



Importance of Religion

All humans identify, build and organize social relationships based on family. Their interaction with other people resulted in expansion of the society and culture. The complexity of the world around sometimes agitate and force them to explore towards the solution of that complexity and in the conquest of finding the solution, they find the route towards religion. Sometimes they seek purpose of their lives which is articulated by religion. Sometimes they make decisions and choices based upon religion and come out of confusions. Religion also provide an ethical framework for mankind. It gives people the peace of mind, hope and motivation.

The simplest definition of religion is to believe in supernatural and place it sacred or divine. Practice on certain values and rituals is also associated with this belief.

People have different religions or belief systems across the world which can be easily categorized into two categorizes: The divine religion and the non-divine (or worldly) religion. Non-divine religions are associated with great thinkers, philosophers and reformers. Out of many religions Hinduism and Budhism are the oldest. Rest of other non-divine religions are branches of these two. While divine religions are those which are revealed from God to different prophets. Three of them are still in practice: Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

These religions are being discussed below.

Hinduism

Hindus believe in thousands of gods and goddesses, while there are two equally supreme gods: Shiva and Vishnu. At the same time they also believe that the entire universe is one divine entity and rest of other gods are attributes of that entity. It shows that they recognize a single deity. Hindus believe that based upon the activities and deeds of someone in his life he will transfer into another body and be reborn. Due to the bad deeds he may transform into an animal. Thus the life becomes a continuous cycle of birth, death and rebirth. Hindus believe in a caste system which is also associated with their religion.¹

Budhism

Siddhartha Gautama later on called "Buddha" (the Enlightened One) was the founder of Buddhism that is based on his personal and spiritual development. He explained that due to negative thinking, people suffer from worries, problems and sufferings while happiness, love,

¹ Manusmrity (Manav Dharma Shastra) Chapter:1

passion, peace of mind and good fortune is linked with the positive state of mind. As people think positively, they become clean and light, till the point when their souls attain enlightenment and gradually transform their present confused and self-centered state of mind into the blissful mind of a Buddha. Once this circle is completed then the soul reborn without its own choice.²

All other wordly religions are derived from these two religions and have an influence of them. Now have a look on monotheistic religions.

Judaism

Prophet Abraham (AS) preached the concept of One God among Hebrews 4000 years ago. He invited people towards the oneness of Allah (SWT) and the fear of the day of judgement. There was a chain of prophets in the siblings of Abraham (AS). Abraham's son, Prophet Isaac (AS) had a son, named Prophet Jacob (AS), also called Israel. The followers of these prophets are called Israelites. They were bound to obey the laws of Allah (SWT) which were given to Prophet Moses (AS) in written form on Mount Sinai. This book is called Torah or more commonly Old Testament.

Christianity

Christianity grew out of Judaism. It is also a monotheistic religion that is based on the life, teachings and miracles of Prophet Jesus also called "Christ". His followers believe that he is son of God and the supreme power, along with God and Holy Spirit. The three of them are one while at the same time they are three.

The book revealed to Prophet Jesus is called Bible or New Testament. According to the believers, Prophet Jesus was crucified, killed, buried in a tomb and he rose three days later. Then he disappeared into the heaven. By his crucifixion, he paid off the sins of his followers. He also demonstrated his power over life and death and therefore has the power to give people an eternal life. They also believe that Christ will appear again and save the humanity, that is why he is also called Maseah.³

Islam

The arabic word "Islam" is derived from a word meaning "peace", while "Islam" stands for willing submission to Allah (SWT). One can not achieve the peace of mind and soul until he does not surrender himself in front of Allah (SWT) and live his life according to His laws.

Islam is not a new religion. It is an extension of Judaism and Bible because submission to the will of God' has always been the only acceptable religion in the sight of God. For this reason,

² Sitting Together, Sumi Loundon Kim, Wisdom Publications

³ The Significance of the Death and Resurrection of Jesus for the Christians, Australian Catholic University National.

it is the same eternal message revealed through the ages to all of God's Prophets and Messengers. The prophethood started with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Solomon, Jesus, and Ismail, peace be upon them, all conveyed this main message that there is only One True God and He alone is to be worshipped. God says in the Quran,

"We did not send before you (O Mohammad) any messenger but We revealed to him: 'none has the right to be worshipped except I, therefore worship Me.'" (Quran 21:25)

However, the true message of these prophets was either lost or got corrupted over time and hence lost its credibility to guide the people towards the right path. Therefore, 600 years after Jesus, God purified the lost message by sending the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) with His final revelation, the Holy Quran, towards all the mankind. It was the revival of humanity. Since the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) was the final prophet, God Himself has promised to preserve His last revealed words so that it would remain the source of guidance for all humanity till the Last Day. It is now imperative for everyone to believe and follow this final message from God. God Almighty says in the Quran,

"We have not sent you (O Mohammad) but to all mankind as a giver of good news and as a warner, but most people do not know." (Quran 34:28)

"Whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted of him, and in the Hereafter, he will be one of the losers." (Quran 3:85)

The word "Muslim" means one who submits to the will of God, regardless of his/her race, nationality or ethnic background. Hence, any person who is ready to submit to the will of God is eligible to become a Muslim.