

Straight Talk:

Facets Of True Religion¹
by Mahatma Bhagwan Din

Can labels be applied to true religion?

A number of labels have been attached to religion. This tradition of attaching labels to religion has violated its spirit - it has annihilated its soul. There is only one religion and it cannot be anything but truth. Here is a fact that supports this statement. Every individual, whether illiterate or highly educated, regardless of his/her religious persuasion, on observing a truthful person - one whose conduct is righteous and scrupulous, asserts that he/she is a DHARMAATMA or EIMAANDAAR - a person who conscientiously follows the code of ethics. An individual applies the word 'DHARMAATMA' or 'EIMAANDAAR' only when the other individual follows religion in the true sense. No Hindu or Muslim calls a veritable follower of Hinduism a 'Hindu DHARMAATMA'. Similarly, no Muslim or Hindu calls an impassioned follower of Islam a 'Muslim EIMAANDAAR'. One cannot apply labels such as 'Hindu' or 'Muslim' to 'EIMAANDAAR' and 'DHARMAATMA'. In the same vein, how can one apply labels such as Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Jain and Buddhist to true religion?² Any individual who attaches such labels to religion does an extreme disservice to religion. Virtues such as truth, devotion, and purity of body and mind cannot be called Hindu or Muslim.

Religion does not indulge in conflicts:

Any conflicts among religions indicate that they have fallen prey to ignorance and have departed from truth. Ignorance and deviation from truth leads a religion to indulge in trivial squabbling with others. Religion is like a bright light - pure and immaculate. Just as light does not clash with light, a real religion does not assail other religions. Two veritable religious (DHARMAATMA or EIMAANDAAR) persons never indulge in any dispute. If Hindus and Muslims had been religious (DHARMAATMA or EIMAANDAAR), they would not have fought amongst themselves. Guru Nanak and Sant Kabir, two of the great sages of India, have given a

¹ English adaptation of the article 'DHARM AUR SATYA', adopted from the book 'SATYA AUR JEEVAN', and published in the prestigious journal 'Tirthankar' of December-January 2003-2004.

² In ancient times, no labels, such as Hindu or Jain, were attached to religion in India.

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candid and sound advice to their followers in this respect. In fact, followers of all religions deserve such advice.

Religion that is enshrouded in ignorance, disinterest and indifference cannot allow anyone to remain a religious person. This does not imply that there are no veritable followers of any religion; for, in that case, the world would be devoid of veritable individuals because each individual follows one religion or another. Nevertheless, it seems that no religion is truthful about its own ignorance (lack of proper knowledge). In this respect, no religion is either truthful or nonviolent. On account of its lack of true knowledge, it indulges in deception (delusion) and in irrational and violent schemes.

'Religion is in danger' - a white lie:

Heralding that religion is in danger is a lie comparable to stating that the bright sun is dark. Indeed, religion can never be in danger. Only irreligion can be in danger. Religion is closely related to mind and soul. Danger cannot touch them. At times, certain selfish individuals herald that religion is in jeopardy. In reality, such pronouncements imply that their interests and the interests of their associates are threatened. Religions carrying the labels of Hindu or Muslim can be in peril. This is because of the fact that they have deviated from being religions in the true sense - they have descended to the status of 'paths' that are expected to be blindly followed by all. When such blind following is challenged, rumbles of 'religion is in danger' intensify. True religion emerges as a consequence of this process. Veritable individuals are never alarmed by the slogans of 'religion is in peril'. Only the individuals, who ignorantly believe that religion is a maze of blind adherence to gods, are agitated by such slogans.

Scourge of the religion based on ignorance:

An individual who blindly follows religion develops a unique tendency. He/she considers that all that is written in a religious book is absolutely true. He/she would not even bother to ascertain what is written in the book. Such individuals develop one more demerit. They blindly accept the faulty interpretation of their scripture provided by the so-called scholars of their respective religions. They do not even accept a rational view of their religion provided by those who are not followers of their religion.

Truth versus miracles:

Miracles as such do not add up to much. In fact, their worth is not more than that of any mundane routine incident. Some miraculous deeds or tricks can prove to be even inferior to a common occurrence. More is an individual influenced and bewitched by a miracle, the more ignorant he/she is. Ignorance and miracle are two sides of the same coin. When one is fascinated and enchanted by any object or incident, he/she regards it as a miracle. If an infant could express himself/herself, he/she would describe numerous miracles because he/she is ignorant of most of the things and events in life.

Discovering miracles:

Children start discovering miracles when they are in the cradle. It seems that this is indispensable, for without the mishmash of miracles, man cannot have faith in the religious personalities such as messengers, incarnations and apostles of any religion. Being enchanted by the normal events in life, people start to believe that a religious personality is not a human being but God's messenger or apostle. They develop a frame of mind that leads them to accept miraculous things just as they accept other events of the universe.

All ignorant people, especially women, have this firm belief: religious men such as monks (SADHUS) can perform wonderful miracles. Many monks wander like beggars. Our children are as scared of them as people were scared of police during the British rule because their mothers talk about the miraculous powers of these wandering monks.³

³ This is a realistic snapshot of the present Jain system that is being manipulated by some acharyas, monks and so-called scholars.