

Illustrate 5 of the 8 Religions We Have Studied

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Every religion has the fundamentals that are used to lay down the framework of the specific religion. The followers of the religion then ensure that these elements are followed and maintained on a regular basis so that they stay true to the original form. Therefore, we are going to illustrate the elements of religion based on our example of the Islamic religion (Harvey).

The first element is Ethics. These are rules about the way we should behave. They are often thought to come from a deity or a supernatural place, but they are sometimes seen as the guidelines that create the group over time. In the Islamic religion, Mohammad is considered as an exemplar. They derive their Islamic ethics from the Quran and the Hadith. The Quran possesses several commandments, which were followed by Muhammad. Therefore, the Hadith illustrates Muhammad as an exemplary human being whom Muslims should imitate in all aspects. Also, Muslims get their ethics through general virtues, i.e. they should practice the five pillars as a form of Islamic ethics.

The second element of religion is rituals. These are beliefs that are taught, explained, and made real through ceremonies. Like the other religions, Islamic religious practices and rituals are relatively few but of greater importance. Rituals are illustrated as the five pillars of Islam, which are five religious duties that every Muslim is expected to do. These pillars are mentioned in the Quran. They include "confession of faith, Alms tax, fasting during the month of Ramadan, pilgrimage to Mecca and Hajj."

The third element is sacredness, where the religion sees some things as sacred and not others. Some objects, people, actions, and places are used to express sacredness. In the Islamic religion, there are many things that simplify sacredness. Some of them include the Quran, which is the sacred book of worship. They also consider the mosque to be their sacred place of worship.

The fourth element is a material expression. These are the things that are being used to perform rituals or express beliefs. In the Islamic religion, the women use the headscarf to attend their prayers in the mosque and in different celebrations. The last element of religion is myths. These are the stories that explain the beliefs of the group. For instance, the Muslims believe that the Quran is their holy book, which was revealed to Muhammad by Allah through the angel Gabriel over twenty-three years.

2. What is the purpose of reincarnation in

Hinduism? What determines the life of which one is reincarnated? Elaborate... What marks the end of the cycle of reincarnation, and what happens to the soul/spirit?

Reincarnation, which is a major tenet of Hinduism, can be defined as the moment when the soul, which is seen as an external and also part of the spiritual realm, is taken to the physical realm of the new body. The soul is bound to the cycle of death and birth due to desires and also desire-ridden actions. Therefore, there are three main reasons for the reincarnation of the soul in the mortal world. They include attachment (Pasas), egoism (Anava), and also delusion (Maya). The Anava implies the feeling of being separate, distinct, and small as compared to other creatures. Egoism implies individuals are responsible for desired-ridden actions. Delusion is the mode of mistaking the real for the unreal and the unreal for the real.

The life of the person is determined by breath (pranas), senses (devas), mind (Karana Citta), and impressions (Samskaras) after reincarnation. Based on the Upanishads, the moment the person is almost dead, the senses are taken from the mind and the mind from the breath. The breaths, in combination with the subtle sense, gather within the soul and then enter the subtle heart that connects the entire body in the various channels of energy known as the Nadis and nerve centre. At this moment, the soul carries the residues of the mind, which consist of dominant desires and tendencies like latent impressions. All these become the blueprints for the next birth of the soul.

In the final stage, the person becomes very unconscious and then loses sight of everything. The souls, alongside the subtle sense, the breath, the subtle body, and also the residual mind, ascent upward from the heart all the way through an upward breathing channel called Udana until it reaches the head region. It then passes through the subtle opening found in the skull to the air, and then it reaches the Antariksha (mid-region). The moment the soul escapes from the body, a person remains with no life. The body is cremated, and the other elements are then returned to the other elements.

3. To explain the Buddha's notion of suffering, use the Four Noble Truths and elaborate on the following questions: What causes suffering? How do you minimize it? How does one become released from it?

"The Four Noble Truths is the contingency plan for dealing with human suffering." They include "the

existence of the suffering, the cause of suffering, the end of suffering, and the truth of the path that leads to the end of suffering.” Therefore, the cause of suffering in the human being includes ignorance, lies, and desires. Desire implies pleasure, immortality, and material goods, which are needs that can’t be satisfied. In the end, desire leads to suffering. On the other hand, ignorance is not being able to see the world the way it is. Without possessing the mind of insight and concentration, the mind of the person remains undeveloped and is unable to capture the truth about the nature of things. Ignorance is driven by vices like hatred, anger, and envy.

A person can minimize the suffering by determining the truth that surrounds the end of their suffering, which is the “Third Noble Truth.” This has two different illustrations, deciding to end the suffering in life either on earth or in their spiritual life by achieving “Nirvana.” The moment a person has achieved Nirvana, which implies the transcendent state that is free from suffering, then the worldly cycle that illustrates the birth and the rebirth and the enlightenment of the spirit would have been reached.

The person can be released from the suffering by setting up the truth chart of the methods that are necessary for attaining the end of the suffering, which is known by the Buddhists as the Noble Eightfold Path. The steps that are being used in the “Noble Eightfold Path include the right thoughts, the right understanding, the right speech, the right action, the right livelihood, the right effort, the right mindfulness, and also the right concentration.” Also, there are three different themes which are used to divide the path. They include “the good moral conduct (like the thought, speech, and understanding), meditation and the mental development (like the livelihood, action, and effort) and lastly is the wisdom or insight (e.g., concentration and mindfulness).”

Bibliography

Harvey, G. (2016). *Religions in Focus: New Approaches to Tradition and Contemporary Practices*, Routledge. New York: Cambridge University Press.