

The Christian Culture: Wheel of Indian Development

Ved Pal Singh Deswal pursued L.L.B and completed L.L.M (Criminal Law) from M.D University Rohtak in 2003. He was awarded Ph. D in law in 2010. Currently he is an assistant professor in the faculty of Law, M.D University Rohtak. More than 35 research articles have been published in National as well as International Journals and he has attended more than 70 National and International Conferences, Seminars and Workshops.

Abstract

Human development is at the heart of Christian culture. Individually and collectively, authentic human development always leads to social actions that seek a fair balance between self-interest and the common good of the society. There are various parameters which speak about the path of human development embodied in Christianity. They are equity, freedom, social progress, economic conditions, efficiency in working conditions, sustainability, human security, peace and the principle of stewardship. In pursuance of the principles of Christianity, we are grateful for the gift of creation and we must therefore work towards ensuring that we raise the moral issues in our actions for ensuring the protection of above mentioned issues in the form of principles of human development. The stability and success of any country may be secured if we are able to spread the principles of Christian culture in the form of ethical norms guiding human activities.

Keywords: Development, Principles, Equity, Sustainability and Stewardship.

“Try not to become a man of success. Rather become a man of value.” (Albert Einstein) ¹

“But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.” (teachings of Jesus) ²

“Now I will avow, that I then believe, and now believe, that those general Principles of Christianity are as eternal and immutable, as the Existence and Attributes of God; and that those Principles of Liberty, are as unalterable as human Nature and our terrestrial, mundane System.” (John Adams) ³

One of the key elements for the development of a nation is the maintenance of social justice, where the principles of natural justice are prevailing i.e., equality before law and equal protection of law. Social justice leads to peace in the society and perceptions of injustice lead to discontent, non-cooperation, conflict, civil unrest, and war. Religions have a powerful role in shaping ideas of social justice and legitimacy, and in responding to perceptions of injustice and illegitimacy – e.g., passively accepting human suffering and injustice as the will of God and a badge of moral merit, or actively opposing them, and if so, whether by violent or nonviolent means.

Public institutions (e.g., schools, universities, hospitals, social service centres) and worldwide memberships in religions engage millions of people at local, regional, and global levels and can have a major influence on political, economic, and social policy development. In some countries, religious systems are more powerful than political systems, and in others political and religious

¹ <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/8860-try-not-to-become-a-man-of-success-rather-become>, (Accessed on 02.03.2017).

² <http://biblehub.com/luke/6-27.htm>, (Accessed on 02.03.2017).

³ John Adams, American Independence was Achieved Upon the Principles of Christianity”, Constitution Society, <http://www.constitution.org/primarysources/adamsprinciples.html>, (Accessed on 02.03.2017).

systems are intertwined. Indeed, given the importance of religion in many societies, it would be difficult to develop a culture of peace without including religions and the symbols and meanings they hold for people as well as the power of their networks.

Meaning of Social System

By social system is meant a form of social, economic, political, or religious organization or practices, or patterns of human interactions and relationships. It can also refer to the set of doctrines, ideas ideologies, or principles intended to explain the arrangement.

Meaning of Social Justice

The terms 'justice' and 'injustice' can refer to the actions of individuals, but here they are used as a predicate of societies or social systems and their acts and institutions, thus the phrase social justice. Concepts must do with images or ideas about justice and injustice. Perceptions have to do with a sense of judgment that particular activities, behaviours, policies, or systems are fair or unfair, just or unjust. Perceptions of social justice or injustice usually have to do with feelings of equitable or inequitable treatment within a social system. These perceptions usually center around questions of: 1) Authority - who can make decisions and who must follow them? 2) Division of labour - who will do what work, when and how? and 3) Distribution of goods and services - how are resources, opportunities, duties, rewards, punishments, offices, status, or other things that affect physical, psychological, economic, or social well-being to be allocated within a social system?

All societies are faced with these problems. The need to resolve them requires a certain amount of social co-ordination, which in turn leads to moral judgments and moral imperatives, and thence to a sense of justice or injustice. The need for justice and for social co-ordination is universal among all peoples and societies. However, widespread variations occur in how different societies co-ordinate or organize themselves to resolve these problems. In turn, these variations give rise to variations in moral codes and concepts and perceptions of justice and injustice. Perceptions of injustice may vary according to who is making the judgment, based on what moral codes, and also the type of social and economic system being assessed with its particular goals, structures, and historical circumstances. Also, perception of social justice may change as social and economic conditions or systems change. The variations in perceptions of social justice in different or changing social systems contribute to a potential for conflict.

The Importance of Social Justice in Society

According to many peace scholars, among possible elements of peace, ideas and perceptions of social justice are among the most significant. Kenneth Boulding, M Deutsch, E E Sampson, and Lerner in Sampson's collection have asserted that the need for justice is universal.⁴ While ideas and perceptions of what constitutes social justice may vary from one type of social system or culture to another, the need for justice is fundamental in all societies and cultures. Lerner (in Sampson) asserts that the need for justice arises so early and with such primacy that it has a nearly genetic, or natural, base.⁵

⁴ Kenneth E. Boulding, *Stable Peace*, University of Texas Press, 1978. See also M. Deutsch, *Distributive Justice: A Social-psychological Perspective*, Yale University Press, 1985.

⁵ E. E. Sampson, *Justice and the Critique of Pure Psychology*, New York, Plenum, 1983, p. 15.

However, this need for justice can affect individuals and social dynamics in different ways. Because the need for justice is so fundamental, people who perceive that their world is not just may struggle to change or transform it to fit their concept of justice. Such change in social efforts may be undertaken violently or non-violently, through constitutional means or revolution. Or, conversely and paradoxically, people who perceive that their world is unjust may deny or repress their sense of injustice, or accept and 'justify' a certain amount of oppression for a time; out of conscious or unconscious fears that acknowledging the injustice will undermine not only their worldview, but also their sense of belonging, identity, and self worth. Religion is a powerful cultural force that both inform many peoples' ideas of justice, and also their responses to perceptions of injustice.

One reason why the ideas and perceptions of social justice are so significant in the dynamics of war and peace is that they vitally affect a people's sense of the legitimacy or illegitimacy of social structures; therefore, there is a willingness or unwillingness to co-operate with those structures. As Sampson asserts, justice takes us to the roots of the social order, particularly in the matter of its legitimacy. Questions of justice and fairness are not simply minor complaints within an individual's psyche; those unspoken cries of "unfair!" reveal the fault lines of a given social form.⁶

A perception that a system is just contributes to a sense of its legitimacy and thus strengthens it by enhancing peoples' willingness to support and reproduce it. This support and strength enhances the prospects for a system's survival. A sense that a system is unjust erodes a sense of its legitimacy and, with it, the willingness of people to sustain and reproduce it. If allowed to become too widespread, perceptions of injustice may lead to a crisis of legitimacy and undermine the whole social system. To prevent this, societies develop ideologies and other mechanisms to 'justify' existing systems. Here 'justice' is viewed as a process rather than a state of being. As a process, justice "addresses itself to the way legitimacy can be achieved in human affairs."⁷ Ideologies play a central role in legitimating or justifying the existing social formation and in managing potential discontent regarding social structures.⁸ It can be anticipated that whenever there is a potential for raising questions about the fairness of a system, extensive social mechanisms and ideologies will be brought into play to maintain the legitimacy of the system. Such ideologies are essential for sustaining and reproducing the social order, including its built-in discriminatory practices.

One reason religion and culture may have such an affect on a society's justice motivation is because they affect people at deep, symbolic levels of meaning and identity, and profoundly touch peoples' concerns about self-presentation and self-image. Religious groups, cultures, and nations, as well as individuals, may have a self-image, or ideal self-concept.⁹

⁶ See Note 2, pp. 154-155.

⁷ E. E. Sampson, *Justice and the Critique of Pure Psychology*, p. 184.

⁸ E. E. Sampson, *Justice and the Critique of Pure Psychology*, pp. 155-157.

⁹ E. E. Sampson, *Justice and the Critique of Pure Psychology*, p. 177.

Christian Path to Sustainable Human Development

Human development is at the heart of Christian education. It is so individually and collectively, for authentic human development always leads to the kind of social action that seeks a fair balance between self-interest and the common good. According to the Judeo-Christian tradition, human development started with the creation of the first human couple, Adam and Eve, as a communion of persons endowed with the gift of love and the gift of life. Both man and woman were created in the image of God and both were destined to take good care of each other and the entire creation. But instead they decided to do things their own way and ended up creating patterns of domination - of each other and of nature - that persist even today.

For Christians, the decisive turning point in this process of human development was the birth of Jesus of Nazareth in or near the town of Bethlehem of Judea, about 5 kilometres south west of Jerusalem, circa 4 BCE. Each human being is unique, but Christians believe that Jesus is the consummated 'Human Being' and the model of what God wants every human being to be. His life provides the roadmap of an inner journey during which each person must make some hard choices pursuant to personal integration or disintegration, self-determination or conformism, solidarity or self-interest, sustainability or consumerism, disciplined spirituality or indulgence of bad corporal and mental habits. This process of learning to make choices is the kind of human development that can become sustainable and enable humanity to become a communion of persons living with harmony in the human habitat.

The mission of the baby born in Bethlehem was to be the 'Human Being' (the 'Son of Man' in the language of his Jewish culture) and to show the way to full human development (the 'Kingdom of God' within) for every human being willing to follow the straight and narrow path. The path that every human being must travel even if there is pain and suffering along the way; "Jesus shows us something of what it means to become human, but not enough to keep us from having to discover our own humanity. We must weave the story, and for each of us the story will be unique."¹⁰ Reflecting on the challenge of human development is to be at the intersection of religion (including the undeniable influence of organized religion) and sustainable human development. A reflection on inclusiveness present even in archaic religious dogmas as well as in priceless inspirations of religious art. Indeed, the star of Bethlehem is encapsulated in religious dogmas and religious art, but still needs to be liberated from boundaries of exclusiveness rooted in ancient prejudices and unhealthy mental habits. The essence of human development is to bring about this liberation, in each human being and in the human community worldwide.

According to jurists there are four areas of human development to which every conscientious person ought to pay attention (as reflected by the growth of Christ). These are the intellectual, the physical, the social, and the spiritual aspects respectively. Before exploring these four dimensions of balanced personal growth, two introductory points must be made.

First, Luke records that young Jesus "advanced" in these realms. The Greek word is *prokopto*, from *pro* (forward), and *kopto* (to cut). Many scholars believe that the term originally described the work of wood-cutters who cleared away the obstacles that impeded the progress of ancient armies. Eventually, the word simply came to suggest the idea of progress. Paul uses a form of

¹⁰ Walter Wink, *The Human Being*, Fortress Press, 2002, p. 139.

the term when he contends that the difficulties which befell him in Rome had facilitated the progress of the gospel. It is not inappropriate to suggest that the example of Christ acts as the model for advancement in godly maturity, a 'pioneer' in human development. Second, the verb 'advanced' is an imperfect tense form, which suggests a sustained activity as viewed historically. The young Jesus was ever developing in the areas suggested by the text.

Intellectual Development

The Bible places considerable emphasis upon the development of the human mind. After all, it is the mind that is created in the very image of God himself. It is an egregious tragedy that so many entertain the perverted notion that intelligence and faith are mutually exclusive. C S Lewis once wrote: "If you are thinking of becoming a Christian, I warn you are embarking on something which is going to take the whole of you, brains and all."¹¹

Physical Development

The Scriptures do not ignore the physical aspect of the human being. There are three areas upon which we should focus in a discussion of the physical dimensions of responsible people. First, they are urged to keep their bodies pure. Second, children ought to be trained to cultivate their physical health as there is a divine responsibility to try to maintain good health so that one may serve God and accomplish one's mission on earth as effectively as possible. Proper eating habits, exercise, rest and recreation are part of a balanced life. Moreover, regardless of one's vocational aspiration, every youngster should be taught the value of vigorous physical labour. A youngster who does not learn the value of honest, diligent work will be crippled for life. Third, it is not inappropriate to suggest that clothing and attire, deportment and personal expression in word and deed are equally significant.

Social Development

As beings that have been fashioned in the image of God, humans are social creatures. As the poet expressed it, "No man is an island."¹² People need people. Responsible human beings need to know how to interact with others. It is truly a disaster when one ends his or her life as a miserable recluse - as did Howard Hughes, for example. That tragedy was compounded by the fact that Hughes's grandfather was a well-known gospel preacher! Children should be trained to get along well with their peers. Youngsters tend to become self-centred if they are not taught to share, and to be concerned for others. Young people ought to be nurtured by their parents in developing sacrificial and loving relationships, which ultimately can contribute to stable and happy marriages. Discernment in selecting close associates of high moral character is also a vital part of proper training.

At an early age children should be given domestic responsibilities and made to realise the value of financial management of whatever resources may come their way, as to learn how to be good stewards of those possessions entrusted them.

¹¹ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, http://pdbooks.ca/pdbooks/english/L/Lewis-C-S--Mere-Christianity/yudbwx_files/OEBPS/Text/Section0018.html, (Accessed on 11.03.2017).

¹² John Donne, *No Man is an Island*, <https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/no-man-is-an-island/>, (Accessed on 11.03.2017).

Spiritual Development

The most important dimension of human development is that of spiritual growth. It is an incredible phenomenon that so many parents, who are anxious about their children's intellectual, physical, and social welfare, are so flagrantly careless about religious and moral maturity. Even as parents pressure their youngsters to make good grades, may have strict rules about school attendance and socialising, they need also to show their children the value of religious choices. Parents have a role to cultivate early within their children a love for the religious values. In order to aid in this step Children can be taught that learning Christian values are an important engagement in life. The ultimate goal of all physical well-being, brilliant intellectual pursuits, and appropriation of social graces tend towards a spiritual destiny of human harmony with the Divine. Parents need to reflect upon the example left by young Jesus, and direct their own offspring in a similar course of living.¹³

Economic Growth and Human Development

Granted that longevity, education, and income are necessary factors of human development, they are not sufficient for people to reach the level of psychological and spiritual maturity that is required to overcome resistance to change and make decisions taking into account the common good. Human development is at the heart of the principles of Christian culture. It is so individually and collectively, for authentic human development always leads to the kind of social actions that seeks a fair balance between self-interest and the common good in the society. There are various parameters (principles) which speak about the path of human development embodied in the principles of Christianity. They are as follows:

Equity

This principle provides the equal opportunity of the citizens in terms of social, political and economic growth. Christians believe all people are made in the image of God and are loved by God. Jesus taught all people are welcome in the Kingdom of God, especially those excluded by society.¹⁴ Jesus had a positive attitude towards people of other religions. Jesus accepted all people and taught that everyone was deserving of love which is very vividly shown when he made an ostracized Samaritan as the hero of the parable of the Good Samaritan and when He praised a Roman officer saying he had not found faith like his even from Jews!

Freedom

The principles of Christian religion lead towards empowerment, democratic governance, gender equality, civil and political rights, and cultural liberty, particularly for marginalized groups defined by urban-rural, sex, age, religion, ethnicity, physical/mental parameters, etc. We live in a society committed to self-love and to each one doing his own thing, pursuing his own happiness, comfort, and peace. The mandate on the body of Christ is love for God and love for one's neighbour, the pursuit and promotion of the kingdom of God, doing not one's own thing, but denial of the self-life that one might be free to live for God and others, building on the

¹³ <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/97-jesus-christ-pioneer-in-human-development>, (Accessed on 11.03.2017).

¹⁴ <http://www.rsrevision.com/GCSE/shortcourse/equality/religions.htm>, (Accessed on 11.03.2017).

doctrine of 'Love One Another'. The New Testament has repeated injunctions and statements concerning human responsibilities to fellow humans.¹⁵

Social Progress

The history of social progress is an outcome of greater access to knowledge, better nutrition and health services. *Mater et Magistra* was written in observance of the 70th anniversary of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. It also refers to the social teaching of Pope Pius XI in *Quadragesimo Anno*, and of Pope Pius XII in a radio broadcast given 1 June 1941. The document mentions the following changes in the world since then: ¹⁶

Scientific advances including atomic energy, synthetic materials, increased automation, modern agriculture, new means of communication (radio and television), faster transportation, the beginnings of space travel are the few changes took place in the society. Some of the changes are: new social systems such as social security, improved basic education, breaking down of class barriers, and greater awareness of public affairs by the average person; lack of economic balance between agriculture and industry, and among different countries and in the political sphere, the breakdown of colonialism, independence for many states in Asia and Africa, and an increasing network of international organizations. A key theme of Christian social teaching is the notion of stewardship, a Christian principle that relates to the use of God's creation. The earth does not belong to the humans as to use selfishly. The earth is the Common human heritage and everything in it, the world and all who live in it have it as their home.¹⁷

Conclusion

In pursuance of the principles of Christianity, we are grateful for the gift of creation and we must therefore work towards ensuring that we raise the moral issues in our actions for ensuring the protection of above mentioned issues in the form of principles of human development. As an individual, as institutions and as a nation, we need a change of heart to preserve and protect the planet for our fellow creatures and generations to come by following the principle of sustainable development. We also need to protect the culture of peace to maintain social justice because perceptions of injustice lead to discontent, non-cooperation, conflict, civil unrest, and war. The principles of Christianity have been playing a powerful role in shaping ideas of social justice and legitimacy, and in responding to perceptions of injustice and illegitimacy e.g., passively accepting human suffering and injustice as the will of God and a badge of moral merit, or actively opposing them, and if so, whether by violent or nonviolent means. In 21st

¹⁵ <http://bible.org/seriespage/personal-freedom>, (Accessed on 11.03.2017).

¹⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mater_et_Magistra, (Accessed on 11.03.2017).

¹⁷ cfr. The two recent articles by Gopal Guru and Valerian Rodrigues take on Gandhi-Ambedkar debate and modes of creating the public sphere and democratic space through an ethical process of dialogical engagements. Gopal Guru, 'Ethics in Ambedkar's Critique of Gandhi', and Valerian Rodrigues, 'Ambedkar as Political Philosopher', in *Economic & Political Weekly*, 52 (April 15, 2017), 15. The Christian ideal of redemption as throwing light upon the discourse of Ambedkarian incorporation of Gandhi seeking redemption for Modern India, as argued by Gopal Guru and the need for incorporating the minority visions in creating the collective vision, as argued by Rodrigues as the Ambedkarian political philosophy makes room for the kind of attempt Ved Pal Singh is making in this article. (Editor's Note).

Century human development and human rights are to be enshrined in the core values of our reality. The stability and success of any country will not be secured until we are able to spread the principles of Christian culture in the form of bundles of ethics in activities of human beings.

Christians, like everyone else should work for increase in understanding and the ability to be tolerant of all citizens. Efforts for political and social change are to be pursued through constitutional means. The members of religious groups must work towards withdrawing their moral support for continued maintenance of systems of war and injustice, and make a significant contribution to the development of a culture of positive peace which will usher in the human development, which is the objective of not only Christianity but also all religions.