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COMPARISON OF 3 DIFFERENT WORLD RELIGIONS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to make an emphasis in some of the comparisons from the Buddhism, the Sikhism and the Islamic faith. It is my understanding that after studying these three different religions I am starting to reason some of their similarities. Undoubtedly, I will be mentioning few differences from one another in my conclusion.

BUDDISHM

Based on the teachings of Siddharta Gautama (the Buddha), it began in the northeastern approx. 563-483 BCE. Buddhist believe that the main goal of an individual should be by breaking the cycles of death and birth and to achieve freedom from the cycle of reincarnation and ultimately obtain nirvana.

Nirvana: The enlightened state in which the person is free from greed, hate and ignorance.

a) Sacred Space:

Worshipping for the Buddhists, does not entirely requires a temple or a shrines, they believe that their worship space is more a way of life; they focus into a way of act everyday. However, the temple visited on this course, represented a sacred space right from the entrance.

The symbols that were part of the temple offered a sacred ambient, I was able to understand that the **Puja** was dedicated to Chenrezig (compassion). All the colorful icons and decorations around the temple were symbols that has characterized Buddhism, the space reflected calm and Spirituality inside the building. The big barrel, and altars with food offers engaged everyone with the service (puja) that was taken place at that moment. Reaching **Nirvana** seems to be one of their goals as Gary Stephenson (officiant) explained to all of the participants.

b) Rituals:

The ritual started from taking off our shoes and in the same way silence took place right from the start. The smell of incense that was part of the "puja" overwhelmed my senses as well as engaging my attention, however; tossing the rice throughout the service as part of their rituals, became of a special interest besides the image of the Buddah at the altar. Observing how the officiant and the other two persons were holding beads while not only praying but also singing at the "puja" made the occasion more appealing while praying for self and others. The mental events like meditating throughout the entire service kept my full attention until the end.

c) Emotional Atmosphere:

One of the benefits from this Puja, was the silence and meditation that took place in the service, the physical space somehow improved the feeling of peace and serenity. The collaborative attitude on these rituals from all the people showed the perception of this faith, having in mind that mental discipline; knowledge and morality are some of their primary beliefs. Equally important I was able to understand how the Buddhist see "ego". To them is a collection of mental events such as "feelings, perceptions, mental formations and consciousness". Having all these characteristics connected to Buddhist is what they establish as Human Life.

In particular, The Four Noble Truths have been an interesting subject from this faith, the way they approach the need to cease from our attachment to desires, "The cause of suffering is not the world but individuals' attachment to it". The Buddha's teaching concentrate of relieving human suffering by a disciplined life.

SIKHISM

Guru Nanak, who was born in 1469AD, founded the Sikh religion in the village Talwandi, now known as Nankana Sahib. Guru Nanak was succeeded by ten Gurus, the last Guru, Gobind Singh born in 1669AD, initiated the Sikh baptism ceremony, giving a distinctive identity to the Sihks. Their concept of God is based on direct experiences of a personal God in the human heart. Believing that God both Impersonal (Nirguna) and Personal (Saguna).

a) Sacred Space:

A warm welcome from the members made everyone feel comfortable as we entered the Sikh Temple known as Gurdwara, after their service, a small group of students were taken to a small room to learn more about their beliefs and practices. Unlike the Buddhist Temple adorned with colorful decorations all around, the Sikh Temple has more simplicity in their décor; they don't have icons to worship. After Gobind Singh's death, Sikhs were to honor only the Adi Granth as their guru. **Adi Granth** is considered to be the scriptures of the Sikhs and the highest authority within the community.

One of the Sikhs started sharing and explaining that their central belief revolves around the nature of God. That God exists inside of each one of us, having as a goal to become closer to Him, and letting go of the ego-centered life. **Pripal Singh**, one of the members of the congregation, which seemed very educated and extremely polite, explained the importance of Sikh code of conduct and that Faith is only in one God.

b) Rituals

As we were approached by a worshiper, we knew we had to remove our shoes before entering the room, both men and women had to cover their heads and we were told to make sure we wouldn't turn our backs on the Andi Granth. They also talked about the "Khalsa" which are well known for being noble warriors (soldiers) that vow to protect their faith, and anyone in need. The Sikhs that go under Khalsa, make a sacred commitment in a baptism ceremony, called Amrit, in which they take vows of owns personal spiritual fidelity and dedication to fully live to the high standards of their faith.

Some of their most important rituals are:

- The Five K's uncut hair, (wrapped in a turban), combs, silver bracelet, dagger and undergarments.
- The importance of the Adi Granth (the Sikh holy book).
- They shared how they pray regularly and meditate by repeating God's in the same way the Sikhs explained to us how all men are considered "protectors" and women "princess" **Singh** (Lion) and **Kaur** (princess)

c) Emotional Atmosphere

I was drawn by their hospitality and disposition to guide us throughout the temple, and their ceremonial service that was taking place. They took the time to attend our questions with so much patience and dedication. At the end of the "educational discussion", they seemed to me as if they were anxious for us to partake in the lunch downstairs, which I gladly accepted in return of their hospitality only to witness of the unity and service by only serving lunch. Their harmony and active service that everyone had towards us was extremely pleasant, I enjoyed every single moment getting to know more the Sikhs, the knowledge that I gained by experiencing for a few hours their faith, made me respect them for their beliefs and to know that they abide the laws of the land they reside as well as to know that women shared equal rights as men.

ISLAMIC

Muhammad ibn Abdullah was born in 570 CE in Mecca, Saudi Arabia in the Hashim clan of the prestigious Qurayshi tribe, the keepers of the sacred shrine the Ka'bah. Muslims say that the most important belief is the nature of God; the second is the nature of everything created by God. Islam is a firm monotheism, according to the Muslims; God communicates with humanity through the Qur'an, through prophets, prayers of individuals and through direction of individual lives.

a) Sacred Space:

Going to the Khadeeja Mosque, was a unique experience; women were directed to go upstairs after removing their shoes and covering their hair with a scarf. The sense of peace and unity among the members was respectful as well as cordial. The space did not offer icons or any type of symbols rather was the purpose to focus the attention on listening to the sermon (khutba) that was offered by a prayer leader, Imam Muhammad Mehtar. It was very interesting listening to the serm in English and Arabic; the most fascinating part of the sermon was when the congregational prayer took place as well as watching a little boy along with his mother, passing around a donation box while the Iman explained renovations that needed to be done to the Mosque.

b) Rituals:

The Muslims traditions among male infants are to be circumcised as well as children to memorize the Qur'an. Qur'an is the sacred scripture of the Muslims, as the word of God dictated to Muhammad by God through the archangel Gabriel. Another ritual that seems to be very similar with the Sikhs and Buddhists are the removal of the shoes, unlike the Buddhists,

the need to cover the hair for women with a scarf is a very sacred ritual for the Sikhs and Muslims. In the 5 daily prayers, cycles of kneeling, touching the forehead to the ground and standing while reciting is paramount to their faith, however; they have to make sure they pray in direction of the Mecca.

c) Emotional Atmosphere:

At the service you could see playful and happy children wondering around, their mothers were engaged with the sermon and the prayers as they felt getting closer to God, with respect and collaboration from the women and men, the sermon was carried with peace and serenity throughout the entire time.

CONCLUSION

Despite the similarities in some of the rituals in taking off the shoes, women covering their hair as well as praying for a purpose, they contrast in how each one of them see their relationship to God in one way of the other. Their ethics have different approaches toward their beliefs but to my opinion, they all have a common goal, which is to have a meaning that is greater than anything here on earth, they may have different disciplines, beliefs or different concepts towards life and God but ultimately religion has always been part of humanity and will always be.

CITED WORKS

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