

RELIGION AND ETHICAL VALUES IN HUMAN RIGHTS

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Abstract: Conceptually, the word “right” may designate *rectitude* or morally correct behaviour or thinking; righteousness by means of which we talk of something (for example, an action) as being right. This meaning is only tangentially related to what we usually have in mind when talking about human rights, a term that is broadly used to designate *entitlement*. In legal, political, and moral contexts, human rights refer to justifiable claims that individuals and groups can make upon others or upon society, including their governments. The claims may be negative, when they impose constraints upon the actions of others. They may also be positive, requiring active efforts on the part of those against whom they are made to meet the needs embodied in the claims. But are all claims entitled to recognition? What distinguishes “rights” claims from petty claims, and why should we be inclined to take the former seriously while having no qualms about laughing off the latter? Answer to each of these questions roughly corresponds to a separate meaning of human rights and these answers have been attempted to be explored within the context of different religious discourses.

Key Words: Human Rights, Equality, Religion, Principles, Freedom, Law, Doctrinal positions, Morality, Belief, Duties, Discrimination, Humanity.

Introduction: Human rights are taken seriously, or ought to be so taken, because they are expressions of moral identity. They provide normative clues to what a society and its citizens care about. When enacted into law by a democratically elected government, rights often become a means by which important moral values – dignity, respect, and justice – are legally protected. In short, human rights language calls our attention to what it means to be human. It testifies to the goodness of the human who understands himself or herself, and is regarded by others, as a valuable member of the community, and who not only has to be respected but upon whom others can also make similar claims. Second, human rights function as a meaningful rhetoric for discussing society’s response to basic human needs. “A basic need” is anything “in whose absence a person would be harmed in some crucial and fundamental way” (Feinberg 1973: 111).

Needs are things required to survive with dignity; they are warrants for protection against potential harm. When someone has a need, that person is not merely entitled to compensation in the event that he or she happens to be deprived of the needed good; one also has a right to the satisfaction of that need even before harm befalls him or her. At the international level, human rights norms and values are also becoming a fashionable subject of bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, largely because of the lexical priority accorded to human rights over actual cultural beliefs and particular social arrangements. Third, these worldwide developments provide a basis for a conceptualization of the idea of human rights, as “an expression of a deep human ability to recognize the other as like oneself; to experience empathy for the other’s needs and sufferings; to consent to, support, and rejoice in the fulfillment of the other’s human capacities and well-being” (Cahill 1999–2000: 45).

Gulf between Normative Theory and Social Practice

Thus, when we articulate human choices in rights language, we are attributing to those choices a certain peremptory (insisting on immediate attention or obedience not open to appeal or challenge) force that is neither derived from, nor can be overridden by, the rules of any municipal legal system. Human rights have a tangible existence and moral force in the world of actions, not because the law or a given received tradition says so (in fact, rights are often the casualties of law and tradition), but because they are the means by which we assess the worth of any tradition or legal system. The capacity of any legal or political order to create moral obligations depends on its conformity with human rights. Unfortunately, this has not always been the case. There has been, in virtually every society, an immense abyss or gulf between normative theory and social practice, between constitutional doctrine and constitutive conduct. Slavery, colonialism, sexism, and religious intolerance are among the many indelible deviations from human rights. Thankfully, there have also been progressive efforts toward bridging the gap between our normative aspirations and actual conduct.

Theoretical Edifice

Many theories have been expounded to elucidate the basics of human rights. According to the lawful (or positivist) inspection of human rights, all human rights shoot from the law and nothing

else. For example, the source of human rights would be found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 2020) Natural law theory (or Natural Rights theory), in comparison, premise the foundations of human rights, and in particular human liberty and equality on the consideration that they have a natural, universal and an timeless aspect to it. There is more over the religious theory which anchors human rights within the perspective of a moral vision. The issue is a significant one because many have emphasized that these basics of human rights are fundamentally western ideas, ideas that do not clinch or mirror principles of non-western cultures. This view is espoused in the context of the universality and cultural relativist debate. Among notable sources of human rights ideas are religious traditions, philosophical ideas, legal theories, and revolutionary political and socialist movements, which have articulated moral and humanistic principles that either correspond to or have influenced modern conceptions of human rights. Buddhism and Islam, no less than Christianity, Judaism, and several indigenous religions, portray a vision of universal moral community, in which human beings exist under one transcendent Source, whose will they are to serve for the benefits of all. We find a similar cosmopolitan vision of human interdependence in Cicero's *De Legibus* (52 BCE), where he appeals to human rights laws that transcend customary and civil laws, and endorses the idea of "a citizen of the whole universe, as it were of a single city." Cicero rejected the view that distinctions of race, religion, and opinion are insurmountable barriers to forming an inclusive civic and moral community (Griffin and Atkins 1991). Enlightenment thinkers bolstered this moral orientation to the world, requiring only that the emerging nation-state be seen as the natural forum for securing civil and political rights against religious establishments. As women entered the public sphere, militants and thinkers like Olympe de Gouge and Mary Wollstonecraft called for the equal natural rights of women. While few would dispute the importance of tracing the intellectual history of human rights, the controversy surrounding the use of the term today focuses on what it means to have rights, how they may be justified, and what rights we should have or recognize.

Justifying Human Rights

Central to the contemporary doctrine of international human rights is the principle of non-discrimination. “Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status” (UN 1948: Art. 2) (UDHR, 2020) The non-discrimination principle has become an article of faith for those regarded as universalists in the human rights community, that is, those who argue that a commitment to human rights necessarily implies a rejection of all systems of inequality based upon extrinsic human traits such as age, race, gender, religion, and places of origin. Some proponents of moral universalism appeal to the structure of human action to justify the inclusiveness of the human rights vision (Gewirth, 1982). Other proponents ground human rights in the notion of an *a priori* human nature, pre-existing any form of social and political organization (Wiredu 1990: 243). “The whole point of human rights is that they are taken to be binding and available, regardless of any particular identity or conviction” (Little 1999: 157). On this view, rights are the inescapable entailment of the moral status of human beings. The important question to raise at this juncture is whether religious sensitivities contribute to or undermine the aspirations for a universal recognition of human rights. One stream of scholars believes that it is religion that needs human rights for its preservation, not the other way round. They contend that the morality of historical religious traditions is totalizing and exclusivist (Okin 1999: 9–24). Others argue “human rights are, in substantial part, the modern political fruits of ancient religious beliefs and practices” (Witte 1998: 258). By evoking “a basic sense of fellow humanity, respect for human dignity, and mutual responsibility,” religious symbols and beliefs provide a motivational rationale for universalizing and domesticating human rights (Cahill 1999–2000, 47–8). More fundamentally, “the idea of human rights is . . . ineliminably religious” (Perry 1998: 13). The idea of human rights, on this view, requires affirming that each person is “sacred” in relation to a holistic view of the world and its meaning, so that there are certain things that should not be done to and that should be done for any person. Despite the disagreement between secular (rationalist) universalists and their religious counter-parts, both camps agree on the normative understanding of humanity and the defense of human dignity as the primary object of human rights. Neither camp is also completely free of the potential evils that it identifies in the other. Historical

religious traditions have perpetrated gruesome atrocities in the name of defending “absolute and universal” truths. Secular philosophical theories are no less sullied by their attribution of “rationality” to some segments of humanity while denying it to others.

Human Rights and Human Duties

The scheme of human rights can be observed as in the early hours of the French Declaration of Human Rights of 1789, and the American Bill of Rights of 1791. However, the Charter of the United Nations (1945) primarily stressed the international acknowledgment of human rights: ‘to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women...’ (Preamble of the United Nations Charter, 1945) These rights were enumerated in the UDHR and elaborated in the two later Covenants. (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966). In addition human rights are guaranteed constitutionally around the world, including in the Indian Constitution. This guides some scholars to propose that the roots of human rights are intensely implanted within various religious and cultural traditions of the human race. (Are the Principles of Human Rights 1999 & Sucharitkul, 1987) In order to understand whether human rights do have a religious origin it is necessary to briefly look at how they are defined under international law. The UDHR recognizes in its preamble the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family. In its especially first Article it is declared: ‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.’ (Article 1, UDHR, 2020).

This means that all individuals possess human rights. (Ritter, 1997) They are general rights that arise from no special undertaking beyond membership in the human race. (Donnelly, 1982) One does not need to do anything other than be born a human being and therefore human rights are not determined by virtue of any social action. Intrinsic to the notion of human rights is the idea that all humans equally hold them. (Ritter, 1997) This equality is understood in terms of a dignity equally inherent in each individual. So human rights language talks of the intrinsic value of human beings, which is equally common to all simply by virtue of them being human (Ritter, 1997)

Judeo-Christian Tradition

The origin of human rights language in the Judeo-Christian tradition starts with the idea of the creation of man in the image of God, and is therefore absolute, and the state of grace, which is universal. The fundamental conception of the human being within the Judeo-Christian tradition begins with the thought that God was the creator of all things. He created man in his own image: 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness ... So God created man in his own image, in the image and likeness of God he created him; male and female he created them.' (Genesis 1:26-27, 5:1, 9:6). (Bailey, 2014) This is the reason why it is important to recognize the dignity of every human being regardless of any social differences. Dignity is inherent. Human rights law provides for a way to recognize the respect for dignity. The significance of this can be observed through the plentiful constitutions which have guaranteed its position. This ropes the idea of rights that all benefit from by virtue of their general humanity. By asset of reflecting the godly image, supreme value is accorded to human beings. (Ritter, 1997) This gives all human beings a special status, a unique value, or dignity. Being created in God's image is to be comprehended 'in the sense of God bestowing dignity and honour upon man'. In Hebrew consideration human life possessed inherent value by virtue of its heavenly endowment. The Jewish understanding of human rights is entirely a function of the absolute value of humanity granted to every person. (Ritter, 1997) This belief within Judaism provides an explanation as to why human beings are given certain basic rights. In the New Testament, the Son of God, in the personality of Jesus Christ, perfected divine consideration for the human being. Through Christ humanity is unchained from sin and as a result of the Fall, redeemed before God, and survives in a position of grace. (Ritter, 1997) So it is in Christ that the image of God, obscured and blurred by sin, is restored. Consequently the Christian conception of human rights is completely a function of the value divinely bestowed to humans through Christ. (Ritter, 1997) This is absolute and universal. The absolute value of a person pre-exists any social differences, all are seen as equal, and as a result the value is universal. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is Jesus Christ, who is to be received by faith (Romans 3:21- 25). (Bailey, 2014) As an instance, the thought of intrinsic rights and self-esteem as explained in religious terms can be seen to have insinuation on the law of euthanasia. It has been stated by the European Court of Human Rights, that the right to life under Article 2 of

the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR), does not include the right to die. Christianity denounce suicide and consider it as self-murder. Christians were expectant to endure suffering with the help of God's grace rather than to look for to put an end to their own lives. (Ferngren, 1987) However, this does not mean that religion can provide for a theory of human rights in all aspects. For example, whereas the Bible claims all have dignity, including the foetus, the law has not recognized so. The fact that this Biblical viewpoint is not represented in law (i.e. abortion is allowed), means that not all aspects of human rights can be explained by a Biblical theory. (*Baby-Boy case*, 1981)

Nevertheless, there is another significant, and in one's judgment far stronger, feature to the Judeo-Christian thought. This is the idea of duties towards all. The reality that divine consideration is accorded to all humans means that one ought to act with deference towards one another. If one looks intimately at the UDHR, the concept of duties can be explored. In Article 29 it is stated that: 'Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.' (Article 29(1), UDHR, 2020).

The Judeo-Christian conventions offer a more all-inclusive theory for human duties than human rights. Novak has put that Judaism more directly bear a resemblance to a system of duties rather than rights. (Novak, D. 2004) He identified that there is no equivalent term of 'rights', the closest is 'permission'. There are, nevertheless, equivalent terms to 'duty', in terms of 'commandments' (*misvot*) and 'obligations' (*hovot*). All people are bearers of fundamental and unassailable human rights, as long as they carry out a set of bare minimum human duties. Consequently, for instance, when one is moving along the pathway from stranger to Jew, the added duties he performs the more rights he is entitled to. These duties are identified as the "Noachide laws" and comprise, for instance, the ban of theft and sacrilege. Likewise, there are the 'Ten Commandments', which lay down a sequence of duties that each person be obliged to others. This proposes that even though the design of rights has been much of the focal point, it is the notion of duties which is particularly stated and encouraged in the religious text.

There is also a additional grounds which may clarify why we can unearth the idea of duties to the community in Western rights talk. This is the idea that people are not just created as individuals who are to live alone. They are created to live in communion with other people and subdue the

earth.(De Blois, 1998)The greatest duty, which may be drawn out in this context, is the duty to one's neighbour: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour' (Mark 12:31, Matthew 22:39 and Leviticus 19:18). (Bailey, 2014)However it does not present a right for the neighbour to be loved, love must be given unconditionally. Within Christianity it is trained that as a substitute of demanding rights, one should give them up generously. (Matthews 5:39-44, talking in the context of retaliation). (Bailey, 2014)

Hinduism

Within Hinduism there is more emphasis on the concept of human duties as opposed to human rights. In Hinduism, just like Judaism, there is no place for 'rights'. (Pandeya, 1986) The closest word to 'rights' is *adhikara*, which relates to the idea of 'just claim'. However this concept is not used alone. It is used in the context where one has performed some act, or performed a duty. (Pandeya, 1986) In Sanskrit this understanding relates to the central concept of *Dharma*, the central doctrine of Hindu thought. This word is derived from the root *dhr* and means to uphold, sustain and nourish. It is an all-inclusive term, which comprises duty, ethics, ritual, law, order and righteousness. For instance, it can be applied in a ritualistic context to mean the religious duties, or it can be used to connote the duties of the different castes (*varna-dharma*), or it can pass on to those duties that are general to all irrespective of class.(Sharma, 2004) Professor Kane considers the conception of *dharma* as embracing the whole life of man.(Nanda, 1997) It is a mode of life or a code of conduct, which regulates a man's work and activities as a member of society and as an individual. It is intended to bring about the gradual development of man and to enable him to reach the goal of human existence. (Nanda, 1997) The concept of *dharma* also refers to the structure of reality. It is the way in which the cosmos, the whole universe, or the balance in the cosmos is maintained. It holds together in a systematic manner the integrity and progression of life in the universe. (Rao, 1998)Hindu thought starts with the cosmos and work its way in to the individual. (Sharma, 2004) At the human level, it involves self-regulation and social regulation. It is the duty of society and each individual to maintain this larger cosmic framework of which they are a part.(Younger, 1972)As Rama Jois has said, since *dharma* regulates the mutual obligations of the individual and society, it is to be protected in the interest of both the individual and society. (Nanda, 1997) Persons are seen first as bearers of duties, not

rights, and whatever rights one does have rest on the discharge of duties.³⁹ Some have argued that these duties are specified in terms of castes, which are defined solely in terms of birth. The major point to keep in mind in this reference is that within Hinduism the focal point is upon duties. Such duties include truthfulness and non-stealing. Even though the duty towards others is the elementary foundation of Hindu thought, instances within Hinduism subsist of rights talk (or *adhikara* as Hindus use the term). The word *dharma* can be interpreted into a term meaning 'rights' when used in the context of a crisis (*apad-dharma*). For instance, the idea of rights exists if one observes the duties of the king (*raja-dharma*). It is the king's duty to guard all and also lend a hand in times of *apad-dharma*. However, the *Mahabharata*, a Hindu religious text, endows the people to 'gird themselves up and kill a cruel king, who does not protect his subjects, who extracts taxes and simply robs them of their wealth.' (Ganguli, 2010). There is a right (*adhikara*) to rebel against a king if he does not fulfill his duty to protect the people. This is an obvious instance of how the idea of human rights can be interpreted within the context of human duties.

Islam

The Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam (CDHRI) is a pronouncement of the member states of the Organization of the Islamic Conference espoused in Cairo, Egypt, in 1990, (Brems, E 2001) which provides an overview on the Islamic perspective on human rights, and affirms Islamic sharia as its sole source. CDHRI declares its principle to be "general guidance for Member States [of the OIC] in the field of human rights". The Declaration starts by saying "All men are equal in terms of basic human dignity" (it is to be noted that the axiom is "human dignity" not equal "human rights") and forbids "discrimination on the basis of race, colour, language, belief, sex, religion, political affiliation, social status or other considerations". It goes on to announce the sacredness of life, and announce the "preservation of human life" as "a duty prescribed by the Shariah". The CDHRI also pledges non-belligerents—such as old men, women and children, the wounded and sick, and prisoners of war—the right to food, shelter, and access to safety and medical treatment in times of war. (Evensen, S.T. 2019)

Buddhism

As Buddhism essentially believes in this potentiality of man and sets the excellence of freedom, and happiness as the objective to be achieved by each individual, liberty of self-development and the support of opportunities for it, have become a basis of the Buddhist ethics. Hence, Buddha's recurring teachings on the repudiation of the caste system of the Hindus, and his emphasis on the equality of men of all classes before the law of Karma and, ultimately, under the law of the Dharma. The Buddha's point of view is that good life is open to everyone and the uppermost truth is the universal treasure claimable by everybody; there can be no restriction because of castes or classes. Moreover, he educates the objective of liberty that is to be attained by means of liberty and a happy means that leads to a happy end. (Payutto, 1994)

Question of Equality

Judeo-Christian Tradition

Man being shaped in the image of God accounts for the firmest argument for the equality of all human beings and the idea of rights that all enjoy by virtue of their common humanity. (Kooijmans, 1977) The rights concerning equality correspond to the position which is granted to man by God in creation and then again in the redemption. (Brunner, 1945) The creation establishes male female interdependence and the interrelatedness of all people as their brothers' keepers (Genesis 2:20-24; 4:9-14). (Montgomery, 1995) This means that all believers are equally members of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:26-27) (Bailey, 2014) and their oneness in Christ transcends racial, national, social and sexual differences (Galatians 3:28). (Montgomery, 1995) As a result of this strong argument, all forms of discrimination are to be rejected. The Bible emphasizes that we are all equal since all of us have one father, one God has created us (Malachi 2:10). (Bailey, 2014) God loves us each equally and unconditionally, and wants his children to love each other. The equal value of all human beings finds its position in human rights law. There is also equality in sinfulness between humans, 'all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23). (Bailey, 2014)

All have been redeemed by the death of Christ, and hence all are brothers. Because the Bible held that all human beings were brothers come down from the same parents, the fact that slavery existed and why it took so long to get eliminated is hard to understand. One reaction may be that Christ has said, 'My kingdom belongs not to this world...my kingdom is not from here' (John

18:36). This has been deduced to advocate that human equality does not have insinuations for the quality of life on earth. (Villa-Vicencio,1999-2000) Another response was to locate the slaves as creatures that had incurred God's rage. The equal worth of human beings finds its expression in equality in respect of the material means people need for their subsistence and development. This means scrupulous concern for the wellbeing of the deprived. There is a duty to protect people, for example, that are in need. Women and children are especially to be protected. This can be seen in Article 25 of the UDHR where it is stated that motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. However, more interestingly in this context is the concern for the poor and just social relations, which is stressed in the Bible. For instance, the dissimilarity in the economic functions of employer and employee does not validate important differences in the standard of living: 'you shall not sleep on cushions while your servant sleeps on straw.' In addition, livelihood must be provided to those who are unable to provide for themselves: 'If your brother has become poor and his hand fails, you shall uphold him, even if he be a stranger.'

Hinduism

Max Weber has written that Hinduism did not acquire a universally valid ethic, for the religious and moral code (*dharma*) of each caste was diverse (Smith, 1963) Each caste had a *dharma* corresponding to its position on the caste scale. The failure to perform one's caste duty would constitute a violation of *dharma*. Because this idea draws a pointed moral difference between human beings in different castes, it seems in bare contrast to the view in the Judeo-Christian tradition with its rigid belief in the intrinsic equality and value of all basically from being created in the divine image. As an illustration, upper caste Hindus frequently controlled temple entry so as to keep untouchables out of the temple. As a result of such disparity, many people from the lower castes have turned to substitute religions choice such as Christianity and Buddhism. This implies that all human beings are not seen as (inherently) equal. It is hard to envisage a universal principle of equality when Hindu thought upholds the caste system. The caste system is clearly in violation of international human rights law with its emphasis on the inherent equal worth of all human beings. Equality of all human beings was restated in the *Vedic* period, no one was superior or inferior, all were considered as alike 'like the spokes of a wheel of the chariot connecting its rim and the hub'. Nevertheless, the design of a 'caste system' as a hereditary aspect that lasts through generations is not explicitly identified within the original religious texts.

The caste system was a notion that was extracted out of the religious context and expanded upon in a philosophical context, in particular in *The Laws of Manu*. The *Manusmriti* is a book which interprets the pre-given *Vedic* texts. A more intense connotation of equality is found within the Hindu religion. This cuddles the idea of accord and fraternity among all human beings, the egalitarianism of all human souls. According to *Vedanta* philosophy, the souls in each human being is similar, consequently, all human beings should be dealt with equally. This is because God is present in all that exists: 'God covers all that moves in the Universe'. (*Isa Upanishad*, chapter IX) Hinduism believes in universal brotherhood and since God permeates every being, there is unity and equality in diversity.

Islam

The CDHRI provides men and women the "right to marriage" despite of their race, colour, or nationality, but not religion. In adding together, women are given "equal human dignity", "own rights to enjoy", "duties to perform", "own civil entity", "financial independence", and the "right to retain her name and lineage". The CDHRI announces the rule of law, establishing "equality and justice for all", with the limitations provided under Islamic law. The CDHRI also agrees all individuals the "right to participate, directly or indirectly in the administration of his country's public affairs". The CDHRI also forbids any exploitation of authority "subject to the Islamic Shariah." (Evensen, S.T, 2019)

Buddhism

The Lotus Sutra teaches that all living beings possess the world of Buddha-hood. There is not even a allusion of prejudice toward women. If there are men who refute the illumination of women, they are denying the possibility of their own accomplishment of Buddha-hood. To discriminate against others--in any way--is to separate against your own life. Buddha revolted against prevailing notions of class & caste superiority as birthright. (Kubo and Yuyama, 2007)

Religious Freedom in Question

One of the most fundamental freedoms recognized is the freedom of religion. Under Article 18 of the UDHR: 'Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community

with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.’ (UDHR, 2020).

Hinduism

The importance of freedom of religion, as stated in the UDHR, can be found within Hinduism. *Dharma* means, at the human level, the order intrinsic in man, the principled life. (Barnabas, 2002) It is the duty of every individual to make out this order in order to bring about unity throughout the world. The *Dharmic* format gives freedom to every individual, to make out this order and these comprise religious freedom. The character of Hindu religion is encouraging to religious tolerance. Hinduism recognizes that the goal of attaining realization with the nature of self can be reached through many paths. Sri Ramakrishna’s mystical experiences through diverse religions led him to educate that a range of religions are diverse means to reach supreme knowledge and bliss—and that the different religions cannot articulate the entirety of absolute truth, but can convey aspects of it. (Flood, 1996). Comparable attitudes are also declared in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, in particular in Chapter 4 it is stated ‘Whoever approaches me in whatever manner, I accept him. All paths men are struggling through lead unto Me.’(*Bhagvadgeeta* (2002) Chapter IV, verse 11) (Gandhi, 2018)

Judeo-Christian tradition

The Christian notion of religious freedom starts from the presupposition that all individuals are free and responsible. With regards to religious tolerance within the Judeo-Christian tradition, in the Biblical period ancient Israelites were encouraged to view the Gods of other peoples as non-entities. In this reference, ancient Israelite faith was exclusivist in direction. Jews contend that they are God’s chosen people and partners in a special covenant. Nevertheless, foreign people were not damned for their pagan practices. A parallel attitude seems to have been followed in the Christian tradition. Christians affirm the uniqueness of their faith and its superiority. However, this does not mean they are intolerant of other faiths. Calvinists have recognized that as a result of our fall into sin and as a fruit of redemption we now live in a religiously divided world and religious freedom must be assured of all faiths in uniform way. (Montgomery, 1995)

Islam

Conversion to Islam is simple, but Muslims are forbidden to convert from Islam to another religion (cf. Apostasy in Islam). A number of Muslim-majority countries are known for their limits on religious freedom, highly favoring Muslim citizens over non-Muslim citizens. Other countries having the same restrictive laws, tend to be more liberal when imposing them. Yet many other Muslim-majority countries are secular and thus do not control religious belief. (United States of America, Department of State, 2012) The CDHRI Declaration emphasizes on the other hand the “full right to freedom and self-determination”, and its opposition to enslavement, oppression, exploitation, and colonialism. Freedom of belief is preserved and expressed in the Koran - the leading textual authority in laying down the philosophies of Islamic law. But there is disagreement among Muslim scholars as to the limits of that freedom. Abdelsabour Shahin, an Islamist writer and academic at Cairo University, informed the BBC that even though Islam in standard enshrined freedom of belief, there were severe restrictions on that freedom. "If someone changes from Islam to kufr (unbelief), that has to remain a personal matter, and he should not make it public," he said. In other words, a fugitive in a Muslim society, according to this view, forfeits his liberty of expression. If he goes open he be supposed to be executed, says Dr Shahin. (Abdelhadi, 2006)

Buddhism

According to the Buddha, religion should be left to one's own open option. Religion is not a law, but a corrective code which should be followed with understanding. To Buddhists true religious principles are neither divine laws nor a human law, but a natural law. The Buddha advised those who pointed out their aspiration to follow Him, not to be quick in accepting His Teachings. He advised them to judge cautiously His Teaching and to settle on for themselves whether it was realistic or not for them to follow. Buddhism teaches that meager belief or outward rituals are inadequate for accomplishing wisdom and perfection. In this sense, outward conversion becomes meaningless. The Buddha had advocated the utmost degree of freedom not only in its human essence but also in its divine traits. It is a liberty that does not take away man of his dignity. It is a freedom that liberates one from slavery to dogmas and tyrannical religious laws or religious retributions. (MahaThera, 2011) Buddhism places a high stress on freedom of thought and freedom of expression in terms of its doctrinal ethics visibly articulated in the discourses of the

Buddha. The basic Buddhist doctrinal positions on freedom of thought, freedom of expression and academic debate are clearly represented in the *Kalama Sutta* in the shape of a question by the spokesperson of a community of people called the Kalamas and an extensive answer by the Buddha. (Thera, 1981)

Conclusion:

At the most fundamental level, ethics, human rights and the developing global interactions of the whole human race are also closely entwined. Ethics must be allied to morality. In the human rights assignment, religion has played its part right from the start in two ways. First, choice of worship (or non worship) is one of the basic human freedoms. Noticeably, realization of this autonomy is mainly problematic in a multi-religious context as absolutism effortlessly pervades organized Faith. Secondly, religion, with all its components, i.e. beliefs as well as institutions, also falls under the widespread norms of the UDHR. Religion embodies institutionalized links with transcendental bases for ethically justified behaviour. From a reality outside the purview of direct human experience, moral standards are located with ‘eternal’ pretence. Does this signify that admiration for truly universal human poise is intrinsic in all religion? Practice demonstrates it does not. First, the religious message itself may enclose discriminatory rudiments. This applies predominantly to situations in which, separately from the religious nucleus of the message, its cultural location is also authorized and made absolute. Religion may then consecrate a whole people or caste and hence come into clash with the standard of human equality. In fact, validation for enduring violations of human rights in the name of religion tend to come from coalitions of politicians with radical exclusivist religious leaders as opposed to moderate religious establishments – be it Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist or any religion. Religion is, certainly, subject to sturdy political treatment. The tactical question is how to evade clashes between religion and human rights efficiently.

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