**Defining Faith for All Religion**

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Faith is, perhaps, the most private thing in the life of every human being, regardless of caste and creed. Every person has a God in his/her heart and soul and prays to the same God without having seen Him out of his/her belief. Every person believes that there is a Creator who has created this universe and every living being, and one day everything will perish and return to Him.

The findings of a Pew Research Centre study revealed that the major religions that have sizeable representation include: “2.2 billion Christians (32% of the world’s population), 1.6 billion Muslims (23%), 1 billion Hindus (15%), nearly 500 million Buddhists (7%) and 14 million Jews (0.2%) around the world as of 2010.”

Since the matter is too personal and may invoke a reaction, therefore, Allah has given clear warnings that “Believers, do not say bad words against the idols lest they (pagans) in their hostility and ignorance say such words against God….” (6:108).

Likewise in Surah Al-Kafirun, Allah has Ordained that “To you is your religion, and to me, my religion.” (109:6). However, some elements from different faiths do target the people of other faiths; sometimes through desecration of Holy Books mainly Al Quran, and sometimes by showing disrespect to any of the Holy Prophets, mainly Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

If one has a right of expression, others also have a right of choice.

This short article is aimed at defining FAITH by explaining each letter of this beautiful English word, which is a true translation of the Arabic and Urdu word IMAN, and this should hold good for people from all faiths because they all have their Gods.

The letter ‘F’ stands for Fondness, i.e. liking and affection for your God, whom you think is the Creator of this universe. Without an affectionate fondness, one cannot submit himself/herself to the Creator. It has to be total and with hearts, minds, and souls.

The letter ‘A’ represents Allegiance, i.e. total loyalty. One has to be loyal to your own God and cannot share His image with anybody else or cannot replicate His stature with any other entity.

The letter ‘I’ reflects Intimacy, i.e. closeness. This is perhaps the most private relationship between a person and his/her God or Creator. He/she has to develop a personal linkage with his/her Creator for ease of communication. He/she can cry, pray, and talk to his/her Creator in private and no other person can intervene in this relationship.

The letter ‘T’ stands firmly for Truthfulness, i.e. openness, because the Creator knows everything and hence you cannot hide anything from Him. Therefore, you must be entirely truthful with your God, and only then you will be able to face Him with a clear conscience while communicating in private.

The last letter ‘H’ refers to Hopefulness, i.e. expectation, and optimism. Without hope, everything will be lost and this is a norm accepted by people regardless of caste and creed. One prays to his/her God with the hope of the fulfilment of the prayers offered in private or mass public gatherings.

At this stage, the question arises that if one’s needs to have Fondness, Allegiance, Intimacy, Truthfulness, and Hopefulness, with his/her God, then why would somebody interfere with the same attributes in the God of the other, and create hatred for a particular community, mainly Muslims. Because, to all Muslims, Allah has Ordained about His Prophets that “We make no distinction between any of them” (Qur’an 2:136).

In my opinion, the answer is very simple. An individual’s provocative acts against the Holy Book (Al Quran) or the Prophet (PBUH) and the people of other religions are not because of differing ideologies, but it is often politically motivated. Sometimes it is state-sponsored, and sometimes it is community sponsored to create chaos, and purposely target Muslims living in the Western world to force them to think of leaving the place they have chosen to settle in life. These states and people who initiate such Islamophobic sentiments are well aware of the pattern that the Islamic countries and their people would follow when such acts are undertaken. Most countries will only condemn, few will host demonstrations, few will formally protest, and one odd will start burning itself in protest to such intended and sponsored acts.

Let me suggest a way forward. People from all religions must understand that these religions are very old and the teachings are nearly similar in context. Therefore, if one has a right of expression, the others also have a right of choice. A sincere effort is needed to agree on minimum common grounds, including the following five points, at least.

(a) There is only One Creator of all living and non-living beings in all the universes and has no parallel, regardless of Caste and Creed.

(b) All the Messengers sent by The Creator are Equal and must be respected by all, regardless of Caste and Creed.

(c) All the Holy Books are Unique and must be respected by all, regardless of Caste and Creed.

(d) Holy Rituals of All Religions must be regarded as sacred and personal, and hence respected regardless of Caste and Creed.

(e) Hate material and speeches against any religion must be declared illegal, universally.

It might sound ideal, but it is certainly doable, to begin with a sincerity of purpose and will relieve people of any particular community from occasional emotional stress.

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