

PREFACE

In a bid to standardize higher education in the country, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has introduced Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) based on five types of courses viz. *core, generic, discipline specific, elective, ability and skill enhancement* for graduate students of all programmes at Honours level. This brings in the semester pattern which finds efficacy in sync with credit system, credit transfer, comprehensive continuous assessments and a graded pattern of evaluation. The objective is to offer learners ample flexibility to choose from a wide gamut of courses, as also to provide them lateral mobility between various educational institutions in the country where they can carry their acquired credits. I am happy to note that the University has been recently accredited by National Assessment and Accreditation Council of India (NAAC) with grade “A”.

UGC (Open and Distance Learning Programmes and Online Programmes) Regulations, 2020 have mandated compliance with CBCS for U.G. programmes for all the HEIs in this mode. Welcoming this paradigm shift in higher education, Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU) has resolved to adopt CBCS from the academic session 2021-22 at the Under Graduate Degree Programme level. The present syllabus, framed in the spirit of syllabi recommended by UGC, lays due stress on all aspects envisaged in the curricular framework of the apex body on higher education. It will be imparted to learners over the six semesters of the Programme.

Self-Learning Materials (SLMs) are the mainstay of Student Support Services (SSS) of an Open University. From a logistic point of view, NSOU has embarked upon CBCS presently with SLMs in English / Bengali. Eventually, the English version SLMs will be translated into Bengali too, for the benefit of learners. As always, all of our teaching faculties contributed in this process. In addition to this, we have also requisitioned the services of best academics in each domain in preparation of the new SLMs. I am sure they will be of commendable academic support. We look forward to proactive feedback from all stakeholders who will participate in the teaching-learning based on these study materials. It has been a very challenging task well executed by the teaches, officers & staff of the University, and I heartily congratulate all concerned in the preparation of these SLMs.

I wish you all a grand success.

Professor (Dr.) Ranjan Chakrabarti
Vice-Chancellor

Netaji Subhas Open University
Under Graduate Degree Programme
Choice Based Credit System (CBCS)
Subject: Honours in Sociology
Core Course : CC-VI
Course Code : CC - SO - 06
Sociology of Religion

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Netaji Subhas Open University

Under Graduate Degree Programme

Choice Based Credit System (CBCS)

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Core Course : CC-VI

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Sociology of Religion

: Board of Studies :

Members

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*Department of Sociology,
Jadavpur University*

Professor Soumyajit Patra

*Department of Sociology,
Sidhu Kanho Birsa University,*

: Course Writers :

Units 1-2 & 9-10 : Dr. Nibedita Bayen

*Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology,
P. R. Thakur Government College Thakurnagar,
Gaighata, North 24 Parganas.*

Units 3-4 : Professor Anirban Banerjee,

Department of Sociology, University of Burdwan.

Units 5-7 : Dr. Nabamita De

*Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology,
Adamas University*

Units 8,17-18 & 20 : Dr. Srabanti Choudhuri,

Department of Sociology, NSOU

Units 11-14 : Dr. Sutapa Ghosh,

SACT-1Barrackpore Rashtraguru Surendranath College

- Units 15-16** : **Dr. Suchismita Das,**
Assistant Professor in Sociology,
Government General Degree College, Mangalkote.
- Unit 19** : **Soumya Narayan Datta,**
NET Qualified, SACT-1, Howrah Bijoy Krishna Girl's College.

: Editor :

Professor. Partha Sarathi Dey,
Department of Sociology,
Kalyani University,

: Format Editor :

Dr. Srabanti Choudhuri
Assistant Professor of Sociology
Netaji Subhas Open University

Notification

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Dr. Ashit Baran Aich
Registrar (Acting)



**Netaji Subhas
Open University**

**UG : Honours in
Sociology
(HSO)**

**Core Course : CC-VI
Course Code : CC - SO - 06
Sociology of Religion**

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Unit 1. □ Formulating the Religious

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1.1 Learning Objectives

- Inter-Disciplinary comparison to understand the meaning and structure of this institution
- To know the function of religion through psychological and philosophical lenses
- To know the reason of changing significance of this institution
- To know how sociologists define religion
- To know about the relationship between craft, body and religion
- How do we incorporate our sense of time, space and reason in our religious practices
- Relationship between gender and religion
- To learn how to imply our disciplinary understanding about religion on our everyday experiences

1.2. Introduction

Religion today has once again come to the forefront of human concern as part of civil society even though for negative reasons. Late eighteenth century has seen the gradual decline of the overriding position of religion as institution, which was endorsed by the priest community along with monarchy throughout Europe and Asia. Again, after independence in India during nineteenth century when religious revivalism along with the western idea of secularism had started to establish new form of religion, we are now witnessing the wrath of communal violence, and religious conflict. While in Europe and in USA religion has shifted from its traditional role to “modern” one that allows abortion and liberty to women. In south Asian countries especially in India, national religious movements that have a political agenda are coming to the center stage of politics. We are witnessing a new form and political function of religion.

New researches are required to know the causes behind this kind of revival of new form of relationship between state and religion. It is quite significant that in the end of millennium with the end of model liberalization, the gap is filled by different religious model that is addressing all forms of citizen in modern day governance system. We may think Durkheim, Weber, Marx, and their theories would be beneficial in understanding such changing forms and functions. However, these stalwarts were critical about religion following enlightenment philosophy but in the present time, religion is questioning Enlightenment’s own argument about religion, individualism, and secularism.

People opined that enlightenment has given birth of dogmatism though euro- centrist that resulted in giving birth of colonialism that has curbed the freedom of choice of common people. New religious movements are also emerging globally to provide an alternative to the established religious rituals, ethics that are found oppressive and aggressive in nature. We are observing that use of various drugs have increased in the name of religious festivals. These kind of altering cultural practices have been raising questions about relationship between asceticism and accumulation of capital. Black magic and witchcraft are still persisting in our society. Therefore, this question comes in our mind that why we cannot completely rely on reason? Why don't we trust science? We have come a long way from the view of the secularization theorists that in the period of the enlightenment and scientific rationalism, the role of religion in society would decline, even die out. However, religion is reviving in new form like fundamentalism, a new ideology for nation building. Contemporary sociologists are once again questioning the role of religion in society, but there is no overarching theory that has emerged to explain such a powerful presence of religion. However, we can start our discussion from understanding the meaning of the word religion in the history of human society to know the trajectory of religion as institution, and its influence in profound ways throughout the world that is even until today.

1.3. Why do we study religion?

Religion as an oldest social institution is the key construct for understanding social life of a given society. Studying religion helps us to shed light on understanding the everyday struggle for existence by maintaining social order, of the majority of human being of different society spread across the world. It is seen that this social institution has potential as initiator that propels the process of social change. The impact of religion on human being reflects on their attitude towards caste, class, ethnicity, and other significant stratification. Therefore, religion plays significant role in explaining certain social action. However, religion helps in forming particular cultural practices through different ritual practices and believing in myths of different communities, which help those communities to maintain ties with their fellow community members throughout the world and above all forming their identity. In this regard, E.E. Evans-Pritchard's article *Nuer time –reckoning* can be read to know how people use religious believes, myths to connect their identity with time and space that is very different from European understanding of time, space and reason.

We have to know the different function of religion in different society along with the politics of using religion in shaping the cultural practices of particular community, tribe. Even study of religious practices specially the history of the evangelical missions of the different religious groups/community will help us to shed light on how religion was used to meet imperialistic wishes of different race, community and state. Using religion as modality to achieve particular political or economic intention has changed the meaning of social structure, psychology of people where religious missions were sent or used by colonizers to control the mind and body of the colonized people.

Do you know?

Jihad, (Arabic: “struggle” or “effort”) also spelled **jehad**, in Islam, is a meritorious struggle or effort. The exact meaning of the term *jihad* depends on context; it has often been erroneously translated in the West as “holy war.” Jihad, particularly in the religious and ethical realm, primarily refers to the human struggle to promote what is right and to prevent what is wrong.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/jihad>

Do you know?

The **Crusades** were a series of religious wars between Christians and Muslims started primarily to secure control of holy sites considered sacred by both groups. In all, eight major Crusade expeditions occurred between 1096 and 1291. The bloody, violent and often ruthless conflicts propelled the status of European Christians, making them major players in the fight for land in the Middle East.

<https://www.history.com/topics/middle-ages/crusades>

1.4. How does Sociology address religion?

It is tough to study history, anthropology, sociology, political science, literature, music, art, theater, psychology, education, or economics without understanding how religious views and ideals function in respective cultures throughout the world. Religion has been perceived by all disciplines as the social institution that is as old as human civilization.

It is found by sociology that religion can inspire and provoke, unite and polarize. It is the primary expression of humanity’s quest to find meaning and purpose. Understanding this phenomenon helps us explore the most basic questions of our existence. From politics and art to science and war, the study of religion opens a gateway to understand the world around us. However, religion as institution has given birth of several elements of material and non-material culture like place of worship, totem, and taboos. Along with these, subsystem like priesthood has been developed throughout the world, which has created

hierarchy amidst human being. Therefore, discipline like sociology became interested to know the structure and function of religion in society.

Since the emergence of the discipline, sociology happened under the umbrella of the age of reason on the verge of French Revolution (1789), to study the structure and function, reason of existence of cohesion of human society. Founding fathers, August Comte, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Karl Marx focused on studying institutions like religion to know the specific role and reason of development and consequences of this institution in the prolongation of the existence of human society.

According to Dillon (2003) the sociology of religion treats religion as an empirically observable social fact. It thus applies a sociological perspective to the description, understanding, and explanation of the plurality of ways in which religion matters in society. Sociologists who studies religion do not enquire to find God's existence or comparative study of intelligence of religion and science. Focus of sociology of religion therefore is on the identities and how religious practices and meaning associated with it changes.

Do you know?

The French Revolution was a watershed event in modern European history that began in 1789 and ended in the late 1790s with the ascent of Napoleon Bonaparte. During this period, French citizens razed and redesigned their country's political landscape, uprooting centuries-old institutions such as absolute monarchy and the feudal system. The upheaval was caused by widespread discontent with the French monarchy and the poor economic policies of King Louis XVI, who met his death by guillotine, as did his wife Marie Antoinette. Although it failed to achieve all of its goals and at times degenerated into a chaotic bloodbath, the French Revolution played a critical role in shaping modern nations by showing the world the power inherent in the will of the people.

<https://www.history.com/topics/france/french-revolution>

Classical social theorists Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, and Max Weber provide the early insights that have come to be associated with the critical, functionalist, and interpretive perspectives on religion in society. Interestingly, each of them predicted that the processes of modern secularization would gradually erode the significance of religion in everyday life. More recent theorists like Peter Berger, Rodney Stark (feminist), and John Caputo take account of contemporary experiences of religion, including what appears to be a period of religious revivalism. Each of these theorists contributes uniquely important perspectives that describe the roles and functions that religion has served society over time. When taken altogether, sociologists recognize that religion is an entity that does not remain stagnant. It evolves and develops alongside new intellectual discoveries and expressions of societal, as well as individual, needs and desires.

Comparative framework of classical understanding of sociology of religion :

Classical Thinkers	Major works on religion	Main argument
E. Durkheim	Elementary Forms of the <i>Religious Life (1921)</i>	<p>1. “A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them.”</p> <p>2. Religion is the product of human activity,</p> <p>3. He is not searching for an absolute origin, or the radical instant where religion first came into being. Such an investigation would be impossible and prone to speculation.</p> <p>4. He is investigating the social forces and causes that are always already present in a social milieu and that lead to the emergence of religious life and thought at different points in time, under different conditions.</p>
K. Marx	“On the Jewish Question” “On Religion”	1. “Man makes religion, religion doesn’t make man.

Classical Thinkers	Major works on religion	Main argument
		<p>Religion is the self-consciousness and self-esteem of man who has either not yet found himself or has already lost himself again.</p> <p>2. Religion is <i>not the creation of the bourgeoisie</i> but the resulting conditions of the historical systems of exploitation</p> <p>3. Marx proposes is that religion does not reflect man's true consciousness</p> <p>4. Religion comes to divert people's attention from their miseries, which are the consequences of exploitation.</p>
Max Weber	<p>The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism (two parts 1904, 1905)</p> <p>The religion of China (1913)</p> <p>The religion of India (1916-1917)</p> <p>Ancient Judaism (1917)</p>	<p>1. The theory also captures several significant socio-economic influences which distinguish western from the eastern characteristics.</p> <p>2. He also embarked upon, through the "method of difference", a comparative survey of the relation of economic ethics of world religions to economic life, and to underline "those elements of the economic ethics of the western religion which differentiate them from others."</p>

Classical Thinkers	Major works on religion	Main argument
		<p>3. His study promulgates that how far a particular sect of religion can influence the economic behaviour of its followers.</p> <p>4. Weber's main concern was to what extent religious conception of the world of existence have influenced the economic behaviour of various societies and specially the western society. Weber says that Calvinist sect of protestant Christian religion has strongest influences on the development of capitalism.</p>

In studying religion, sociologists distinguish between what they term the experience, beliefs, and rituals of a religion. **Religious experience** refers to the conviction or sensation that we are connected to “the divine.” This type of communion might be experienced when people pray or meditate. **Religious beliefs** are specific ideas that members of a particular faith hold to be true, such as that Jesus Christ was the son of God, or that reincarnation exists. Another illustration of religious beliefs is the creation of stories we find in different religions. **Religious rituals** are behaviors or practices that are either required or expected of the members of a particular group, such as bar mitzvah or confession of sins (Barkan and Greenwood 2003).

Do you know?

Religious experience

The conviction or sensation that one is connected to “the divine”

Religious beliefs

Specific ideas that members of a particular faith hold to be true

Religious rituals

Behaviors or practices that are either required for or expected of the members of a particular group

1.5 Arrival of religion as institution and human response

Every religion in this world has tried to formulate the myth about the origin of universe and human being. In those mythical stories like Adam and Eve which belongs to the Abrahamic religion human being's sin was given importance than his/her contribution. Similarly in other religions as Hinduism, numerous mythical stories as mythology are formed which were used to establish and continue practices like caste system. In Jainism and Buddhism that were later incorporated inside the rubric of Hinduism, focused more on human sufferings or human beings were given more value than myths and occult beliefs. Therefore, to understand religion from sociological point of view we need to know the different views towards religion that have developed in different parts of the world. Due to our limited scope, we are focusing here on Abrahamic Religion and Dharma as it developed in South Asia.

1.6 European understanding

Religion (from the Latin Religio, meaning restraint, or Relegere, according to Cicero meaning to repeat, to read again, or most likely Religioness, to show respect for what is sacred) it is an organized system of beliefs and practices revolving around, or leading to , a transcendent spiritual experience.

There is no culture recorded in human history, which has not practiced some form of religion. In ancient times, religion was indistinguishable from what is known as mythology in the present day and consisted of beliey in higher supernatural entities that were created and continued to maintain the world and surrounding cosmos. These entities were anthropomorphic and behaved in ways, which mirrored the values of the culture closely (as in Egypt) or sometimes engaged in acts anti-theatrical to those values (as one sees with the gods of Greece). Religion, then and now concerns itself with the spiritual aspect of the human condition, gods and goddess, the creation of the world, human beings place in the world , life after, eternity, and how to escape from suffering in this world or in the next; Every nation has created god in its own image and resemblance.

Do you know?

Ancient history as a term refers to the aggregate of past events from the beginning of writing and recorded human history and extending as far as the post-classical history. The phrase may be used either to refer to the period or the academic discipline.

Ancient people felt that no single god could possibly take care of all the needs of an individual. In the course of one's life in the present day, one will interact with one's parents,

siblings, teachers, friends, lovers, employers, doctors, gas station attendants, plumber, politicians and so on. No one single person can fill all these roles or supply all of an individual's needs just as it was in ancient world where these functions were fulfilled by specialists in their respective areas. In some cultures, a certain god or goddess would become so popular that he or she would transcend the cultural understanding of multiplicity and assume a powerful role. It transformed a polytheistic culture into a henotheistic one. While polytheism means the worship of many gods, henotheism means the worship of one god in many forms.

As noted, every ancient culture practiced some form of religion, but where religion began, exactly cannot be pinpointed with any certainty.

Do you know?

The **Abrahamic religions**, also referred to collectively as **Abrahamism**, are a group of Semitic-originated religious communities of faith that claim descent from the Judaism of the ancient Israelites and the worship of the God of Abraham. The Abrahamic religions are monotheistic, with the term deriving from the patriarch Abraham (a major biblical figure from the Old Testament, who is recognized by Jews, Christians, Muslims, and others).

Sourer : https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abrahamic_religions

1.7 Indian understanding of religion and Dharma

The word 'Dharma' has its root 'dhr'" meaning 'to uphold', 'to support', and 'to sustain'. The famous verse from Mahabharata says: "yadaayadaa hi dharmasya glaanir bhavati bhaarata. Bhagavad Gita, Chapter IV, Verse 7.

It is explained by scholars from both Europe and India that *Dharma* upholds people. That which upholds the created universe, supports it and sustains it, without which the universe just falls apart, is '*Dharma*'. Dharma sustains and maintains the social, moral, political and economic order. The word appears to be used in the sense of upholder, supporter or sustainer. Here *Dharma* is clearly used as masculine agent . In all other places, the word is used either in neutral or in masculine gender.

Dharma in its closer sense refers to religion in general and the practice of religion. We often find usages like *Baudha Dharma*, *Jaina Dharma*, *Hindu Dharma*, Here Dharma is used in the sense of religion. Interpreters like Heinrich Ziramer agree that Dharma 'comprises the whole context of religious and moral duties'. 'Dharma as the religion paves

the way for moral development and one experiences the religious life at its best through philosophical understanding of Dharma as expressed in the religion'. Religion, when practiced with a "dharmic" attitude, becomes truly human. The soul of religion consists in man's recognition of the essential ethical relationship between himself and his surroundings. Religion, as a collective mode of life, necessarily involves vision and a code of conduct.

All the major religions have their own scriptures which embody the preaching of their founders and these scriptures offer moral guidance to the adherents. As far as Hinduism is concerned, the Vedas stand as the revered sources of morality, both social and religious. The *Mimamsakas* establish and define religious duties in terms of the absolute authority of the Vedas. Religion inculcates the fundamental values through external sacred practices.

Religion plays an important role in the propagation of basic virtues and moral practices among people. *Dharma* is used as religion in many places; but religious interpretation of *Dharma* forms only a single phase of its vast meaning. Bhagavan Das says: '*Dharma* is not a mere other-world religion, but it is also every duty, every law, every proper and specific function of every thing or being in this and other worlds'. However, the well-known interpretation of Dharma treats it as a synonym for religion.

According to Dr. Iliia Ravi, 'Dharma is the central ethical concept in the post-Vedic Indian thought and it is the comprehensive ethical category in the light of which alone the rest of the ethical ideals can be understood'. It is the ethical approach that links philosophy with man and the society. As metaphysics forms the theoretical part of philosophy, ethics is the practical realm of those theories. In this sense, "*Dharmasastras*" are considered as the foundations of Indian ethics. *Dharma* in its social sense is equivalent to ethics.

1.8 Sociological reflection to the understanding of religion

After going through both European and Asian understanding of religion as institution and reflection in our social action, we will move towards sociological debates about the religious institution. In this debate, we will bring into other disciplinary approaches that have changed after French Revolution. This is significant to notice the change because economic institution is also changing along with other penultimate institutions like family, marriage, and approach towards class, caste, and race. However this attitude is not giving us any finite tool for explanation of any kind of social action rather helping us to develop different tools to understand different ,subtle change in religion and consequently other institutions.

1.9 Sociological definition of religion

It is clear from the above discussion that this institution has a chequered destiny. Human being has developed this institution for their own purposes in different situation of

their lives. Post- Enlightenment era, which is known as the age of reason, has given different understanding of religion. Sociologists followed this logic of modernity to explain the meaning and function of religion, which sociologists have believed to be scientific.

In this regard, we are following the approach of Peter Berger. He has tried to know different logics, which were applied by sociologists to understand religion. In doing this comparative analysis we will learn how to apply comparative method to understand the function and forms of the institution like religion which is itself critical in nature.

According to Berger(1967) sociological definition of the religion can be traced back through his arguments which is very relevant to know the trajectory of discourse about this institution. For him definitions cannot, by their very nature, be either “true” or “false,” only more “useful” or “less” so. For this reason, it makes relatively little sense to argue over definitions. If, however, there are discrepancies between definitions in a given field, it makes sense to discuss their respective utility. This we propose to do here, with the brevity appropriate to minor matters. For example, **Max Mueller’s** conception of religion as a “disease of language” (Essay on Comparative Mythology, 1856) is based on a very inadequate rationalistic theory of language, but it is still useful in pointing to language as the great world building instrumentality of man, reaching its most far-reaching power in the construction of the gods. Whatever else it may be, religion is a humanly constructed universe of meaning, and this construction is undertaken by linguistic means for another example, **Edward Taylor’s** theory of animism and his conception of religion based on this theory (Primitive Culture, 1871) start from the quite unacceptable notion of primitive man as a sort of imperfect philosopher and, in addition, have a far too narrow emphasis on the soul as the basic religious category. Yet it is still useful to recall that religion entails man’s quest for a world that will indeed be kindred to himself, that will be “animated” in this broader sense. In sum, the only sensible attitude in matters of definition is one of relaxed tolerance.

Emile Durkheim, in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, begins with a substantive description of religious phenomena, particularly in terms of the sacred/profane dichotomy, but ends with a definition in terms of the general social functionality of religion. It may also be said, in view of this, that Durkheim’s approach to religion is more radically sociological than Weber’s—that is, religion is grasped as a “social fact” in the precise Durkheimian sense. The alternative of substantive and functional definition is, of course, a constant in all fields of sociological analysis. Plausible arguments may be made for either choice and, indeed, one of the strongest arguments for functional definitions is that they permit a more unambiguously sociological, thus “neater” or “cleaner” line of analysis. I am not at all interested in taking a doctrinaire position in favor of substantive definitions at all times and all places, but only in defending the choice of a substantive definition here. The most convincing and far-reaching attempt to define religion in terms of its social functionality

is that of **Thomas Luckmann** (in his *Das Problem der Religion in der modern Gesellschaft*, 1963, English version, *The Invisible Religion*, 1967). This attempt is very clearly in the Durkheimian tradition, though it is augmented by general anthropological considerations that go considerably beyond Durkheim. Also, Luckmann is careful to differentiate between his conception of functionality and that of contemporary structural- functionalism. The functionality is grounded in certain fundamental anthropological presuppositions, not in particular institutional constellations that are historically relative and cannot be validly raised to a status of universality (as, for instance, is done by sociologists of religion fixated on the church as an institutionalization of religion peculiar to Western culture). Without going into the details of an extremely interesting argument, the essence of Luckmann's conception of biological and psychological necessities. [...] If one attempts to assign to religion its place in man's evolution, it seems not so much to be a lasting acquisition, as a parallel to the neurosis which the civilized individual must pass through on his way from childhood to maturity." From *The Future of an Illusion* (1927): "Our knowledge of the historical worth of certain religious doctrines increases our respect for them, but does not invalidate our proposal that they should cease to be put forward as the reasons for the precepts of civilization. Those historical residues have helped us to view religious teachings, as it were, as neurotic relics, and we may now argue that the time has probably come, as it does in an analytic treatment, for replacing the effects of repression by the results of the rational operation of the intellect."

Some of his most critical comments can be found in his text *Civilization and Its Discontents*. "The whole thing is so patently infantile, so foreign to reality, that to anyone with a friendly attitude to humanity it is painful to think that the great majority of mortals will never be able to rise above this view of life," he suggested. "It is still more humiliating to discover how a large number of people living today, who cannot but see that this religion is not tenable, nevertheless try to defend it piece by piece in a series of pitiful actions."

He further commented on sin as, "The different religions have never overlooked the part played by the sense of guilt in civilization. What is more, they come forward with a claim...to save mankind from this sense of guilt, which they call sin." Freud's psychoanalytic perspective viewed religion as the unconscious mind's need for wish fulfillment. Because people need to feel secure and absolve themselves of their own guilt, Freud believed that they choose to believe in God, who represents a powerful father figure.

Before Freud and Weber, Nietzsche developed his theory of "trans valuation" to do a comparative analysis between Christianity and Buddhism. His main objective was to know the function of morality that was introduced by Christianity on the European civilization. Nietzsche observed that religion had compelled common people to value death over life.

1.10 Function of religion : Psychoanalysis of Freud and sociological understanding

We need to shift our attention from sociological interpretation of religion, psychological analysis to understand the reason of embracing religion by human being. Human being develop have certain norms and values to maintain their comfortable lifestyle by surpassing uncertain and unexplainable life. Few human beings tried to use this nature of human being to develop different discourse about religion along with a canopy of beliefs and ideas that confine human being within certain types of social action. According to Marx, these actions are the result of false consciousness. People do not want to come out from their situation because of the fear of gradual degradation of their present condition. Freud explained this false consciousness with little elaboration. However, this explanation is the consequence of the scientific movement that brought modernity in Europe.

In some of his best-known writings, Freud suggested that it was an “illusion,” a form of neurosis, and even an attempt to gain control over the external world. In *The Future of an Illusion*, Freud wrote, “religion is comparable to a childhood neurosis.”

Among some of Freud’s most famous quotes on religion, he suggested that “religion is an illusion and it derives its strength from the fact that it falls with in our instinctual desires.” Sigmund Freud wrote this in his book *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1933). *Moses and Monotheism* was one of his final works prior to his death. In it, Freud suggested that “religion is an attempt to get control over the sensory world, in which we are placed, by means of the wish-world, which we have developed inside us as a result of biological and psychological necessities. [...] If one attempts to assign to religion its place in man’s evolution, it seems not so much to be a lasting acquisition, as a parallel to the neurosis which the civilized individual must pass through on his way from childhood to maturity.”

Some of his most critical comments can be found in his text *Civilization and Its Discontents*. “The whole thing is so patently infantile, so foreign to reality, that to anyone with a friendly attitude to humanity it is painful to think that the great majority of mortals will never be able to rise above this view of life,” he suggested. “It is still more humiliating to discover how a large number of people living today, who cannot but see that this religion is not tenable, nevertheless try to defend it piece by piece in a series of pitiful actions.”

He further commented on sin as, “The different religions have never overlooked the part played by the sense of guilt in civilization. What is more, they come forward with a claim...to save mankind from this sense of guilt, which they call sin.” Freud’s psychoanalytic perspective viewed religion as the unconscious mind’s need for wish fulfillment. Because people need to feel secure and absolve themselves of their own guilt, Freud believed that they choose to believe in God, who represents a powerful father figure.

Before Freud and Weber, Nietzsche developed his theory of “trans valuation” to do a comparative analysis between Christianity and Buddhism. His main objective was to know the function of morality that was introduced by Christianity on the European civilization. Nietzsche observed that religion had compelled common people to value death over life.

1.11. Functions of religion: Current approaches

In a functional aspect, religion emerges ‘in both individual and collective human life’ and in socio-political discussions, the collective aspect is important.

With regard to individual aspect, religion has psychological-social functions as Sigmund Freud mentioned man’s need for ‘God’. For Peter Berger, also, religion is as a kind of ‘canopy’, the Sacred Canopy, a social construction that projected a sacred cosmos and in so doing served to shelter individuals and society from a seemingly meaningless existence.

According to the above-mentioned views, however religion has many individual and social functions in society and the earlier research have investigated many of them such as psychological-social functions and influences. Here, the researcher reviews the social functions related to political function of religion. Nevertheless, before moving further, it is necessary to mention Nottingham’s three models of society. For investigating the role of religion in society, Nottingham uses three models, model one is a type of society in which religious values predominate, model three is a type of society in which secular values are in the ascendant, and model two is a combination of religious and secular values.

The functions of religion in model one are its roles in relation to the group and its members especially regarding socialization process for the individual. It acts as a factor of cohesion, integrating and stabilizing in the society as a whole, and promotes conservatism and fighting against change.

In model two societies, religion is not only a possible source of division and strife, but it also plays a creative and innovating role. It is understood as representing ethical values “higher” than the everyday standards of ordinary social life. In this model, like model one societies, the absence of highly developed scientific techniques, on one hand, leaves religion with an important function in helping to alleviate situations of stress, particularly those related to health and food supply. On the other hand, because of the stressful and disruptive nature of religious conflict, sociologists have emphasized the negative function of religion regarding such conflicts.

The functions of religion in model three societies are profoundly affected by the changing characteristic of religion. Religious divisions combined with the growth of

secularism greatly weaken religion's integrating function, and even its divisive power is somewhat blunted. Religious beliefs and practices, however, may serve an integrating function within the various organizations themselves.

However, values continue to contribute to the cohesion of the society. Evidence of this is the frequency, especially in times of stress, of public appeals to this common heritage of religious tradition. Presidents open their inaugurals with prayer, and in times of war or national danger the help of god is solemnly and publicly invoked. In the modern societies none of the above-mentioned types could be found unmixed.

In complex societies, moreover, the religion may play an innovative role in one part of the social structure and a conservative role in another. For instance, during the seventeenth century, according to Max Weber's analysis, when certain Calvinistic protestant sects played an innovating role in the emergence of modern capitalism, some branches of the Roman Catholic Church showed a conservative reaction. Therefore, religion may be viewed as performing simultaneously both negative and positive functions. According to Lamert, until a relatively advanced moment of evolution, moral and legal rules have been indistinguishable from ritual prescription that was not initially. Lamert says that 'nearly all the great social institutions have been born in religion. Now in order that these principal aspects of the collective life may have commenced by being only varied aspects of the religious life, it is obviously necessary that the religious life be the eminent form and, as it were, the concentrated of the whole collective life. Compared to industrial society in pre-industrial societies religion provided a guide to action and a basis for meaning. In addition, Compared to Primary societies, indeed, religion has been origin of most of development and evolutions of humankind. Some of Weber's arguments about ascetic Protestantism confirm this claim. Some of the sociologists have accepted Weber's interpretation of the basis for action in industrial society. In this relation, from a Parsonian perspective, Weber's comparative studies of Protestantism, Confucianism, Hinduism and Islam show the independent role of religious beliefs in shaping the economic organization of society.

1.12 How to deal with fundamentalism, new age spirituality sociologically

Religious sensibility, which Grace Davie (1994) referred to as "**believing without belonging**." People, especially young people, often say that they are 'not religious, but they are spiritual.' What does this mean for contemporary religious belief and practice? Firstly, surveys show that people retain fairly high levels of belief in God or supernatural forces, or belief in the efficacy of prayer or other ritual practices, even though they might never attend conventional churches or services. Secondly, the *orientation* to these beliefs and

practices has also changed. People are seeking more holistic, flexible, ‘spiritual growth’ oriented types of religious experience (Beckford, 1992). **New Age spirituality** — the various forms and practices of spiritual inner-exploration that draw on non-Western traditions (e.g., Buddhism, Hinduism, Indigenous spirituality) or esoteric Western traditions (e.g., witchcraft, Gnosticism) — is emblematic of this new religious sensibility but it also increasingly characterizes people with otherwise conventional religious affiliations.

Ruthven (2005) defines the common core of **fundamentalism** in different faith traditions as “a religious way of being that manifests itself in a strategy by which beleaguered believers attempt to preserve their distinctive identity as a people or a group in the face of modernity and secularization.”

The use of the term “fundamentalism” has its origin in the early 20th century Christian Evangelical and Pentecostal movements in Southern California. Oil tycoons, Milton and Lyman Stewart, sponsored a series of widely distributed pamphlets titled *The Fundamentals: A Testimony of Truth*, which presented a core set of beliefs said to be fundamental to Christianity:

- **Biblical inerrancy:** The inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible
- **Creationism:** God’s direct creation of the world
- **Divine intervention:** The existence of miracles
- **Divinity of Christ:** The virgin birth of Jesus as the son of God
- **Redemption:** The redemption of the sins of humanity through Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection
- **Pre-millenarian dispensationalism:** The Second Coming of Jesus, the end times, and the rapture.
- <https://opentextbc.ca/introductiontosociology2ndedition/chapter/chapter-15-religion/>

Comparative inkling of world religions:

World Religion	Origins	Beliefs	Rituals and Practices
Judaism Symbol: The star of David	Judaism began in ancient Israel about 4,000 years ago.	Followers of Judaism are monotheistic ,	Judaism has many rituals and practices that followers of the faith

World Religion	Origins	Beliefs	Rituals and Practices
	<p>The prophet Abraham was the first to declare that there was to be only one true God. Moses, centuries later, then led the Jewish people away from slavery in Egypt, which was a defining moment for Judaism. Moses is credited with writing the Torah, the sacred Jewish texts, which consists of the five books of Moses.</p>	<p>believing that there is only one true God. Israel is the sacred land of the Jewish people, and it is seen as gift to them — the children of Israel — from God. According to the Torah, Jewish believers must live a life of obedience to God because life itself is a gift granted by God to his disciples (Sanders, 2009). Followers of Judaism live in accordance to the ten commandments revealed to Moses by God on Mount Sinai. These commandments outline the instructions for how to live life according to God</p>	<p>carry out. Jewish people have strict dietary laws that originate in the Torah, called Kosher laws. The goal of these laws is not a concern for health, but for holiness. Examples of foods that are prohibited include, pig, hare, camel, and ostrich meat, and crustacean and molluscan seafood. Additionally, certain food groups are banned from being consumed when combined, for example, meat and dairy together (Tieman & Hassan, 2015).</p> <p>Other examples of Jewish rituals are the practices of circumcision and Bar and Bat Mitzvahs. These rites of passage for young boys (bar) and young girls (bat) mark the</p>

World Religion	Origins	Beliefs	Rituals and Practices
			<p>transition into manhood and womanhood. During these celebrations, the coming of age process is celebrated.</p> <p>Jewish followers also carry out multiple prayers each day, reaffirming and demonstrating their reciprocal love with God.</p>
<p>Christianity Symbol: The Cross</p>	<p>Christianity began in approximately 35 CE — i.e., the date of the crucifixion — in the area of the Middle East that is now known as Israel. Christianity began with recognition of the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth (Dunn, 2003). A poor Jewish man, Jesus was unsatisfied with Judaism and took it upon himself to seek a stronger connection to the word of God defined by the prophets. Thus, Christianity initially developed as a sect of Judaism. It devel-</p>	<p>Christian is to believe in the trinity of father, son, and holy spirit as one God: the God of love. Out of love for humanity, God allowed his only son to be sacrificed in the crucifixion to expiate their sins. Christians are admonished to love God, and to love their neighbours and enemies “as themselves.” They believe in God’s love for all things, have faith that God is watching over them at all times and that Jesus, the son of God, will return when</p>	<p>There are many rituals and practices that are central to Christianity, known as the sacraments. For example, the sacrament of baptism involves the literal washing of the person with water to represent the cleansing of their sins. Today, the ritual of baptism has become less common, however, historically the process of baptism was considered an integral rite in order to christen the individual and to wipe away their ancestral or original sin (Hanegraaff, 2009). Other sacraments include the Eucharist (or communion), confirmation, penance,</p>

World Religion	Origins	Beliefs	Rituals and Practices
	<p>oped into a distinct religion as Jesus developed a stronger following of those who believed that he was the son of God.</p> <p>The crucifixion of Jesus was the first of many tests of faith of Christians (Guy, 2004).</p> <p>A division emerged within Christianity between Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism with the division of the Roman Empire into East and West. A second division occurred during the Protestant Reformation when Protestant sects emerged to challenge the authority of the Catholic church and Papacy to be intermediaries between God and Christian believers.</p>	<p>the world is ready. Jesus is the exemplar of the religion, demonstrating the way in which to be a proper Christian. In the Christian faith, the theodicy, or the way that Christianity explains why God allows bad things happen to good people, is shown through faith in Jesus. If believers follow in Jesus' footsteps, they will have access to heaven. Unfortunate occurrences are acts of God that test the faith of his followers. Therefore, by maintaining faith in God's love, Christians are able to carry on with their lives when confronted with tragedy, injustice and suffering</p>	<p>anointing the sick, marriage, and Holy Orders (or ordination). However, not all sects of Christianity follow these.</p> <p>One of the core qualities and practices of Christianity is caring for the poor and disadvantaged. Jesus, a poor man himself, fed and nurtured the poor, demonstrating care for all, and is thus seen to be the exemplar of morality (Dunn, 2003). Christian churches are often institutions that demonstrate how to follow Jesus, running charities and food banks, and housing the homeless and the sick.</p>
Islam	Originating in Saudi Arabia, Islam is	Central to Islam is the belief that the God,	Islam outlines five pillars that must be up-

World Religion	Origins	Beliefs	Rituals and Practices
<p>Symbol: Crescent and the Star</p>	<p>a monotheistic religion that developed in approximately 600 CE. During this time, the society of Mecca was in turmoil. Muhammad, God's messenger, received the verses of the Quran directly from the Angel Gabriel during a period of isolated prayer on Mt. Hira. He developed a following of people who eventually united Arabia into a single state and faith through military struggle against polytheistic pagans. Followers of the Islamic faith are referred to as Muslims.</p> <p>Today, a division exists with Islam originating from disagreement regarding Muhammad's legitimate successor. These two groups are known as</p>	<p>Allah, is the only true God and that Muhammad is God's Messenger, otherwise known as the Prophet. God also demands that Muslims be fearful and subservient to him as He is the master, and the maker of law (Ushama, 2014).</p> <p>In Islamic faith, the Quran is the sacred text that Muslims believe is the direct word of God, dictated by the Angel Gabriel to Muhammad (Ushama, 2014).</p>	<p>held by Islamic followers if they are to be true Muslims.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Daily recitation of the creed (Shahadah) which states that there is only one God and Muhammad is God's messenger; 2) Prayer five times daily; 3) Providing financial aid to support poor Muslims and to promote the practice of Islam; 4) Participation in the month long fast during the 9th month of the Islamic calendar; 5) Completion of a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their life ("Pillars of Islam," 2008).

World Religion	Origins	Beliefs	Rituals and Practices
	Sunni's and Shia's, the former making up the majority of Muslims.		
Hinduism Symbol: Om or Aum	Hinduism originated in India and Nepal, however the exact origin of this widespread religion is highly contested. There is no known founder, differing strongly from the other religions discussed here, which have strong origin stories of the individuals that first posited the specific way of religious life (Flood, 1996).	The beliefs characteristic of Hinduism are a belief in reincarnation, and a belief that all actions have direct effects, referred to as Karma (Flood, 1996). In contrast with other world religions, Hinduism is not as strongly defined by what followers believe in but instead by what they do. The Dharma is what outlines a Hindu's duty in life, identifying individuals with a place within the dharmic social stratification system, or the caste system. This classification greatly dictates what a Hindu can and cannot do. Hindu followers believe in one God that is represented by a multitude of sacred forms known as deities (Flood,	In the religion of Hinduism, practice is more important than belief. One ritualistic practice that is carried out by Hindu followers is the act of making offerings of incense to the deities. This act of offering is seen as a "mediation" to open to the lines of communication between the sacred and the profane, or the deity and the individual. This correspondence is of great significance to Hindu followers (Flood, 1996). Another widespread ritual practice is yoga, which is a practice of holding postures while focusing on one's breath. Yoga is used to silence the mind, allowing it to reflect the divine world. This practice brings the

World Religion	Origins	Beliefs	Rituals and Practices
		1996). In Hindu religion, in death, only the body dies while the soul lives on. Individuals are reincarnated, surviving death to be reborn in a new form. This new form is believed to be dependent on the way in which the individual lived their life, with the proper way being identified as their acting in accordance to the duties of their caste position (Flood, 1996).	believer closer to unification with the divine.
<p>Buddhism</p> <p>Symbol: The Dharma Wheel (the eight spokes of this wheel represent the eightfold path).</p>	<p>Buddhism refers to the teachings of Guatama Buddha. It originated in India in approximately 600 BCE. Buddha, originally a follower of the Hindu faith, experienced enlightenment, or Bohdi, while sitting under a tree. It was in this moment that Buddha was awakened to the truth of the world, known</p>	<p>Buddhists are guided through life by the Dharma or four noble truths.</p> <p>1) The truth that life is impermanent and therefore generates suffering such as sickness or misfortune;</p> <p>2) The truth that the origin of suffering is due to the existence of desire or craving;</p> <p>3) The truth that</p>	<p>The noble eight-fold path includes eight prescriptions: right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. These outline the “middle path” between the extremes of sensualism and acseticism, which gives rise to true knowledge, peace, and Enlightenment (Tsersing, 2005).</p>

World Religion	Origins	Beliefs	Rituals and Practices
	<p>as the Dharma. Buddha, an ordinary man, taught his followers how to follow the path to Enlightenment. Thus Buddhism does not believe in a divine realm or God as a supernatural being, but instead follows the wisdom of the founder (Rinpoche, 2001).</p>	<p>there is a way to bring this suffering to a halt and achieve release from the cycle of suffering and rebirth;</p> <p>4) The truth of following the eight-fold path as a way to end this suffering (Tsering, 2005).</p> <p>This path consists of the 'right' view to carry out one's life. Buddhists believe in reincarnation, and that one will continue to be reborn, requiring them to continue the study of and dedication to the four noble truths and the eightfold path until Enlightenment is achieved. Only then will the cycle stop. Therefore, the end to suffering is only reached through the cessation of the craving or desire that drives the cycle of rebirth (Tsering, 2005).</p>	<p>A key ritual practice of Buddhism is meditation. This practice is used by followers to learn detachment from desire and gain insight into the inner workings of their mind in order to come to greater understandings of the truth of the world. In the Buddha's example, meditation on breath or on chanted mantras, which are often key passages of the Buddha's sutras (teachings), is a key practice to reach the place of Enlightenment or awakening.</p>

Source: <https://opentextbc.ca/introductiontosociology2ndedition/chapter/chapter-15-religion/>

1.13. Relationship between women and religion

Feminist theories of religion analyze and critique the ways in which sacred texts and religious practices portray and subordinate—or empower—women, femininity, and female sexuality (Zwissler, 2012). Theorists within this area of study look at religion’s contribution to the oppression or empowerment of women within society, as well as provide analyses of the challenges that women face within different religious practices. The crucial insight into religion that forms the basis for feminist research is the *gendered nature* of religion (Erikson, 1992). Women’s place and experience within religious traditions differ significantly from men’s. Feminists therefore argue that questions about gender are essential for a meaningful analysis and explanation of religion.

In one line of inquiry, feminist theorists of religion have analyzed the representation of women within sacred religious texts, identifying and critiquing the way women are portrayed. For example, the gender of the deity is an issue for women, particularly in the monotheistic Abrahamic religions such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism (Zwissler, 2012). God, within these religious beliefs, is usually understood as male. Mary Daly (1973), a feminist theologian, famously stated, “if God is male, then the male is God.” Individuals within these religious practices are socialized to see men and the qualities of masculinity as having greater importance than women and the qualities femininity, thus perpetuating the rationales and gender ideologies that legitimate women’s subordination in society. The question this raises is whether religion is therefore the direct cause of **misogyny**—the aversion or distaste for people of the female sex, including belittling, sexual objectification, sexual violence, and discrimination against women—or whether male-dominated religious practices are the product of broader gendered inequalities and societal norms outside of religion (Zwissler, 2012).

1.14. Conclusion

Religion is an institution that has helped human being to be united across the world. However, the unquestionable faith is the main pillar of this institution. The functions of religion can be varied and the impact of such functions have been assessed and modified by people as other social institutions have changed or formed to support human need for existence. The heteropatriarchal priesthood has tried to create differences amongst gender and human being by creating false notion of religion. The processes of salvation from mundane life have been informed by the priest as the main purpose of religion. Such malpractices to maintain power position of a group of people have given birth of critical

rituals and complex hierarchy. Sociologists have tried to explore the genesis of these institutions by studying Autochthonous communities and how gradually human beings have remodified religion during the post-industrialization era.

1.15. Summary

In summary, this chapter has tried to give you an idea about the history of the development of religion as an institution and its meaning in human life. Religion is the oldest form of institution that human beings ever built to maintain the balance and order of their social structure. Human beings may take the path of vertical development by constructing their doctrine of religion. They could not deny or abolish this institution from their lives. Religion is the self-claimed truth and more than that, it is a belief system.

1.16 Questions

A. Answer in detail

1. Write an account on how the festival of Durga Puja is an occasion where both asceticism and accumulation is reflected? Give examples
2. How do you address new age religious movements?
3. What is your opinion regarding religious fundamentalism.
4. Do you think, “God is dead”?

B. Answer briefly

1. Mention about one significant change in the function of religion
2. Write a short note on relationship between religion and gender

C. Answer very briefly

1. What do you mean by religion?
2. Differentiate between sacred and profane

1.17. References and Suggestive readings

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1.18. Glossary

1. **Abrahamic religions**, also referred to collectively as **Abrahamism**, are a group of Semitic-originated religious communities of faith
2. **Biblical inerrancy**: The inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible
3. **Creationism**: God’s direct creation of the world
4. **Divine intervention**: The existence of miracles
5. **Divinity of Christ**: The virgin birth of Jesus as the son of God
6. **Redemption**: The redemption of the sins of humanity through Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection

Unit 2. □ Asceticism and Accumulation

Structure of the Unit

2.1 Learning Objectives

2.2 Introduction

2.3 European tradition of Puritan asceticism and the mystical ethics of Asian religions

2.3.1 Development of asceticism and accumulation in Europe

2.3.2 Perception of asceticism and accumulation in South Asia

2.4 Forms of religious asceticism

2.5 Sociology of asceticism (classical thinking and twenty-first century thinking)

2.6 Conclusion

2.7 Summary

2.8 Question

2.9 References and Suggested Readings

2.10 Glossary

2.1 Learning Objective

- To learn about what is asceticism and accumulation
 - to understand social structure of Asceticism and accumulation
 - to find different Consequences of processes of asceticism and accumulation in different society
-

2.2 Introduction

Asceticism indicates a type of behavior that tends to submit impulses, passions, and desires of an individual to a systematic way of life in order to achieve what he considers his nature and which he feels called to. The concept of asceticism has paved the way towards its first and most wide spread practice within a religious environment and it can be found in all religions of salvation based on the constant practice of virtues that are pleasing to God.

According to Christopher Adair-Toteff (2015), Asceticism is the practice of self-discipline, self-denial, or self-restraint in order to achieve a certain goal. This goal can

be a physical one, but more often it is a spiritual one. The term 'asceticism' was used originally to refer to ancient Greek athletes who practiced it in order to increase their physical strength and maintain their mental discipline. The term 'ascetic' can be applied to athletes, warriors, artists, and politicians, but it is most commonly applied to religious figures. Ascetics can be found in almost every religion (Pfister, 1927: p. 571). There have been Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamic ascetics, but the term is most frequently used in conjunction with early and medieval Christian ascetics and specifically with monks. Different religions emphasize different ascetic practices, but there are five universal traits: fasting, sexual continence, poverty, seclusion, and self-inflicted pain (Heussi, 1936: p. 13; Kaelber, 2005: p. 527). The body is regarded as being evil; thus, there is a fundamental and critical opposition between body and spirit. For Christians, asceticism is the denial of the body; it is a means to an end. The sole goal is to see God. In order to do this, one believes it necessary to 'flee the world,' to leave it as humanly possible without dying (Harnack, 1904: pp. 84, 95, 101–102, 106). The focus here is on early and medieval Christian asceticism and on the modern sociological study of it. Max Weber developed the sociological study of asceticism and introduced a new type of asceticism – the 'inner-worldly' asceticism of the early Protestants.

2.3 European tradition of Puritan asceticism and the mystical ethics of Asian religions

2.3.1 Development of asceticism in Europe

The origin of asceticism lies in the desire to discipline the body to achieve a goal that is given highest value in a given society in ancient Greece. According to Encyclopedia Britannica, athletes preparing for physical contests (*e.g.*, the Olympic Games) disciplined their bodies by abstaining from various normal pleasures and by enduring difficult physical tests. In order to achieve a high proficiency in the skills of warfare, warriors also adopted various ascetical practices. The ancient Israelites, for example, abstained from sexual intercourse before going into battle.

The ideal of training for a physical goal was converted to that of attaining wisdom or mental prowess by developing and training intellectual faculties. Among the Greeks such training of the intellect led to the pedagogical system of the Sophists—*itinerant teachers, writers, and lecturers of the 5th and 4th centuries BC who instructed in return for fees.* Another change in the concept of *asceticism* occurred in ancient Greece when the notion of such training was applied to the realm of ethics in the ideal

of the sage who is able to act freely to choose or refuse a desired object or an act of physical pleasure. This kind of involvement training the mind against a life of sensual pleasure, was exemplified by the Stoics (ancient Greek philosophers who advocated the control of the emotions by reason).

Many factors were operative in the rise and cultivation of religious asceticism: the fear of hostile influences from the demons; the view that one must be in a state of ritual purity as a necessary condition for entering into communion with the supernatural; the desire to invite the attention of divine or sacred beings to the self-denial being practiced by their descendants the idea of earning pity, compassion, and salvation by merit because of self-inflicted acts of ascetical practices; the sense of guilt and sin that prompts the need for atonement; the view that asceticism is a means to gain access to supernatural powers; and the power of dualistic concepts that have been at the source of efforts to free the spiritual part of man from the defilement of the body and physically oriented living.

2.3.2 Perception of asceticism in South Asia

Among the higher religions (*e.g.*, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity), still other factors became significant in the rise and cultivation of asceticism. These include the realization of the transitory nature of earthly life, which prompts a desire to anchor one's hope in otherworldliness, and the reaction against secularization that is often coupled with a belief that spirituality can best be preserved by simplifying one's mode of life.

In India, in the late Vedic period (*c.* 1500 BC–*c.* 200 BC), the ascetic use of *tapas* ("heat," or austerity) became associated with meditation and *yoga*, inspired by the idea that *tapas* kills sin. These practices were embedded in the Brahmanic (ritualistic Hindu) religion in the *Upanicads* (philosophical treatises), and this view of *tapas* gained in importance among the Yogas and the Jainas, adherents of a religion of austerity that broke away from Brahmanic Hinduism. According to Jainism, liberation becomes possible only when all passions have been exterminated. Under the influences of such ascetic views and practices in India, Siddhârtha Gautama himself underwent the experiences of bodily self-mortification in order to obtain spiritual benefits; but since his expectations were not fulfilled, he abandoned them. But his basic tenet, which held that suffering lies in causal relation with desires, promoted asceticism in Buddhism. The portrait of the Buddhist monk as depicted in the *Vimaya* (a collection of monastic regulations) is of one who avoids extreme asceticism in his self-discipline. The kind of monasticism that developed in Hinduism during the medieval period also was moderate. Asceticism generally has no significant place in

the indigenous religions of China (Confucianism and Taoism). Only the priests in Confucianism practiced discipline and abstinence from certain foods during certain periods, and some movements within Taoism observed similar marginally ascetic practices.

2.4 Forms of religious asceticism

Abstinence and fasting are by far the most common of all ascetic practices. Among the primitive peoples, it originated, in part, because of a belief that taking food is dangerous, for demonic forces may enter the body while one is eating. Further, some food is regarded as especially dangerous were to be avoided. Fasting connected with religious festivals has very ancient roots. In ancient Greek religion, rejection of meat appeared particularly among the Orphics, a mystical, vegetarian cult; in the cult of Dionysus, the god of wine; and among the Pythagoreans, a mystical, numerological cult. Among a number of churches the most important period of fasting in the liturgical year is the 40 days before Easter (Lent), and among Muslims the most important period of fasting is the month of Ramadan. The ordinary fasting cycles, however, did not satisfy the needs of ascetics, who therefore created their own traditions. Among Jewish-Christian circles and Gnostic movements, various regulations regarding the use of vegetarian food were established, and Manichaean monks won general admiration for the intensity of their fasting achievements. Christian authors write of their ruthless and unrelenting fasting, and, between their own monks and the Manichaeans, only the Syrian ascetical virtues could offer competition in the practice of asceticism. Everything that could reduce sleep and make the resultant short period of rest as troublesome as possible was tried by Syrian ascetics. In their monasteries, Syrian monks tied ropes around their abdomens and were then hung in an awkward position, and some were tied to standing posts.

Personal hygiene also fell under condemnation among ascetics. In the dust of the deserts—where many ascetics made their abodes—and in the blaze of the Oriental sunshine, the abdication of washing was equated with a form of asceticism that was painful to the body. With respect to the prohibition against washing, the Persian prophet Mani seems to have been influenced by those ascetic figures who had been seen since ancient times in India, walking around with their long hair hanging in wild abandonment and dressed in filthy rags, never cutting their fingernails and allowing dirt and dust to accumulate on their bodies. Another ascetic practice, the reduction

of movement, was especially popular among the Syrian monks, who were fond of complete seclusion in a cell. The practice of restriction in regard to contact with human beings culminated in solitary confinement in wildernesses, cliffs, frontier areas of the desert, and mountains. In general, any settled dwelling place has been unacceptable to the ascetic mentality, as noted in ascetical movements in many religions.

Psychological forms of asceticism have also been developed. A technique of pain-causing introspection was used by Buddhist ascetics in connection with their practices for meditation. The Syrian Christian theologian St. Ephraem Syrus counselled the monks that meditation on guilt, sin, death, and punishment—*i.e.*, the pre-enactment of the moment before the Eternal Judge—must be carried out with such ardour that the inner life becomes a burning lava that produces an upheaval of the soul and torment of the heart. Syrian monks striving for higher goals created a psychological atmosphere in which continued fear and dread, methodically cultivated, were expected to produce continual tears. Nothing less than extreme self-mortification satisfied the ascetic virtues.

Pain-producing asceticism has appeared in many forms. A popular custom was to undergo certain physically exhausting or painful exercises. The phenomena of cold and heat provided opportunities for such experiences. The Hindu fakirs (ascetics) of India provide most remarkable examples of those seeking painful forms of asceticism. In the earliest examples of such radical forms of self-mortification that appeared in India, the ascetic stared at the sun until he went blind or held up his arms above the head until they withered. Syrian Christian monasticism was also inventive in regard to forms of self-torture. A highly regarded custom involved the use of iron devices, such as girdles or chains, placed around the loins, neck, hands, and feet and often hidden under garments. Pain-producing forms of asceticism include self-laceration, particularly castration, and flagellation (whipping), which emerged as a mass movement in Italy and Germany during the Middle Ages and is still practiced in parts of Mexico and the southwestern United States.

2.5 Sociology of asceticism (classical thinking and twenty first century thinking)

In sociology, Durkheim, Weber, and Troeltsch all ask themselves about the importance of asceticism in the edification of the modern world; for Durkheim

asceticism is the core of every religion and, as society and religion end up by amalgamating, it becomes inevitable in the behavioral ethos of the secular citizen.

Weber sees asceticism as a method to obtain the state of grace needed for the salvation of one's soul, for Troeltsch the ascetic dimension is not separated by a sort of implicit protest towards the surrounding society. Ranging from the cells of the monks to the austerity of the militants of the revolutions in every age, to the sacrifice for the city or country through all different levels of public duties, asceticism remains one of the elements that structures ethical behaviors raised to a voluntary methodology of social behaviors.

Weber and the rise of calculative rationality:

From the seminal work of Weber, we can understand the gradual evolution of the idea of asceticism and process of accumulation. Weber in order to know the relationship between the idea of accumulation of wealth for the sake of religious belief influenced him to find out the root cause of this kind of behaviour where people are earning money not for enjoyment. Weberian explanation of "Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism"(1904-1905) has relation with the growth of calculative rationality and the "expansion of large-scale bureaucracies and organizations". The only person who becomes the disseminator of the spirit of capitalism according to Weber is called 'inner worldly ascetic' who follows religion dogmatically and perceives or perform the will of the God in a calculative rational way. According to Weber, "A mystic, conversely, seeks to break with the established order, and is a very individual form of religious actor who leads a life of contemplation, rather than a life of action". According to Weber, neither otherworldly asceticism nor either of the two manifestations of mysticism was able to bring about change. Today's inner-worldly ascetics, moreover, tend to be fully engaged with neoliberalism, and therefore, tend not to provide long-term solutions to its shortcomings in this life.

Worldly Asceticism and accumulation

Weber notes that in the medieval world, asceticism drove the individual farther and farther from everyday life. With the Reformation, every Christian had to become a monk in everyday life, and through the whole life.

Distinction between inner worldly asceticism and other worldly asceticism:

INNER WORLDLY ASCETICISM	OTHER WORLDLY ASCETICISM
Inner-worldly mystics make no attempt to withdraw from everyday life.	Other-worldly mystics live in great tension with the world
Although they live a life of contemplation, they are still active in the day to-day routine of, for example, working at a job and being a member of a family.	They try to avoid any concerns connected with everyday life and aim to dissociate themselves from the world
Inner-worldly ascetics do not seek a union with God through contemplation	Other-worldly mystics and ascetics have withdrawn themselves from the everyday life of society, no social change can emerge directly from them.
They seek mastery of themselves according to their theology and pursue what they believe is God's will. They see themselves as God's instrument, and this is the type of religious actor that Weber believes steered the world toward capitalism	Catholic Social Teaching, which promotes the idea of working for a just wage and charging a just price, or in accordance with the ethics that Pope Francis (2013) proposes, that sees money as a servicing tool rather than a ruler of our society

Modern concerns:

From Marc Gopin's (2008) study we can get a different opinion about the role of asceticism in modern day world. He said, some renunciants have been deeply involved in social change – but that the renunciant tends to be focused on experimenting with alternative ways of living, trying to embody utopian values here and now, in private and social life. Typically, renunciants are less interested in denouncing than in relinquishing. Self-perfection through discipline and the letting go of wealth, power, and status must accompany social improvement.

One of the most important renunciatory movements in history began in the kingdom of Magadha in Northeast India sometime around the beginning of the sixth century BC. This movement gave birth to both Jainism and Buddhism and helped in the formation of Hinduism. In Jainism and Buddhism (also in Hinduism, though in a more complex way) renunciation became part of a comprehensive system of human

perfection, which included peace and nonviolence. This model of peacefulness was unique in the ancient world since it emphasized renunciation of violence against all living beings, human and nonhuman; integrated moral rules within a comprehensive system of training; and, in the case of Jainism and Buddhism, grounded these values in intimacy.

Many modern Buddhist organizations committed to peace and justice, such as the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, retain the traditional flavor of Buddhist renunciatory teachings, stressing simplicity of lifestyle, meditation, and the development of compassion. At the same time, lay people of both sexes have taken a leading role in many such organizations and there exists a degree of criticism of traditional monasticism both for its tendencies to disengage itself from the world and for its tendencies to compromise with secular powers.

The influence of the ancient Indian stream of renunciatory spirituality and its critique of dominant society and the war system extends beyond Asia. Both of the central figures in the development of twentieth-century nonviolence, Gandhi and Tolstoy, were deeply influenced by it, and it is, in part, through them that the renunciatory ideal has become entrenched in contemporary peace spirituality. Tolstoy was largely frustrated in his personal attempts to live a renunciatory existence, but Gandhi put his ideals into action. Gandhi became one of the most influential figures in the twentieth century through his ability to merge an ancient Indian ascetical ideal, buttressed by a solid grounding in the Hindu religious tradition, with an activism, cosmopolitanism, and political sophistication that allowed him to be understood outside his own tradition.

In addition to the transmission from India, there have been other, largely independent renunciatory traditions, including Jewish, Muslim, and Christian traditions, and these too have developed a critique of the war system. In Judaism, the Essenes were an early renunciatory sect that apparently experimented with a doctrine of non-retaliation, rooted possibly in early Biblical texts in Exodus and Proverbs that called for aid to one's enemy. In Islam, while the prophetic tradition has developed principles of just war, many powerful statements in favor of peace are found in the renunciatory tradition of Sufism in both the early and late period. During much of Christian history, radical renunciatory spiritualities with a strong critique of war and violence developed as conscious alternatives to dominant forms of Christianity. Some of these groups were denounced and persecuted as heretical by the Church. Anabaptism and Quakerism, so influential in bringing pacifism and peacemaking into the modern

world, were able to survive persecution, but pre-Reformation groups were often decimated. Few Waldensians and virtually no Cathars survived the medieval persecutions to carry forward their witness against violence. In the modern period, Roman Catholic renunciatory activism has been well represented by figures such as Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton, and Philip and Daniel Berrigan. Christian renunciatory traditions have been in direct contact with those originating in India and there has been an ongoing process of dialogue toward the formation of trans-sectarian peace spirituality.

Gendered asceticism :

Now we need to focus on the gender aspect of the asceticism and accumulation. It is seen that in every religion number of female ascetics are very less. According to the social anthropologist Meena Khandelwal (2004), who works largely in the area of women and sexuality, points out that Brahmanic orthodoxy reveals its misogynous tendencies by (attempting to) restrict renunciation to upper caste Brahman men but not the women. Thus renunciation and womanhood, semiotically and experientially, are meant to denote mutually exclusive categories. However, if we look into the history we will find women were allowed even during the time of Buddha to be ascetics but patriarchy never accept women ascetics or their role or contributions. The Brahmanic texts consider women as innately impure therefore they do not have a natural inclination to dharma. Texts such as the *Manusmriti*, and many centuries later, the *Strīdharmapaddhati* explain that women are supposed to follow a specific dharma (strīdharma), which depends on their nature (*strīsvabhāva*) and which is fully accomplished through marriage, householder life and the growth of children.

According to Bevilacqua (2017) women have always found ascetic paths to answer their religious quests. However, these paths were jagged by social obstacles, women often lived their religious experience as a private one or had to cut the social norms in a revolutionary way to follow them. As a result of this discouragement, female participation remains low to be acknowledged and to become a normal reality rather than an exceptional one by the Indian lay and ascetic societies. Asceticism was and still is a path to realize an individual empowerment for those women who deliberately choose it. In contemporary India, the role of female ascetics is improving, thanks to the new historical background: some have gained a position in traditional orthodox groups, others have created their own sect, and some others have become predominant activists in political and social movements. However, these female ascetics and gurus are still recognized as extraordinarily exceptional individuals. Women in the *sādhusamāj* continue to experience sometimes discriminations and

difficulties, as they cannot strive for the highest assignments but in exceptional cases and as outstanding characters.

These studies (Clementin-Ojha, Denton among the others) have shown that the reasons that could drive a woman to become an ascetic are not always connected to a religious call – which remains, according to the aforementioned studies, the main cause– but there may be critical, social or economic conditions. For this reason widows and all those women without the protection of a man can be subjected to economically precarious situations and can decide to begin an ascetic life as a more suitably dignified alternative. As Clémentin-Ojha reports (1998), a woman who walks out of society “tends to be suspected of wanting to misuse her freedom” and can become victim of sexual harassment. Therefore, the path toward asceticism for women was and still is much more difficult than for men, and the fact that a woman decides to undertake the ascetic path is often highly socially criticized. The ascetic choice is primarily seen as a self-determination that *lacerates*, at least to some extent, the usual image of female gender and sexuality as depicted by the Brahmani tradition, that is to be completely dependent on and submitted to the male dominating order. The presence of female ascetics and guru is accepted as exceptional, while the ascetic path for a woman is sometimes favoured to check the dangerous and unrestrained sexuality of a widow or a woman who cannot get married and must be put under the control of the society. In both the cases, the female ascetic is transformed into a socially benign, motherly figure, deprived of sexual and potentially harmful connotations.

As described by Denton, it is due to the processes of menstruation and childbirth that women are considered innately impure and sinful, and therefore lacking natural inclination towards dharma. Because of this impurity, a woman has to follow several ritual acts to achieve a pure state, and because of her supposed sinful nature, she has to be controlled and protected by a male authority (2004, 25-26). The *Manusmriti* argues that “Even in their own homes, a female—whether she is a child, a young woman, or an old lady—should never carry out any task independently. As a child, she must remain under her father’s control; as a young woman, under her husband’s; and when her husband is dead, under her sons’. She must never despite these normative presuppositions, there is evidence in the Indian literature that women were able to undertake ascetic path in several religious currents, especially those based on the feminine principle of divinity and those focused on bhakti (devotion), as well as in orthodox orders. As Marie-Thérèse Charpentier suggests, it is likely that those represented in dharmic *literature* are idealized women and idealized behaviours for

women, intended as symbols, which are not completely representative of women as agents (2010, 32). Ancient *Upanicads* portrayed women as intellectuals and experts of religious matters. Pechilis gives the example of the *Bhadāra Gyakopanicad* wherein three typologies of women are presented while interacting with the sage Yājñavalkya (2004, 12-13). Gārgī, a philosopher with a solid education in sacred knowledge, is described questioning Yājñavalkya on the nature of the Brahman seeking to live independently” (Olivelle 2008, 55).

Asceticism in the time of secularism, liberalism:

Since the time of enlightenment when the structure of the religion as institution has been compelled to change to survive in society, the idea of salvation, sexuality and celibacy also changed. However, neither church nor the priest nor the sub groups of different religions accepted this change gracefully. In Marxian analysis we find from Grossman that Marx, when discussing the subject of accumulation, distinguishes between ‘normal’ ongoing accumulation that takes place with the advance of capitalism and a ‘primitive’ form which was the precondition for the emergence of capitalism (1976 [1867]: 873).

Therefore, religious institutions have changed their attitude towards world. They are focusing more according to McRoberts (2003) on the activism. Religious institutions are opening their institutional spaces to provide shelter to both men and women. Different religious believers and practices of people are no longer considered as barriers to seek help during crisis. However, despite such changes among these religions the debate between worldly and otherworldly asceticism is still continuing.

2.6 Conclusion

Salvation from everyday crisis for food, hassles, and disease has been the central focus of rituals and believes of religion. One of the significant aspects of this salvation is to practice asceticism and accumulation. Human beings have understood since their hunting gathering life that controlled use of material resource of earth that is limited in amount would be the one of the significant moral, ethical practices to get the access for salvation. Therefore, protestants have developed the system of asceticism and accumulation by bounding their life on limited resource consumption etc. which according sociologists are the reason for development of ‘spirit of capitalism’. Social actions that have been developed by human being to remain acceptable and free from any kind of mental and physical constrains are found by sociologists as the key

elements to be studied to get the main reasons of development of different social institutions that have given shape to human society of a given society.

2.7 Summary

Asceticism sets a type of behavior that tends to check the impulses, passions, and desires of an individual. This is done to channelize man to a systematic way of life in order to achieve what he considers his elective nature and which he feels is his calling. The concept of asceticism has shown us the way towards an unique spread of a practice and a peculiar kind of behaviour within a religious environment. These can be found in all religions based on salvation that press on the constant practice of self-abnegation and inculcation of virtues that are pleasing to God.

2.8 Question

A. Answer in detail

1. Write an account on how the festival of Durga Puja is an occasion where both asceticism and accumulation is reflected? Give examples.
2. Critically examine the relationship between social change and role of asceticism in society.

B. Answer briefly

1. Write a note on forms of asceticism.
2. Distinguish between inner worldly asceticism and out worldly asceticism.
3. Critically explain asceticism of South Asia.

C. Answer very briefly

1. What is Calculative Rationality?
2. What is Protestant Ethic?

2.9 Reference and Suggested Readings

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2.10 Glossary

1. **Asceticism** :Asceticism may be defined as the voluntary abstention for philosophical or religious reasons from physical goods that are central to the well-being of humankind. Scholars do not wholly agree on the reasoning that distinguishes ascetic behavior from other forms of abstention. Most agree that ascetic abstention aims at rendering the practitioner morally acceptable before the divine.
2. **Accumulation**: Religion directly influences wealth accumulation by identifying valuable goals by providing a set of competencies that direct strategies of action, and by contributing to social contracts that provide information and opportunities that can enhance wealth ownership.
3. **Secularism**: Separation of religious institutions from state institutions and a public sphere where religion may participate, but not dominate.
Freedom to practice one's faith or belief without harming others, or to change it or not have one, according to one's own conscience.
Equality so that our religious beliefs or lack of them doesn't put any of us at an advantage or a disadvantage.
4. **Theological liberalism**: Theological liberalism is a form of religious thought that establishes religious inquiry on the basis of a norm other than the authority of tradition. It was an important influence in Protestantism from about the mid-17th century through the 1920s.

Unit 3 □ State, Religion & Emancipation

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3.5.2b.2 Keshab Chandra Sen(1838-1884)

3.5.2b.3 Ramakrishna Paramahansa (1834-1886)

3.5.2b.4 Swami Vivekananda (1862-1902)

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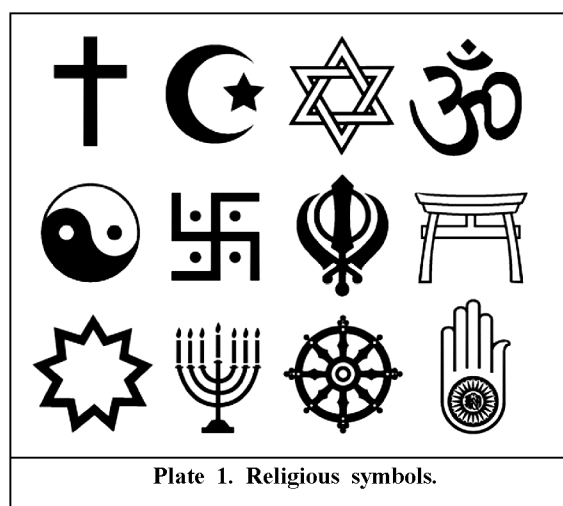
3.1 Learning Objectives

In this part you will learn about the following :

- What is religion?
- What does Sociology of Religion discuss?
- Relation between religion and the state

- Marx's view of the relation between religion and the state
- State and Religion in India—the role played by religious fundamentalism in contemporary India—the use of state power to break the secular fabric of India.
- The Hindu theory of Emancipation
- Emancipation in Buddhism
- Emancipation in Christianity
- Emancipation in Islam

State, Religion & Emancipation



3.2. Introduction

In this unit you will learn about the Sociology of Religion. In all societies people engage in some sort of religious activity. In India, for example, days in which religious festivals are held are treated as public holidays. India is a country of diverse religions, like Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism. There are also minor religions, like Parsis and tribal religions like the *Sarna* religion (Sekhar 2017:94-106). There are countries, like Saudi Arabia, Great Britain, etc. where one religion (Islam in Saudi Arabia, Protestantism in Great Britain) is the state religion. India, however, has no state religion. India is a secular country according to our constitution. That is India favours no religion. All religions get equal treatment in India.

3.2.1 Definition of Religion

The study of any phenomenon, whether natural or social, should begin with a definition. As Durkheim rightly pointed out, the sociologist ought to first define the phenomenon he treats, in order that his subject matter may be known. (Durkheim 1962:34; Banerjee 2014:40) So, we first define religion before we proceed any further. Let us begin with dictionary definitions. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* defines religion as 1. The belief in a superhuman controlling power, esp. in a personal God or gods entitled to obedience and worship; 2. The expression of this in worship; 3. A particular system of faith and worship; 4. Life under monastic vows (*the way of religion*); 5. A thing one is devoted to (*football is their religion*) (Thompson 1995:1161). With regard to the meaning of religion given in the dictionary, items 1-4 come within the scope of our study. *The Compact Oxford Reference Dictionary* defines religion as follows -1. the belief in and worship of a God or gods; 2. a particular system of faith and worship (Soanes 2001:705).

Till now we looked at the common sense meaning of religion in the English language. Now let us examine religion from a sociological perspective. *The Oxford Dictionary of Sociology* has given a comprehensive sociological explanation of religion which is cited in full.

Religion is a set of beliefs, symbols and practices (for example, rituals) which is based on the idea of the sacred and which unites believers into a socio-religious community. The sacred is contrasted with the profane because it involves feelings of awe. Sociologists have defined religion by reference to the sacred rather than to a belief in a god or gods, because it makes social comparison possible. For example, some branches of Buddhism do not involve a belief in God. Religion is also contrasted with “magic” because the latter is thought to be individualistic and instrumental. (Marshall 1998:562; Scott & Marshall 2003:643).

3.2.2 The Sociology of Religion

The Sociology of Religion deals with religion as a social phenomenon. It deals with religion as non rational, collective and symbolic elements. For the sociologist of religion, religion is not some meaningless mumbo jumbo but a response to the human need for meaning. Religion is about symbol and ritual rather than belief and knowledge. The growth of scientific knowledge is therefore irrelevant to the social functions of religion. The Sociology of Religion has been bound up with the problem of defining religion and distinguishing it from magic. (Scott & Marshall 2003:644).

There are two main traditions in the sociology of religion. The first is the Durkheimian tradition. From Émile Durkheim's definition of religion in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, three elements of religion emerge.

The first distinction between the sacred and profane. The sacred is the realm of the extraordinary, the transcendental. The profane, on the other hand, pertains to the ordinary, the mundane.

The second element in religion is faith or belief. Thus belief in a personal God may form part of religion.

The third element in religion is its organization.

All religions have an organization termed by sociologists as “Church”.(Banerjee 2002:72). The Durkheimian tradition was interested in the social functions of religion. The Durkheim scholar, Alpert identified four types of functions: disciplinary, cohesive, vitalizing and euphoric. (Banerjee 2002:86).While discussing the social functions of religion, Durkheim, however, ignored the political role of religion in society. Yet political conflicts over religion have been going on even in the 21st century.(Banerjee 2002:89-90).This is what we propose to take up in this Unit.

The Weberian tradition is more concerned with theodicy and the salvation drive. The science of studying the problem of evil is called **Theodicy**. Weber identified two orientations-mysticism and eroticism. He was especially interested in religious attitudes towards economics and eroticism. In his the *Protestant Ethic and the spirit of Capitalism*, Weber showed how the ideology of Protestant which creates an inner worldly asceticism leads to capital accumulation and the growth of capitalism. (Scott & Marshall,2003:645).

In this part, Unit 1, you will learn about the relation between state, religion and emancipation.

In this Section we will study—

- i) What is the relation between religion and the State?
- ii) How can religion lead to emancipation?

3.3 Religion and the State

The relation between Religion and politics has been intensively studied. A Google search on ‘religion & politics’ on 9th November,2019 yielded about 1,10,00,00,000 results.

3.3.1. The State defined

Before we proceed further , let us define the **State** .The *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics* defines the State as follows: ‘A distinct set of political institutions whose specific concern is with the organization of domination , within a delimited

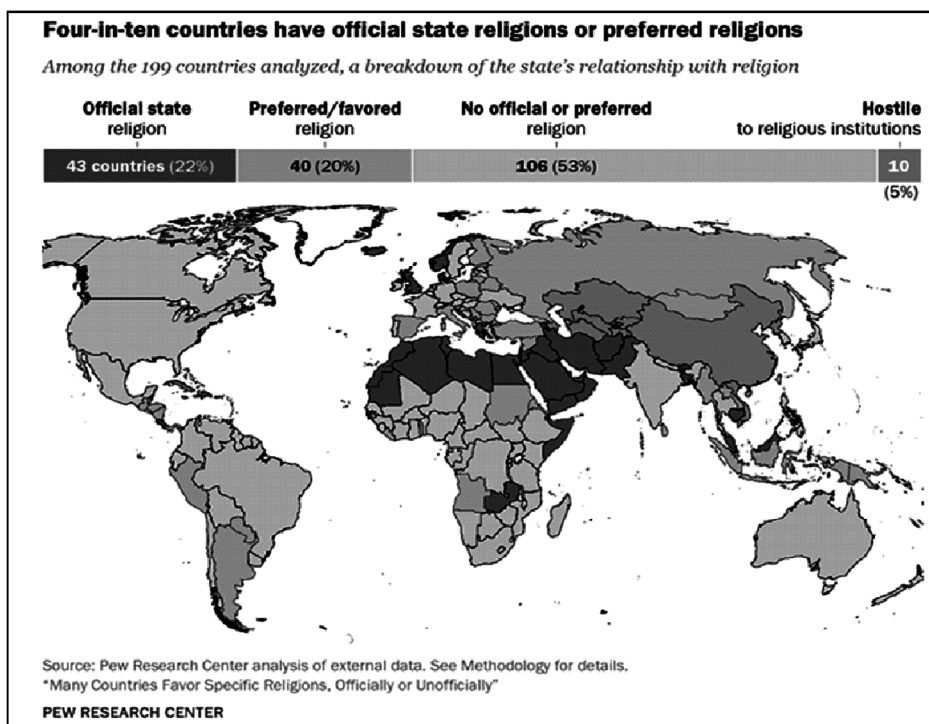
territory' (Varese 2003:512). The State may be sociologically defined as a distinct set of institutions that has the authority to make rules that govern a society. It claims, as Max Weber said, a monopoly on the use of violence. Hence the state includes the armed forces, the bureaucracy and the judiciary, the national council of elected representatives, among other things. Hence the state is not a unified entity. (Scott & Marshall, 2003:726).

3.3.2. Relation between religion and the State

Pew Research Centre (2017) found that more than 80 countries prefer a specific religion. Analyzing 199 countries, Pew found that 43 (22%) countries have an official state religion, 44 (20%) have an favoured religion, 106 (53%) have no preferred religion and 10 (5%) are hostile to religion. (See Map1)

Based on Pew (2017), we may classify the countries as follows:

1. States with an official religion.
2. States with a favoured religion.
3. States with no official or preferred religion
4. States that are hostile to religion.



1. States with an official religion.

In these states a particular religion (Islam in Saudi Arabia) is officially favoured. The State does / does not provide any benefit to the particular religion concerned. Pakistan, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia and some countries of Africa fall within this category.

2. States with a favoured religion

In such countries the state clearly pursues policies designed to favour a particular religion over others. The state provides legal or financial benefits to the favoured religion. They may or may not mention the religion in their constitution. If there are many religions in the country, the state does not treat all religions equally, they make a promise to do so.

3. States with no official or preferred religion

The majority of states do not have any official or preferred religion. In these countries the states treat all religions equally. In their constitutions also they talk about religious freedom. India, for example, has Right to Freedom of Religion as a fundamental right. The USA gives tax exemptions to all religions equally.

4. States that are hostile to religion.

These states, which are hostile to religion, exercise great control over religious organizations. They take combative positions towards religion in general. The state seeks to tightly restrict the activities of religious organizations, undermine their legal status, control their funding, the activities of their clergy and political activities.

3.3.3. Relation between The State and Religion : Marx's View

In his writings, Karl Marx spoke about the relation between religion and the State. In an editorial in the journal, *Kölnische Zeitung*, Marx raised two major questions. Firstly, should philosophers discuss religious issues in journals? Secondly, should journals in a Christian State discuss politics? Marx himself answered these two questions. Firstly, any journal worth its salt has a duty to discuss religious issues. In his answer to the second question, Marx argues that when religion becomes a political issue, journals are bound to discuss political issues.

Making a historical analysis, Marx showed that there is a deep connection between organized religion and the state. The worst kind of state is a theocracy. Like

ancient Byzantium, here there is no freedom, either religious or political. In his opinion, a state cannot become a theocracy if it does not trample upon the religious rights of the people. That is why, Marx was against Theocracy. In 'The Jewish Question' Marx showed that in theocracies, politics is coloured in religious tones and religion in political tones. As a result, religion loses its substance and politics decays. (Bandyopadhyay,1998:165-166)

Does not our protean experience support Marx? Iran, since the Islamic Revolution (1979), has been a Theocracy ruled by Mullahs. In Taliban ruled Afghanistan (before 2001) minorities had no rights, neither religious rights nor human rights. Iran may be an Islamic democracy but religious minorities have no rights. Which way is contemporary India going?

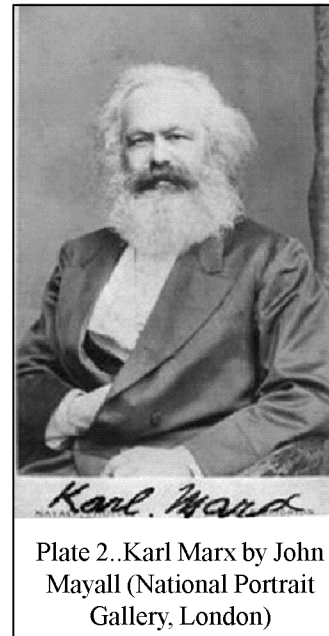


Plate 2..Karl Marx by John Mayall (National Portrait Gallery, London)

3.4 Religion and the State in India

We will now discuss the relation between state and religion in India . Before we proceed any further, let us discuss the character of the Indian state. The 'Preamble' to the *Constitution of India* makes it clear that India is a 'Sovereign, Socialist, *Secular* Democratic Republic...' (Cited in Goel ,2018).The secular character of the Indian State has been repeatedly emphasized in various judgments of the Supreme Court, like S.R.Bommai Vs Union of India, Bal Patil vs the Union of India and M.P.Gopalkrishnan Nair vs State of Kerala (Cited in Goel ,2018).

But what is *secularism*? According to *Compact Oxford Reference Dictionary*, the word 'secular' means (a) not religious or spiritual, (b) of (clergy) not subject to or bound by religious rule (Soans 2001:757). From common sense definition, now let us look at some scientific definitions. According to *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*, the secularization thesis implies that in modern industrial societies religious beliefs, practices and institutions lose social significance. (Scott & Marshall, 23 : 75). According to *Concise Dictionary Politics*, 'secularization' simply means the detachment of the state or other body from religious foundations. (Byrd 03 : 481).

Now these definitions of 'secularism' or 'secularization' apply to western countries only. As Shashi Tharoor said in an interview to Chatham House in 2018,

where he had gone to promote his book, *Why I am a Hindu*, India is *not* 'secular' in the western sense. Here all religions are equally treated. Unlike in some western countries, there is no divorce between the Church and State (Tharoor 2018). The state permits display of religious symbols. Political leaders, including heads of state and governments (i.e., President, Prime Minister, Chief Ministers) regularly visit places of religious worship. For example, recently it was reported that Mamata Banerjee, Chief Minister of West Bengal, has decided to visit the Siliguri Gurudwara on the occasion of the 550th Birth Anniversary of Guru Nanak, founder of Sikhism. That apart, she will also participate in the *Rash Utsav* of Coochbehar's famed Madan Mohan Temple. In this manner the Chief Minister intended to send a message that she respected all religious communities. (Telegraph 2019). Goel (2018) states that the state has no official religion. Some of the provisions of the constitution clearly discuss the type of secularism that prevails in India. Thus articles 15 & 16 declares that discrimination against any person on grounds of religion and caste are prohibited. Right to practice religion is granted in 25-28. Article 44 makes it a fundamental duty of the state to enact uniform civil laws. The State has been enjoined to prevent the slaughter of milch cattle in article 48.

3.4.1 Religion and Politics in India

Now let us discuss the relationship between religion and politics in India. India has six major religions. They include Hinduism (79.80%), Islam (14.23%), Christianity (1.72%), Sikhism (1.72%), Buddhism (0.70%) and Jainism (0.39%). Other religions constitute 0.65% of the population. (Vide Bandyopadhyay, 2016, Table No.1. Table No.1.p.40). From this data, it is clear that India has religious pluralism. But this pluralism is in danger today.

From the 19th century itself, religious pluralism in India is under attack. The first salvo was fired by the Christians who ridiculed Hindu customs and traditions in order to make Hindus feel inferior to Christians and facilitate conversions. Hindus reacted with their own set of doctrines. Thus, the Arya Samaj launched the 'Shuddhi' movement to bring back all those -Muslims, Christians, etc., to the Hindu fold.

Sekhar Bandyopadhyay notes that there were two types of movements within Hinduism-reform and revivalism. Reform movements try to reform some aspects of Hinduism. Movements like that of Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj, etc., were reform movements. Their objective was to reform Hinduism. By contrast revivalism refers to a state of glorious past from which Hinduism has fallen. The revivalists intend to restore that lost period. Sekhar Bandyopadhyay has beautifully marked out the contrast between reform and revivalism. According to him, the reform movements

attempted to bring about changes in Hindu social organization from within and bring it in line with the new rationalist trends in the West. By contrast, revivalism is marked by a glorious Hindu past which is believed to have degenerated under the Muslims and threatened by the British. This glorification of Hindu institutions and practices over Muslim or Christian institutions boils down to the attempt to rationalize Hindu institutions and practices even to the point of offering articulate resistance to social reforms. (Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, cited in Bandyopadhyay, 2016:16).

3.4.2 Communal riots and the Partition of India

It is easy to blame any community for the partition of India. But why did they get alienated from the national movement in the first place? Citing Gyanendra Pandey, Sekhar Bandyopadhyay observed that Congress leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru offered a secularist view of the Indian nation. It was considered to be above the interests of the community. A binary opposition was visualized between secularism and communalism. Those who talked about community were declared anti nationals or communalists. This approach destroyed any possibility of a rapprochement between the Congress and the Muslim League (Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, cited in Banerjee, 2016:16). From this discussion, it is clear that while communalism is the enemy of religious pluralism, secularism, ignoring religious pluralism is equally dangerous.

3.5 Religion and Emancipation

All religions talk of emancipation or salvation. The *Compact Oxford Reference Dictionary* explains 'emancipation' as—

1. free from legal, social and political restrictions;
 2. free from slavery. (Soans, 2003:267) Salvation means in Christian theology, to, protect from sin.
- 2.a means of protecting someone from harm or loss. (Soans, 2003:741). In religion, salvation is used as equivalent to emancipation. In Hindu religion, for example, 'Moksha' means liberation from the cycle of death and rebirth. (Olivielle). The Buddhist conception of 'Nirvana' denotes a state of freedom in which all desires are extinguished. (Jayaram) In Islam, salvation (al Najat) is defined as the preservation from harm, delivery or loss. Therefore salvation in a sense also means freedom, freedom from all the above evils. (Imam 2017).

3.5.1 Hindu theory of emancipation

There is no unified Hindu theory of emancipation. The conception of emancipation varied with the passage of time. During the Vedic Age, Indians worshipped the forces of nature. Salvation could be obtained through prayer. During the Brahmanic period, salvation was obtained through sacrifices. The Upanishads discarded both the Gods and the priests and said that knowledge of the Supreme Power is necessary for salvation. Supreme knowledge is cosmic knowledge, knowledge of Brahmana. During the devotional period, marked by the *Bhagavad Gita*, salvation could be obtained by devotion to a personal God, e.g., Krishna (Table No.2).

Table No.2.Salvation in Early Hinduism (3500BC-250AD)

Age	Time Period	Type of Religion and society	Method of salvation
Pre-Vedic	3500 BC -2000	Polytheistic Religion	Not clearly articulated
Vedic	2000-1000	Nature worship	Prayer
Brahmanic &Upanishadic	600-250	Brahmans more important than Gods. Upanishads discard Brahmanic idea of sacrifice and Vedic idea of Gods and says that only knowledge of Supreme Brahman can lead to salvation.Society became legalistic. Code of Manu propa gated.Caste system becomes rigid .Birth determined caste and rank in society.	Sacrifices performed by Brahmin priests

Source: R.S.Lemuel:'Salvation according to Hinduism'

We find that during the Brahmanas and Upanishadic Period, society became more complex. The Laws of Manu prescribed a rigid social order in which birth became the basis of rank in society. Society was divided into four castes-Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra.Of these the first three castes were 'dwija', i.e., twice born. The occupations of these castes were also fixed.

- Brahmins enjoyed higher rank in society and engaged in literary and priestly pursuits
- Kshatriyas were second in rank. They were the aristocratic and martial caste. Their functions were to rule the country, protect the kingdom and engage in war.
- Vasishyas enjoyed the third rank. This caste was a motley caste. It included farming communities, artisans and merchants.
- Sudras - their task was to serve all the other castes.

3.5.2a Salvation in early Hinduism (250AD-1700AD)

During this period, salvation depended on the teaching of epics, like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, *Puranas*, the teachings of various religious sects and philosophical schools (Table No.3).

Table No.3. Salvation in the philosophical schools of early Hinduism (250AD-1700AD)

Nyaya	Meaning of knowledge way to salvation
Vaisasika	Atomic constitution of things
Sankhya	Explains origin of the world
Yoga	Explains the meaning of attaining ultimate perfection by controlling physical and psychological elements in human beings
Mimansha	Salvation will be obtained through ritualistic observance of the Dharma prescribed in the Vedas
Vedanta	Philosophy of the Upanishads.

Source: R.S.Lemuel: 'Salvation according to Hinduism'

From Table 3, we find that there are a large number of philosophical schools in India. But only two, Nyaya and Mimansha, offer a theory of salvation.

Salvation : How sects define it.

There were a large number of sects in popular Hinduism. Thus Saivism says that mere performance of religious ceremonies like bathing in sacred rivers, uttering a few mantras or prayers is adequate for salvation. In Vaishnavism, devotion to Lord Vishnu is adequate for salvation. Devotees of another sect, Ramaism, say that loving devotion to Lord Ram is adequate for salvation.

3.5.2b Salvation in modern Hinduism (1700AD-present)

3.5.2b.1 *Raja Rammohun Roy (1772-1833)*



Plate10.
Raja Rammohun Roy

In this period some Hindu leaders were influenced by Christianity. The earliest modern Hindu leader was Raja Rammohun Roy. He was a religious reformer. He accepted some truths from all religions. He was the founder of Brahma Samaj. He did not accept idol worship. He said that in order to attain salvation, one had to worship in a spiritual way. One of the first followers of Brahma Samaj was Prince Dwarakanath Tagore. Brahmans only recognize worship of the supreme Brahman.

3.5.2b.2 *Keshab Chandra Sen(1838-1884)*

Keshab Chandra Sen was a Brahmo who founded his own Samaj known as Church of New Dispensation. He tried to establish a synthesis of conflicting creeds of all religions. He taught that all religions are equally good. His main method was *Samadhi*, i.e., concentration on God. According to Keshab Chandra Sen all religions are equally good. Salvation can be obtained by following any religion.



KeshabChandra Sen
(1838-1884)

3.5.2b.3 *Ramakrishna Paramahansa (1834-1886)*

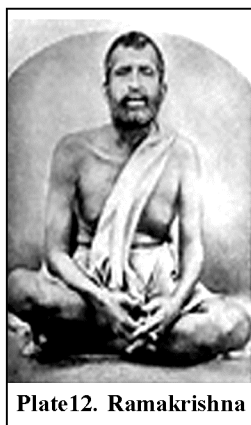


Plate12. Ramakrishna

Ramakrishna Paramahansa was a temple priest who rose to world fame after his death largely due to the efforts of his apostle, Swami Vivekananda. There is no doubt that he was a radical thinker. He practiced all religions-Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and came to the conclusion that God is one but there are many paths by which salvation can be attained. 'Joto mat tata path' is his famous saying. Like Keshab Chandra Sen, Ramakrishna also advocated *Samadhi*, i.e., concentration on God, as the main method one can follow to attain God. All religions are equally good, according to Ramakrishna. Salvation can be obtained by following any religion.

3.5.2b.4 *Swami Vivekananda (1862-1902)*

Swami Vivekananda was an apostle of Ramakrishna Paramahansa. His main teaching about religion was that no conversion should be attempted because no one is a sinner.

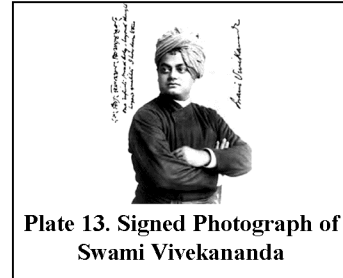


Plate 13. Signed Photograph of Swami Vivekananda

3.5.3 Emancipation in Buddhism



Plate 14. Image of Gautam Buddha at Mulagandhakuti Vihar, Sarnath.
Photo : Anirban Banerjee

3.5.3a Theravada Buddhism

The Buddhists use the concept of *nirvana* in their theory of salvation. According to *Cambridge Dictionary*, the state of nirvana is a state of freedom from all suffering that Buddhists believed can be achieved by removing all personal wishes (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/nirvana>, Accessed on 20-11-2019). According to Astore (2016), the concept of *nirvana* differs in Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism. The basic difference between two schools of thought is given in Table No. 4.

In Theravada Buddhism, it is argued that extinguishing all desires is the key to nirvana. Buddha himself spoke of discipline of mind and body. He said that those who are disciplined in mind and body, are temperate and do not enjoy anything in excess are closer to the path of nirvana. Suffering is due to ceaseless cravings of human beings-the desire for wealth, or fame, or bodily pleasures. Buddha says one who does not indulge in ill speech, is restrained in intake of food and drink, anger and other bodily extremes are nearer to nirvana. Through self cultivation and self discipline one can be closer towards nirvana. Nirvana not only means extinguishing all desires, all excesses, it also means extinguishing all sufferings associated with such desires and excesses.

Table No.4.The concept of Nirvana in Theravada and Mahayana schools of Buddhism

Buddhist Sects	Concept of Nirvana
Theravada	Nirvana can be achieved by abandoning desires.
Mahayana	Those who sincerely seek the path or salvation and spiritual awakening can more easily follow the path of nirvana than those who remain in ignorance.

3.5.3b Mahayana Buddhism

The concept of nirvana in Mahayana Buddhism differs from that in Theravada Buddhism. Mahayana Buddhists believe that those who sincerely seek the path of truth and spiritual awakening are closer to nirvana than those who are ignorant. They believe that seekers of nirvana should follow the path taken by Lord Buddha and try to become a *Bodhisattwa*. This is important because by believing they may reach the same level of awareness of the Buddha while they are alive. To Mahayana Buddhists, devotion is a central tenet to achieve nirvana. Moreover, those who are selfless, and free from shackles of life, may find it easier to achieve nirvana. The concept of nirvana in Mahayana Buddhism differs from that in Theravada Buddhism in one important feature. The Theravada conception of nirvana is predominantly negative. They advocate a life in which cessation of desires take place. *Nivana*, for Theravada Buddhists, takes place after death. The theory of Mahayana Buddhists gives the individual a positive role in the achievement of *Nirvana*. "The Mahayana tradition believes *Nirvana* is the cessation of one's belief that they are a distinct and unique individual, which may heighten one's concern for humanity as a whole, due to their having transcended the illusions of separation and duality". (Burt cited in Astore 2016). Thus the theory of nirvana of Mahayana Buddhists is not merely a theological

discourse but of profound sociological significance. For they say that nirvana cannot be achieved until all achieve it. From the individual plane advocated by Theravada Buddhism, Mahayana Buddhists transcend to the social plane.

3.5.4 Emancipation in Christianity



Plate 15. Basilica of the Holy Rosary, Bandel

According to the Bible, most people, the unsaved, will go to hell after death. But a minority might go to heaven.

Who will attain salvation? Those who are baptized, follow Jesus as their Lord, repent for their sins, do good works, and follow Church rituals and avoid certain specific behaviors. But there is no consensus on what precise combination of these factors will guarantee salvation.

3.5.4a Salvation in Early Christianity

The early Christians thought that one's works and belief in Jesus Christ were enough to ensure salvation. There were various schools of thought (Table No.5). Some say that salvation is permanent. Others say that sins may exclude people from Heaven. Some say that acts like murder, sexual abuse of children, same gender sexual behaviour will exclude people from going to heaven. The Bible is however vague on these points.

Table No.5.Salvation according to some schools of early Christianity

Schools	Salvation
Jewish Christians founded by disciples of Jesus	Salvation can be attained through sacrifices and following the dietary and behavioural rules prescribed in the Torah.
Gnostic Christians	Believe that Jesus was sent by God with special knowledge. Without this knowledge salvation is not possible.
Pauline Christians	Formed the movement that later became the Catholic Church believed that good works and baptism are essential for salvation, forgiveness of sins and heaven.
Nicene Creed	This was approved by 318 leaders at Nice in 325 CE. It linked Baptism to Salvation.

Adapted from ‘Religious Tolerance’

Modern Christian Concepts of Salvation

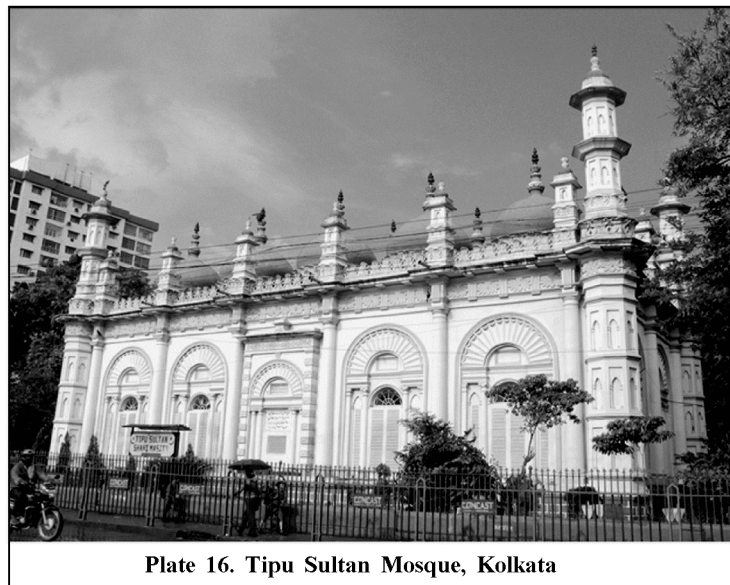
From Table No.4 we find that there was no consensus within early Christianity as to how salvation could be obtained.

Modern Christianity holds that only a minority will be saved. Adherents of other religions, like Hinduism and Buddhism, Islam and other religions will not be saved. Christian concept of salvation totally relies on belief in Jesus Christ. The works done by an individual have little merit. This is what Fundamentalists and Evangelists including Jerry Falwell, D. James Kennedy, Pat Robertson, Charles Stanley said. Charles Stanley claimed that Jesus Christ "*is the only way of salvation.*"

(Cited in Religious Tolerance)

3.6 Emancipation in Islam

Islam holds that worshipping God alone will result in salvation. Islam holds that one can worship God without intermediaries. God is all forgiving. Children are born without sin. People who commit sin will attain redemption if they repent.



3.7 Conclusion

To conclude, in this section we have discussed theories of emancipation of four major religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. We found that there are differences in the conception of emancipation between these religions. However, all agree that emancipation is possible. Where they differ is the path to be followed.

3.8 Summary

We have discussed the various dimensions of religion like its relation with state and salvation as well as emancipation.

3.9 Question

Short questions

1. How does the sociological definition of religion differ from the commonsense definition of religion?
2. How does the Durkheimian tradition approach the study of religion?
3. How does the Weberian approach to religion differ from the Durkheimian approach?
4. What is the State ?
5. How do Christianity and Islam differ in their conceptions of emancipation?
6. How does the concept of nirvana differ in Mahayana and Theravada schools ?
7. What is secularism?

Broad Questions

1. Discuss the relationship between religion and politics in modern India.
2. Discuss the relation between religion and emancipation with special regard to Hindu and Christian doctrines of emancipation.
3. How did the 19th century Hindu religious reformers view salvation?
4. Analyze the major forms of relations between the state and religion.
5. Briefly examine Marx's view of the relation between religion and the state

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Unit 4 □ Religion and Solitude

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Source: Abdulla-Al-Ghurair-Foundation-for-Education

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4.1 Learning objectives

In this part you will learn about the following :

- This unit is divided into three parts.
 - The first part introduces you to the study of solitude.
 - The second part discusses Thomas Merton's theory of solitude
 - The third part discusses some empirical studies on solitude
 - In the conclusion, the unit is summarized and discussed.
 - At the end there are some questions which will enable you to test your learning.
 - In addition, a Glossary is given to enable you to properly understand theological terms used in the text.
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4.2 Introduction

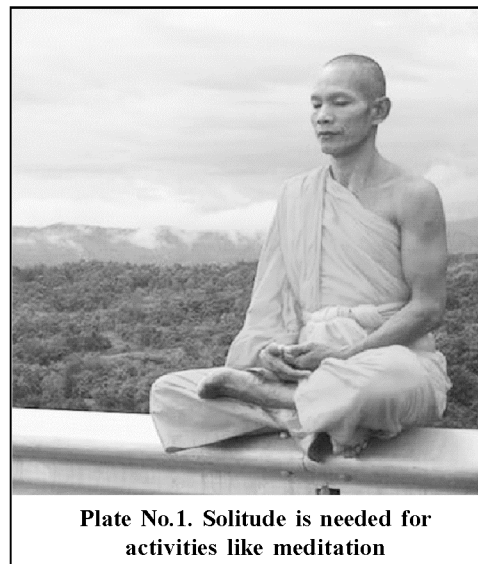
Let me begin with a story. Ralph Wolpe, the famous Rabbi, once told a story on the power of solitude. In his childhood, a famous seer, the seer of Lublin, used

to go to the woods to seek solitude. When his father worried, the child said “I go there to find God.” When his father said “But, my son, don’t you know, God is the same everywhere?” “God is”, said the boy, “but I am not”. A classic Rabbinical text said that Moses received the Torah, the sacred text of the Hebrews, from the Sinai. He needed the solitude. “No mountain solitude, no revelation” (Cain).

St. Anthony was one of the earliest Christian monks. He was determined to find God by totally isolating himself from civilization. He was born in a wealthy merchant family in Alexandria. Once during his youth, he heard a preacher recite the words of Jesus. “Go, sell everything you have and give it to the poor, and come and follow me.” He acted upon these words. At the age of 34 years he gave up his entire inheritance and retreated into the desert. He found an abandoned tomb and lived there alone for many years. St. Anthony lived in a mountain top cave in Egypt for 46 years. He only lived by prayer. St. Anthony learned to live with very little food and water. Today St. Anthony is considered to be the father of monks (Chumley, 2011).

4.3 What is solitude ?

Solitude is the art of being alone. It means avoiding distractions like radio, television, mobile phones and the Internet, and above all, the company of friends and relatives. We all need solitude to perform some tasks which require concentration, like studying for the examinations. But, according to theologians, solitude is a powerful spiritual discipline that is overlooked by many Christians (Mahoney 2017). The simplest way to practice spiritual solitude is to lock oneself up in a room for an hour or so. This alone time enables the believer to be with his /her God. In a nutshell, when one practices solitude, one voluntarily isolates himself or herself from society for some time to seek spiritual solace or spiritual enlightenment. The Buddha practiced meditation and did a lot of heart searching in solitude till he found enlightenment. Practicing solitude is different from solitary confinement which is a harsh punishment imposed on an unruly prisoner, or banishment from society, or



religious punishments like excommunication where a religious offender is forced to leave the spiritual society. The people who suffer these punishments are totally isolated from society, out of compulsion, not choice.

Sewell (1962) rightly observed:

“The quest for solitude is part of man’s unceasing quest for God. Today in an age of unprecedented noise, disturbance and restlessness, more people than ever long for silence and peace. It would be a poor state of affairs if the only way of finding them was by entering a monastery. (sic) Those who dwell in monasteries are supposed to be specialists in silence and solitude; but religious orders exercise an influence which extends far beyond the convent walls “(P.195).

According to Teahan,

“Silence and solitude have important roles in the history of religions. From the solitaries of Upanishadic Hinduism and early Taoism to the initiates of Pythagorean wisdom and early Christian asceticism, seekers have attempted to seek ultimate goals by cultivating quiet and living in seclusion.”(Teahan,1982:521).

Certain religious orders provide a modified form of the solitary life. They include the Carthusians, Camaldolese, and the Carmelites of the Discalced reform.(Sewell p.192)

4.3.1 Why do we avoid Solitude?

Being alone is a difficult task. Being alone forces us to confront everything in our lives –what we have done, what we did not do, what we should have done, etc. It is difficult to tell others that we want to spend some time alone, in quiet contemplation of the Almighty God. Yet without solitude, the spiritual aspects of our lives will not be complete. People need solitude to develop spiritually.

Man is essentially a social being. People are naturally gregarious. They want to socialize. They enjoy each others’ company. They want to enjoy life as it comes. But for the spiritually inclined, solitude is essential if they are seeking the company of God.

Citing the Bible, Spur (2011) said that in *Genesis* God is said to remark that it is not good for Man to be alone. So he gave Adam a companion, Eve.

Adam later said :

“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”(Cited in Spur,2011)

Thus in the Judeo- Christian social and religious history,” the heterosexual coupled state, for adults, is normative; the solitary state is eccentric”(Spur,2011). Celibacy is said to be the new taboo. But Spur argued that , though solitude has been undervalued in modern times, it is needed for psychological, emotional and spiritual well being (Spur,2011).

4.3.2 Why is solitude important?

Solitude is important for the spiritually inclined. It enables them to come closer to their God. Solitude enables them to meditate, to search for inner reality, to confront their problems, both worldly and spiritual, to come closer to the God they believe in. That is why we find that in many religious institutions, where the lay public comes, like Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata, or the Bahai Temple in New Delhi, there are rooms devoted exclusively to meditation. In these places, though one may be with many people in a single room, each individual is enveloped in his/her own world. The people in these rooms don't socialize –they are seeking solitude and spiritual solace through meditation. Solitude is, therefore, accompanied by social isolation.

In the Middle Ages, in England, solitude was not popular. Dam Noetinger , in his “Introduction” to Walter Hilton's, *The Scale of Perfection*, says that in England the cultivation of mystical theology appears to have met with scant encouragement in many older monasteries because they were preoccupied with temporal concerns and the same applies to the Mendicant orders which were very prosperous during that time and were involved in worldly business. Mysticism was found among hermits living in monasteries or in recluses shut into a cell in an adjoining church (Cited in Sewell ,1962:193).

Famous religious people preferred solitude. But they failed to get followers.

Thus the famous hermit of Sahara, Père Charles de Foucauld's original hope was to found a contemplative community in the desert; but in this he failed (Sewell 1962:191). William Sirr, better known as Father William , at first a member of the Society of Divine Compassion, spent his last years as a solitary recluse. He failed to gather around him companions for the special vocation of monkhood. In the end he wrote ‘I have not found a true monk’ (Sewell 1962:191).

Mendicant orders allow their followers to practice a degree of solitude. These mendicants included friars, priests, lay brothers, nuns, lay folk men , etc. They are arranged in three tiers.(Table No.1)

Table No. 1. Structure of Mendicant orders

Tier	Mendicant order
First Order	Friars, priests, lay brothers
Second Order	Enclosed contemplative nuns
Third Order	Lay folk-men, women, single or married, living in 'the world' and basing their spiritual life on the traditions of the order with which they are associated.

Adapted from Sewell (1962:195)

4.4 Thomas Merton on Solitude

In this section we will discuss the work of the famous Trappist monk, Thomas Merton. Our main source will be the work of Teahan (1982:521-538).

4.4.1 Life and Work

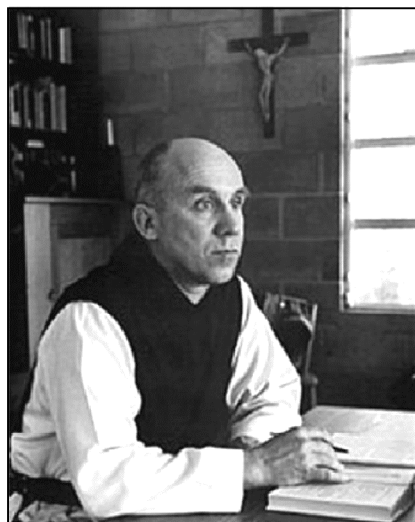


Plate No. 2.
The Reverend Thomas Merton
 (January 31, 1915-December 10, 1964)

Thomas Merton was born in Prades, France on 31st January, 1915. His father, Owen Merton, and mother, Ruth Jenkins, were both artists. Merton converted to Roman Catholicism whilst at Columbia University. On December 10th, 1941 he arrived at the Abbey of Gethsemani, a community of monks belonging to the Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance (Trappists), the most ascetic Roman Catholic monastic order. On May 26, 1949, Merton was ordained priest. In that year he published *Seeds of Contemplation*; *The Tears of the Blind Lions*; *The Waters of Siloe*. In 1951-55 he was Master of Scholastics (students for priesthood). From 1955-1965 he was Master of Novices.

Merton spent 27 years at Gethsemani. These years brought about profound changes in Merton's self understanding. According to Daniel Berrigan, Merton became the conscience of the peace movement in the 1960s. Merton became a strong supporter of the Non violent Civil rights Movement in the sixties. For his political

writings, Merton was severely criticized by Catholics and non Catholics alike. They claimed that Merton's writings were unbecoming for a monk. But, I ask, could a socially and politically conscious being, like Merton, ignore the events happening in the world and just immerse himself in solitude?

In his later years, Merton became interested in Asian religions, especially Zen Buddhism. The Dalai Lama praised Merton for his profound understanding of Buddhism. Merton died while participating in an East-West Conference on Religions. He died near Bangkok, Thailand, on December 10, 1968. This date marked the 27th Anniversary of Merton's arrival at Gethsemani. (The Thomas Merton Centre N.D.).

4.4.2 Major Works by Thomas Merton

Thomas Merton was a prolific writer. As will be evident from this list, all of his writings do not deal with spiritual issues. The following is a list of his major writings, culled from a list by The Thomas Merton Centre.

Man in the Divided Sea (1946)

Exile Ends in Glory (1947)

The Seven Storey Mountain (1948)

What Are These Wounds? (1948)

The Ascent to Truth (1951)

The Sign of Jonas (1953)

Bread in the Wilderness (1953)

The Last of the Fathers (1954)

No Man Is an Island (1955)

The Living Bread (1956)

The Silent Life (1957)

The Strange Islands (1957)

Thoughts in Solitude (1958)

The Secular Journal of Thomas Merton; Selected Poems (1959)

Disputed Questions (1960)

The Wisdom of the Desert (1960)

The New Man (1961)

The Behavior of Titans (1961)

Emblems of a Season of Fury (1961)

Life and Holiness (1961)
Seeds of Destruction (1964)
Gandhi on Non-Violence (1965)
The Way of Chuang Tzu (1965)
Seasons of Celebration (1965)
Raids on the Unspeakable (1967)
Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander (1967)
Mystics and Zen Masters (1967)
Monks Pond, Cables to the Ace (1968)
Faith and Violence (1968)
Zen and the Birds of Appetiten (1968)
Posthumous Publications:
My Argument with the Gestapo (1969)
Contemplative Prayer (1969)
The Geography of Lograire (1969)
Contemplation in a World of Action (1971)
The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton (1973)
He Is Risen (1973)
Ishi Means Man (1976)
The Monastic Journey (1977)
The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton (1977)
Love and Living (1979)

We have seen that Merton wrote on a variety of topics. But our study will concentrate only on Merton's theory of solitude. *The Silent Life* (1957), *Thoughts in Solitude* (1958), etc., are some of his works on solitude. We now discuss Merton's theory of solitude.

4.4.3 Merton's theory of Solitude

The intimate relationship between silence and solitude in Thomas Merton's writings is one of the most striking themes in his work (Teahan, 1982: 521). Silence and solitude attracted Merton before he joined the Trappists in 1941 and the search for ever deepening silence remained a powerful force in his life. Merton regarded silence and solitude as essential for a balanced view of life. Merton believed that he can find

true silence and solitude even in the midst of other people. Merton held that people should not seek silence and solitude in isolation but with reference to the community. For him, silence and solitude are not merely ascetic practices. His writings speculate about the mystical significance of silence and solitude in relation to God.

Merton's attraction to silence and solitude led him to join the monastery. During his early years in Gethsemani Abbey this attraction increased. In 1947 Merton wrote to Mark van Doran, his former Professor at Columbia University, "What grows on me most is the desire for solitude-to vanish completely and go off into some desert and never be heard of again - and pray and keep still".

4.4.4 Solitude and the community

Merton held that a priest's celebration of mass was essentially a private act which also benefited others. "It is at Mass that I am deepest in solitude and at the same time mean most to the rest of the universe". (Cited in Teahan,1982:526). Merton wrote in 1955 that "The life of every man is a mystery of solitude and communion: solitude in the secrecy of his own soul where he is alone with God; communion with his brethren, who share the same nature, who reproduce in themselves his solitude, who are his 'other selves', isolated from him and yet one with him" (Cited in Teahan,1982:526). Merton argues that the integrity of a community rests in its respect for solitude. Those seeking solitude should first be integrated in their community. He advised the seeker of solitude- "Do not flee to solitude from the community. Find God first in the community. He will lead you to solitude." (Merton cited in Teahan,1982:526).

In the sixties, Merton developed a dialectic between the monastic life and the community. The hermit relates dialectically to the **cenobium**[monastic community] because he has been nurtured by it because even after he enters complete solitude he must recognize his need for others. The community also supports the efforts of the hermit's struggle against self-deception, illusion and despair. The hermit provides a charismatic example to the lay people. Despite his solitude, the hermit should not become spiritually isolated from his fellow monks or the Church (Teahan,1982:526).

Merton further argued that the solitary's influence should extend beyond the monastery. Because the solitary life enables the monk to confront self-deception and bad faith the hermit must first come to terms with his own inner emptiness. The hermit is a testimony to the truth that solitude has meaning and value though the world may reject his views as eccentric. Yet the monk blazes a trail which is unknown to most.

4.4.5 Solitude and suffering

Exploring an uncharted territory is a painful and risky enterprise. Loneliness accompanies such enterprise. Merton also wrote about solitude and suffering. In his *Seeds of Contemplation* and *The Sign of Jonas*, Merton wrote that solitude enables us to recognize our limitations. From the sixties, Merton developed his theory of the relation between solitude and suffering. Merton warned that one should not romanticize solitude. The seeker of solitude should pursue it with utmost seriousness. "In prolonged separation from other men there is a real danger of delusion and mental derangement. The hermit life requires exceptional strength of character as well as special graces from God" (Merton, cited in Teahan, 1982:527). Merton thought that solitude and suffering are necessary to liberate the true self. "The discovery of the inner self", he pointed out, "is an act and affirmation of solitude" (Merton, cited in Teahan, 1982:527). Solitude purges the false self. Teahan observed that Merton's conception of solitude is partly ascetical (Teahan, 1982:527). Teahan further observed that solitude has an ontological dimension in Merton's thought. Merton depicted the goal of the inner journey as a mystical union shared by the contemplative and by God (Teahan, 1982:528).

4.4.6 What is true solitude ?

Merton wrote about God's solitude in *The Seven Storey Mountain*. Here Merton wrote about God's anguish and the author's wish to share it. According to Merton, true solitude is participation in the solitariness of God. Solitariness may be inferred as the doctrine that God has only one nature which is different from that of other natures. Merton regarded solitude as a divine attribute in many writings. Christ in the **Eucharist** is solitary because he exists in and solely for those who receive him. But, paradoxically, Christ is not solitary since he gives himself to all. Merton saw in the beings of the Trinity as the manifestations of solitude within their common entity. "The Father is alone in the Son and the Son is alone in the Father and the Holy Ghost is the solitude of love in which they are alone and One" (Merton, cited in Teahan, 1982:528). So, the Trinity shows at the same time divine solitude and union. The mystic participates in both. In solitude the mystic finds that "he and God are one : that God is alone as he himself is alone. That God wills to be alone in him." (Merton, cited in Teahan, 1982:528). Teahan explains : "When Man and God become one, they still remain apart, distinct, separate " (Teahan, 1982:528).

Teahan regards Merton's theology as quite orthodox. Merton always insisted on distinguishing between God and the divinized soul. He saw mystical union as having a solitary dimension. Interior solitude is central to his theology. Merton regarded

solitude as the highest religious experience. Merton's paradoxes highlights the immense significance he gives to silence and solitude in spiritual matters. The solitary, like God, remains alone and yet remains accessible , apart from the world , yet in service to it." (Teahan, 1982:528-9).

4.4.7 Merton theory of solitude and its application to his life

Merton did not isolate himself totally from society. In his letters, he expressed his wish to travel occasionally outside the monastery. But Dom James Fox, Merton's abbot, did not grant these wishes with one exception-to see the ailing D.T.Suzuki in New York and necessary visits to physicians in hospitals in Louisville. Merton expressed his wish to visit Mt. Athos, to attend a patricists' conference in Oxford, to visit Japan and Zen monasteries. But the abbot did not grant these requests because the Cistercian vow of stability requires that the monk stay at the monastery. Yet Merton's desire for travel was not frivolous. He wanted to deepen his religious understanding by studying other religions. He also criticized any interpretation of stability that would automatically prohibit all activities of the monks. "The true attitude...is to adopt a strict policy of separation from the world which nonetheless can obviously admit of obvious exceptions, and then pursue the course of judging by *discretio spirituum*" (Merton, cited in Teahan, 1982:530). A new abbot, who was elected in 1968, granted Merton's desire for travel to Asia. But this turned out to be his last. He died in Thailand.

Merton practiced what he preached. The final years of his life reflect his theory of solitude quite well. His correspondence, visitors, desire to travel, show that he did not use his theory of solitude to erect impassable barriers. He did need some solitude for study or meditation. But he never totally isolated himself from the modern world, writes Teahan (1982:531). Merton's writings on social injustice and monastic renewal and the value of silence and solitude reveals the dialectical relationship and responsibility he often stated in theory. Merton's own union of exterior and interior solitude allowed him to relate to others with compassion and care. "The true solitary", Merton wrote, in *Disputed Questions* "does not renounce anything that is basic and human about his relationship to other men .He is deeply united to them-all the more deeply because he is no longer entranced by marginal concerns" (Merton, cited in Teahan, 1982:531). Merton's theory and practice of solitude are generally coherent .

4.4.8 Silence and Solitude

Finally, Merton 's theory of the relationship between silence and solitude deserves our attention. He drew a distinction between "interior" and "exterior" silence. This is

similar to the one he made about solitude. Actual silence of the tongue should lead to a calm, non evaluative, creative and passive state more receptive to the influx of God. Merton experienced severe tensions between his monastic and writing vocations at different times of his life. He thought that a life of solitude should be reduced to writing. “But since no such correspondence occurred during his three **eremitical** years, the correspondence between his theory of solitude and his living of it was not perfectly realized”(Teahan,1982:531). The twentieth century had seen great attention being paid to silence in religious, literary and philosophical spheres. But we find little interest in solitude. Merton’s contribution lay in providing a philosophy of solitude. “One of the major legacies of Merton is his conjunction of silence and solitude”. (Teahan,1982:531).

4.4.9 Sociological significance of Merton’s theory of Solitude

To conclude this section, Merton was essentially a monk and theologian. He contributed to the theory of solitude in terms of Christian theology. But our question is “Why should we study Merton at all? What does he offer to the sociologist of religion?” Merton was not a sociologist in the sense of Durkheim or Weber. But there are sociological elements in Merton’s thought which we cannot ignore. Merton never detached the pursuit of silence and solitude from society. He never regarded the pursuit of God as being detached from society. Rather he spoke about the dangers of being totally detached from society. He spoke of men’s need for solitude. We not only need solitude for religious contemplation. We need solitude for other purposes also , like preparing for examinations, literary and philosophical pursuits , etc. Lovers need solitude to understand each other. Tired people need solitude to unwind and relax. The sociological significance of Merton’s writings lies in the fact that he pointed out the need for solitude in society.

We conclude by a quote from Merton’s writings. This is a statement from *Thoughts on Solitude* (1956). Here he discusses the social need for solitude.

“When society is made up of men who know no interior solitude it can no longer be held together by love: and consequently it is held together by a violent and abusive authority. But when men are violently deprived of the solitude and freedom which are their due, the society in which they live becomes *putrid*, it festers with servility, resentment and hate.”

4.5 Studies on Religion & Solitude

In this section, we will examine some studies on religion and solitude. Here we will study the following social groups :

1. Arab students in a non-Islamic country;
2. Christian Nuns;
3. Tibetan Buddhist Nuns

4.5.1 Arab students in a non-Islamic country

In the first case, let us examine the case of the lay public-in this case Arab students. Abunab HY, Dator WLT, Salvador JT, Lacanaria MGC (2017: 1701-1718) studied religion and solitude among Arab students. Arabian students are very much religiously inclined and have restrictive social practices. They focused on the necessity of quality of education, culture shock, the stigma and misconceptions about Arabs and Muslims in the non-Muslim world. The study was carried out in the Philippines and other countries with a population of Arab students.



Plate 3. Arab students

Source: Abdulla-Al-Ghurair-Foundation-for-Education

The authors came up with the following conclusions: 1) Arab students were discriminated against. This discrimination was the result of the impact of stereotyping and misconceptions about Arabs. 2) For the Arab students, the tenacity in the Islam faith became a coping mechanism and kept them enormously strong. Through their behavior, the Arab students tried to show, in their view, the real meaning of Islam. The authors found that the Arab-Muslim International Students experienced difficulties in living in a non-Muslim country and acquiring high quality education while they held on to their religious views and kept their culture intact. From this study, we learn that people of one religion may experience social isolation while living in a country with a different religion.

4.5.2 Christian Nuns



Plate4. Christian nuns praying in a convent

Another study done by Glòria Durà-Vilà & Gerard Leavey (Durà-Vilà & Leavey 2017 : 45-60) aimed to study the lives of nuns in a convent. Loneliness and social isolation are growing problems in western societies. They have a negative impact on people's psyche. But nuns prefer social isolation in their voluntary search for solitude. For it is

through solitude that one can communicate with God. The authors reported that though the nuns lived communally, they actively avoided each other's company. Human solitude was reported as necessary to be in perfect communion with God. Solitude was interpreted, not as social isolation but as vitally necessary for communicating with God.

4.5.3 Tibetan Buddhist Nuns

Monks have figured prominently in many discussion on Tibet and Tibetans. Religious life was open to women. Nunneries are found throughout Tibet. Many of them are located in isolated regions. Of the 618 nunneries, 271 were large, having 30 nuns each. Separate monasteries for men and women exist in Tibet. In their daily life nuns practiced Dharma, consisting of study, chanting and meditation (Plate 5.).

Except for those who were in retreat, each resident took care of the maintaining the monastery. The nuns were provided education.

4.5.4 The impact of patriarchy on Tibetan women

The number of women joining the monasteries were less than the number of men. Though Tibetan women enjoyed freedom, the patriarchal social structure ensured that though Tibetan women enjoyed great power within their household, they accepted roles as wives and mothers in accordance with the wishes of their parents. There were arranged marriages. Women who were spiritually inclined were not encouraged to join monasteries, but men were encouraged. Women were seen as requiring more protection and had less personal freedom than men. Factors like pregnancy, childbirth, etc., were regarded as factors which militated against women joining monasteries and taking vows of celibacy.

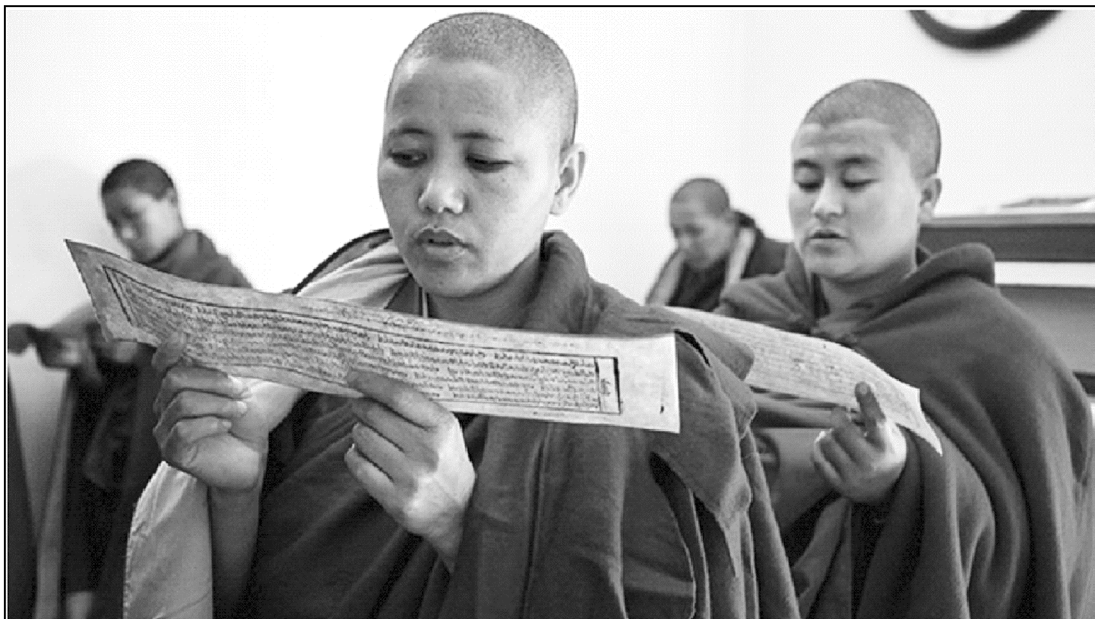


Plate 5. Tibetan Nuns praying

4.5.5 Life in a nunnery

How is life in a nunnery?

The following account of life in Geden Choeling Nunnery indicates how Tibetan nuns live.

6.00 AM. The daily schedule begins with chanting. After that breakfast along with bread and tea are served. After that communal areas are cleaned. After this

classes on logic are held in beginning and intermediate levels. From 10-11.30 AM the morning debating session is held. It is followed by a communal lunch with rice, buns, steamed vegetables, etc. There is a rest session. Grammar classes start at 2.00 PM. After this tea is served. The nuns have the time to study in solitude until the evening session begins.

From this brief description of life in Geden Choeling Monastery, we find that nuns do not always practice solitude. They have a communal life. Their lives not only revolve around meditation but also education. They only practice meditation and private study in solitude.

The same routine is not applicable in other monasteries. In the Mahayana Buddhist Nunnery in Dalhousie, 50 nuns are enrolled -from age of seven to twenty three. Most of them are orphans or semi-orphans. They hail from distant places, like Assam, Kinnaur, Mundgound and Tibet. The nuns follow the tradition of Karma Kagyu school. They specialize in ritual and meditation.

The nuns of Tilokpur are also well known for their practice of meditation. They specialize in rituals of Tara, Mahakal and other meditational deities. They pursue education outside the nunnery and in the process acquire valuable skills which will be of asset to the nunnery in future. Within the nunnery they have intensive Dharma practice with a minimum of conversation and a maximum of mindfulness. The nuns are skilled in dharma practice and are conversant with a wide variety of ceremonies including offerings of rituals and playing of musical instruments. But they also perform the day to day mundane task of managing the monastery on a rotational basis.

4.5.6 Spiritual retreat

At the time of writing (1987) the author Karma LekseTsòmo(1987),witnessed a three- year group retreat by nuns .This was the first three -year group retreat by women to be held in India and one of the few spiritual retreats in history. When the first group completed its retreat the second group will be selected on the basis of seniority. The intensive practice is expected to produce a group of highly qualified meditation instructors. They will serve as role models and teachers to other nuns in future. But , while these nuns underwent spiritual retreat , another group of nuns was chosen to serve them their daily needs of food, etc.Hence, for their bodily and other needs , these nuns were dependent on the monastic society.

The first Tibetan nuns to receive full ordination are members of this monastery. In 1984, four nuns from this monastery travelled to Hong Kong to participate in the

bhiksuni ordination ceremony held at Po Lin monastery. Six more nuns became *bhiksunis* in 1987.

4.5.7 Character of Tibetan nuns

Studying several monasteries in India, including Geden Choeling Nunnery, Mahayana Buddhist Nunnery in Dalhousie, Keydong Thukche Choeling Nunnery, the Samten Choeling Nunnery, Jangchub Choeling Nunnery, Khkchu Gaykil Nunnery, Karma Lekse Tsòmo(1987) concludes that the Tibetan nuns are very humble and self effacing in nature .They are content to practice their religious rituals in solitude. They are very much interested in educating themselves. But the higher spiritual learning continues to be the preserve of male monks. Having little access to educational facilities, women lost faith in their capabilities. They turned to meditation instead. But in India educational opportunities for young nuns are increasing .They receive high school education on a par with young men.

4.6 Conclusion

In this unit we have studied the relation between religion and solitude. Solitude is the art of being alone. We need solitude to study , to meditate , to go into spiritual retreat, to do tasks which require intense concentration. Religious practices are intimately linked to the practice of solitude. Meditation requires intense concentration. It also requires social isolation. That is why we find that when nuns go into spiritual retreat, though they remain members of a spiritual community, mentally they remain distant or isolated from each other.

During our study of religion and solitude, we have studied John Merton's theory. John Merton was a theologian who not only wrote on solitude but practiced it. But Merton was averse to practicing solitude in isolation. He held that solitude must be practiced with reference to the community. Silence and solitude are interlinked.

4.7 Summary

Apart from Merton's theory, we discussed some empirical studies on the relation between religion and solitude. In the first study, of Arab students, we found that for Arab students in foreign countries, religion became a coping mechanism. Arab students were discriminated against in foreign countries. They became socially

isolated. Solitude was enforced due to social isolation. Then the students turned to religion as a coping mechanism.

In a second study, of Christian nuns in a convent, we found that though they lived communally, the nuns actively avoided each others' company in their desire to communicate with God. Here solitude was interpreted by nuns as vitally necessary for communion with God.

Our final study deals with the life of Tibetan nuns. We found that that women in Tibetan society get less opportunities than men to become nuns. But when they do get the opportunity, they actively embrace it. Tibetan nuns prefer solitude only during meditation and spiritual retreats. But, apart from spiritual upliftment, they actively take part in educational pursuits.

To conclude, religious practices, like meditation, spiritual retreat, etc., demand a degree of solitude. But solitude cannot be pursued in total isolation from society. Merton was right when he said that solitude has to be pursued in conjunction with society or with reference to society.

4.8 Questions

Short Questions

1. Why is solitude important in religion?
2. Why do Christian nuns prefer solitude?
3. How does religion help Arab students studying in foreign lands?

Broad Questions

4. Is religious solitude connected to social isolation? Discuss fully.
5. What is the sociological significance of Merton's theory of solitude?
6. Can solitude be pursued in total isolation from society? Discuss with reference to Tibetan nuns.

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4.10 Glossary

Term	Meaning
Cenobium	Monastic community
Eremit	A hermit or recluse especially under a religious vow.
Eucharist	Ritual communion of Jesus's Last supper with his disciples .
Ontology	Theory of Being

Unit 5 □ Sacred, Myth, Ritual

Structure of the Unit

- 5.1 Learning objectives.**
- 5.2 Introduction**
- 5.3 Sacred, myth and ritual**
 - 5.3.1 Sacred**
 - 5.3.2 Myth**
 - 5.3.3 Ritual**
- 5.4 Conclusion**
- 5.5 Summary**
- 5.6 Questions**
- 5.7 References**
- 5.8 Glossary**

5.1 Learning Objectives

- To understand the different elements of religion from sociological aspects.
- The history of the origin, past and present of different elements of religion.
- To learn the sociological concept of function, types and meaning of sacred, myth and ritual.

5.2 Introduction

Religion is a collection of cultural systems, belief systems, and worldviews that relate humanity to spirituality and to moral values. Many religions have narratives, symbols, traditions, and sacred histories that are intended to give meaning to life or to explain the origin of life or the universe.

Many languages have words that can be translated as “religion,” but they may use them in a very different way, and some have no word for religion at all. For example,

the Sanskrit word “dharma,” sometimes translated as “religion,” also means law. Throughout classical South Asia, the study of law consisted of concepts such as penance through piety and ceremonial and practical traditions. Medieval Japan at first had a similar union between “imperial law” and universal or “Buddha law,” but these later became independent sources of power.

The typical dictionary definition of religion refers to a “belief in, or the worship of, a god or gods” or the “service and worship of God or the supernatural.” However, many writers and scholars have noted that this basic “belief in god” definition fails to capture the diversity of religious thought and experience. Edward Burnett Tylor defined religion as simply “the belief in spiritual beings.” He argued, in 1871, that narrowing the definition to mean the belief in a supreme deity or judgment after death would exclude many peoples from the category of religious and thus “has the fault of identifying religion rather with particular developments than with the deeper motive which underlies them.” He also argued that the belief in spiritual beings exists in all known societies.

The sociologist Emile Durkheim, in his seminal book *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, defined religion as a “unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things.” By sacred things he meant things “set apart and forbidden — beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them.” Sacred things are not, however, limited to gods or spirits. On the contrary, a sacred thing can be “a rock, a tree, a spring, a pebble, a piece of wood, a house, in a word, anything can be sacred.” Religious beliefs, myths, dogmas, and legends are the representations that express the nature of these sacred things and the virtues and powers that are attributed to them.

The development of religion has taken different forms in different cultures. Some religions place an emphasis on belief while others emphasize practice. Some religions focus on the subjective experience of the religious individual while others consider the activities of the religious community to be most important. Some religions claim to be universal, believing their laws and cosmology to be binding for everyone, while others are intended to be practiced only by a closely-defined or localized group. In many places religion has been associated with public institutions such as education, hospitals, the family, government, and political hierarchy.

Emile Durkheim argues that religion is comprised of the sacred elements of social life. Durkheim also identifies collective interests and group unity as part of the sacred, whereas individual concerns fall into the profane category. This distinction makes sense when we think about western religious traditions where, for example, the Torah and Bible are considered holy books treated with reverence and respect. Problems

quickly emerge, however, when we think about nationalism or consumerism. Under Durkheim's distinction, both nationalism and consumerism would be considered sacred practices.

Other social scientists view religion as any attempt to answer existential questions, i.e. "is there life after death" and "how does the universe work and what's my role in it." This categorization of religion highlights its functional role as serving specific social ends. In doing so, however, this perspective also attracts criticisms for being overly encompassing. Many branches of scientific investigation, for instance, would be considered religious, and even atheism would fit into the frame of attempting to answer existential questions.

A third social scientific perspective views religion as the collective beliefs and rituals of a group relating to the supernatural. If we simply focus on beliefs relating to the supernatural, this too may be broad enough to include atheism. However, when belief and rituals of a group relating to the supernatural are coupled together, the scope seems appropriately narrowed. Though not without criticisms, this categorization most closely adheres to the traditional and popular view of what constitutes a religion.

5.3 Sacred, myth and ritual

5.3.1 Sacred

The Latin word *sacer*, from which the term sacred is derived, denotes a distinction between what is and what is not pertaining to the gods. In not a dissimilar fashion, the Hebrew root of *k d sh*, which is usually translated as "Holy," is based on the idea of separation of the consecrated and desecrated in relation to the divine. Whatever the specific expression of the sacred, however, there is a fairly universal cultural division where the sacred constitutes phenomena which are set apart, revered, and distinguished from all other phenomena that constitute the profane or the mundane. However, in Hinduism there has long existed the belief that the sacred and the unclean both belong to a single linguistic category. Thus, the Hindu notion of pollution suggests that the sacred and the non-sacred need not be absolute opposites; they can be relative categories; what is clean in relation to one thing may be unclean in relation to another, and vice versa.

The interest of sociologists in the social significance of the sacred is largely derived from the concerns of the sub discipline of the sociology of religion. However, considerable disagreement exists as to the precise social origins of that which is designated sacred. Hence, an understanding of the sacred is frequently and intimately

bound up with broad definitions of religion itself, the categorization of certain social activities as religious, and particular sociological approaches to the subject. Such concerns have subsequently ensured that sociological perceptions of what constitutes the sacred as a social manifestation are subject to constant change and have led to a divergence of thought as to its nature.

The exploration of the cultural perception of the sacred is by no means limited to the discipline of sociology. Psychoanalytical theory and anthropology have also brought their own unique reductions and these have not infrequently informed past sociological speculations. In terms of psychoanalytical accounts, the sacred is discussed in Freud's theory of totemism and is central to his famous analysis of religion in *Totem and Taboo* (1938). For Freud, the link between totemism and the sacred is evident in certain aspects of the development of religion which have left their traces in historical myth and legend. In Freud's account, the Oedipus myth symbolizes a son's desire to possess his mother and murder his father. Freud interpreted sacred animal sacrifices in "savage" tribes as partly a re enactment of the original parricide and partly an expiration of it and where the totemic animal is the symbolic substitute for the father or the dominate male. However, in more civilized communities where in the totemic feast the totem animal is slaughtered and eaten, Freud believed that sacrifice loses its sacredness and becomes an offering to the gods rather than a representation of the gods.

In anthropological terms, Robertson Smith (1889) identified the principal difference between primitive taboo and rules of the sacred as the difference between friendly and unfriendly deities. The separation of sacred and consecrated things and persons from profane ones, which is an integral part of the religious cult, is basically the same as the separation which is inspired by fear of malevolent spirits. Separation is the essential idea in both contexts, only the motive is different, since friendly gods are also to be feared on occasion. Robertson Smith maintained that distinguishing between the holy and the unclean marks a real advance above savagery. In this way he produces a criterion for classifying religions as "advanced" or "primitive." If primitive, then rules of sacredness and rules of uncleanliness are indistinguishable; if advanced, then rules of uncleanliness disappear from religion.

While early anthropological accounts of the nature of the sacred have informed sociological theorizing, it was in turn heavily influenced by the work of Durkheim. In the opening chapter to *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1915) Durkheim summarized and rejected earlier definitions of religion. He dismissed Tylor's (1903)"substantive" definition of religion, namely "belief in spiritual beings." This

definition was bound up with Tylor's account of the origins of religion in a system of thought which he referred to as "animism" – the belief that all things, organic and inorganic, contain a soul or a spirit which infuses them with their particular sacred nature and characteristics. Durkheim insisted that this emphasis was erroneous since it ignored practices, the real essence of religion, which are more important than beliefs. Durkheim likewise dismissed Marett's (1914) conjecture that the essence of religion is the experience of a mysterious, sacred occult power or force that was associated with deep and ambivalent emotions of awe, fear, and respect of natural phenomena which predated conceptualizations of spirits, deities, and the like.

Durkheim then proceeded to adopt two criteria which he assumed would be found to coincide: the communal organization for the community cult and the separation of the sacred from the profane. For Durkheim, the sacred was the object of worship. The rules of separation between religion and the secular are the distinguishing marks of the sacred, the polar opposite to the profane. The sacred, according to Durkheim, is frequently projected as abstract religious entities, but these are merely collective ideas and expressions of collective morality. Moreover, the sacred needs to be continually enforced by prohibitions. The sacred must always be treated as contagious because relations with it are bound to be expressed by rituals of separation and demarcation and by beliefs in the danger of crossing forbidden boundaries.

Durkheim's advanced his own "functional" definition of religion which amounted to a distinction between the sacred and profane, so that religion was "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite them into one single moral community called a church of all those who adhere to them" (Durkheim 1915: 47). Thus, beliefs and practices in relation to the sacred are the defining factors of all religions.

Durkheim's deductionist approach gave way to an examination of what he perceived as the simplest and primitive religion, that of the Australian aborigine, which he believed would provide insights into the origins of religion that are predominantly social in cause. Durkheim described the clan organization of aboriginal society and the association between each clan and a sacred totem animal or plant species. These totems are represented by stylistic images drawn on stones or wooden objects called churingas which, since they bear the representation of the sacred totem, are also sacred. In aboriginal collectives churingas are surrounded by taboo and treated with the utmost respect. These totemic symbols, Durkheim insisted, are emblems of the clan in much the same way as a flag of a country. The churingas are the most sacred objects in aborigine ritual – the outward and visible form of the totemic principle or god.

Durkheim argued that by sacred things we should not understand simply those things which are called gods or spirits – a rock a tree, a river, a pebble, a building – which are frequently held as sacred, as displaying inherent sacred qualities. The totem is the emblem of the clan, but more than what the churingas represents. The churingas are at once the symbol of the sacred and society, for the sacred and society are one. Thus, through worship of god or the totem, human beings worship society – the real object of religious veneration. It is a relationship of inferiority and dependency. Durkheim argued that it is easier for human beings to visualize and direct feelings of awe towards a symbol than such a complex thing as a clan. This is what gives the totem, hence society, its sacred quality.

Durkheim also explored how human beings partake of the sacred. At one level social members express their faith in common values and beliefs. In the highly charged atmosphere of collective worship, the integration of society is strengthened. Members of society express, communicate, and acknowledge the moral bonds between them. At the same time, as members of clans with sacred totems and who believe themselves to be descended from such totems, they too are sacred. Through totemic representation to which they belong, they are in some sense of the same essence as the totemic species and consequently, sacred. In the same way, in the totemic system of ideas, since all things are related with one or another clan totem, natural phenomena such as rain, thunder, and clouds become sacred. As totemic clans partake of a universal principle they are part of an anonymous impersonal force which constitutes society as a whole greater than its parts and which has a sacred quality. This impersonal force has a particular mysterious quality related to the totem and the social consciousness and unity which it represents.

There are a number of problems frequently identified with Durkheim's definition of the sacred. Firstly, such a definition is derived from a western context that is not readily appropriate to the worldviews of a number of non-western societies, since it carries various culture bound connotations. Thus, Durkheim's assertion that religion is related to the sacred and that this is a universal conception in human society has been disputed by anthropologists: Evans Prichard (1937), for example, found that the distinction was not meaningful among the Azunde tribe he studied. The idea of the sacred, therefore, is one which exists in the mind of the observer and not necessarily of the believer or social agent. It might nonetheless be argued that the distinction remains a useful analytical conception by which sociologists can operationalize the study of religion. However, there remain difficulties with such a methodology even as an analytical distinction that focuses on the criteria by which the sacred is

distinguished from the profane. Anthropologists point out that this is not useful in distinguishing a sacred from a profane sphere in at least some societies. While many cultures do have a category of things set apart and for bidden, these things are not always those that feature in religious belief and ritual and, on the other hand, things which do figure in religious belief and ritual may not be set apart and forbidden.

Durkheim also speaks of the sacred as commanding an attitude of respect. This does not, however, provide a consistent criterion because, in many religious systems, religious objects and entities do not necessarily receive reverence. Idols, and the gods and spirits they symbolize, may be punished if they do not produce the benefits they are called upon to bring. Such difficulties have led Goody to abandon the attempt to define religion in terms of the sacred. Goody (1961) maintains that it is far from legitimate for the observer to establish a definition of religious activity on a universal perception of the sacred world – no more than is the actor's division of the universe into a natural or supernatural sphere.

A rarely observed perspective on Durkheim's work is that it also constituted a study in the sociology of knowledge. For Durkheim, the basic social concepts and categories of thought, time, space, and causation, in addition to the distinction between the sacred and the profane, are born in religion as a community enterprise. Through the shared beliefs and moral values which form the collective conscience, social order is made possible and the social and natural world understood and given meaning by those who comprise the "sacred" community. Durkheim proceeded to show how the totemic system was also a cosmological system and how such basic categories had origins within totemism and the clan structure.

5.3.2 Myth

A myth is a story that has a parallel structure linking the past to the present and suggesting directions for the future. A myth may be a cautionary tale, as in the urban myths that teenagers tell about the dangers inherent in parking on dark side roads. A myth may also be a moral tale, as in morality plays and bed time stories. Myths also may be about idealized behavioural standards, as in hero myths. As a sociological term, however, the primary use of the word myth has been rather casual. Sociological writers are likely to refer to the "myth" of masculinity (Pleck 1981), the "myth" of self-esteem (Hewitt 1998) or the "myth" of the mommy role (Douglas & Michaels 2006). This use of the term imputes a less than factual status to the topic of reference and calls into question the veracity of others' accounts and theories. However, sociology currently lacks a clear concept of myth such as is found in anthropology or cultural studies.

Comparative evolutionary anthropology, of which Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890) is perhaps the most recognized example, links contemporary myths to primitive rituals in the search for meaning through mystical experiences. This set of comparative principles was developed by T. S. Eliot in both his poetic work and in his 1923 article *Ulysses, Order, and Myth*. "Later, in 1966, Vickery suggested that an interdisciplinary examination of the larger patterns of myth making was more effective than analyses of single texts. This myth criticism" enjoyed great academic and popular success, propelled in part by Campbell's 1949 work, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*.

A more modern structural approach to the anthropology of myth derives primarily from the work of Levi Strauss (1995), in which he reexamines the dismissive attitude of western cultures toward the myths (cultural narratives) of non-industrial societies and suggests the valuable purpose of myth in human culture and history. Myth, according to Levi Strauss, allows anthropology to understand the underlying structure of a culture by examining linguistic elements and their relations to one another. Levi Strauss locates the modern use of the term myth in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with the development of science as a category of logical endeavor separate from the messy everyday world of the making of common sense from our perceptions of reality. He also suggests that science will progressively broaden its purview to incorporate many problems previously considered outside its territory, such as myths, which appear the world over, yet in different forms in each culture.

Myth is a form of meaning making that seems ideal for sociologists, yet few have risen to the challenge of studying its processes. Durkheim (2001) begins to develop a sociological concept of myth. However, its energetic pursuit by anthropologists may have resulted in its being abandoned as a boundary setting maneuver by sociologists. One direction for contemporary sociologists seeking to investigate a sociological construct of myth might be the work of Barthes (1972), in which he uses the narrative of myth making to explain sense making of everyday lives and experiences.

Myth, a symbolic narrative, usually of unknown origin and at least partly traditional, that ostensibly relates actual events and that is especially associated with religious belief. It is distinguished from symbolic behaviour (cult, ritual) and symbolic places or objects (temples, icons). Myths are specific accounts of gods or superhuman beings involved in extraordinary events or circumstances in a time that is unspecified but which is understood as existing apart from ordinary human experience. The term mythology denotes both the study of myth and the body of myths belonging to a particular religious tradition.

While the outline of myths from a past period or from a society other than one's own can usually be seen quite clearly, to recognize the myths that are dominant in one's own time and society is always difficult. This is hardly surprising, because a myth has its authority not by proving itself but by presenting itself. In this sense the authority of a myth indeed "goes without saying," and the myth can be outlined in detail only when its authority is no longer unquestioned but has been rejected or overcome in some manner by another, more comprehensive myth.

The word myth derives from the Greek *mythos*, which has a range of meanings from "word," through "saying" and "story," to "fiction"; the unquestioned validity of *mythos* can be contrasted with *logos*, the word whose validity or truth can be argued and demonstrated. Because myths narrate fantastic events with no attempt at proof, it is sometimes assumed that they are simply stories with no factual basis, and the word has become a synonym for falsehood or, at best, misconception. In the study of religion, however, it is important to distinguish between myths and stories that are merely untrue.

Ritual sacrifices are typical of traditional peasant cultures. In most cases such customs are related to mythical events. Among important themes are the necessity of death (e.g., the grain "dies" and is buried, only to yield a subsequent harvest), a society's cyclic renewal of itself (e.g., New Year's celebrations), and the significance of women and sexuality. New Year's celebrations, often accompanied by a temporary abandonment of all rules, may be related to or justified by mythical themes concerning a return to chaos and a return of the dead.

In every mythological tradition one myth or cluster of myths tends to be central. The subject of the central mythology is often cosmogony (origin of the cosmos). In many of those ceremonies that each society has developed as a symbol of what is necessary to its well-being, references are made to the beginning of the world. Examples include the enthronements of kings, which in some traditions (as in Fiji or ancient India) are associated with a creation or re-creation of the world. Analogously, in ancient Mesopotamia the creation epic *Enumaelish*, which was read each New Year at Babylon, celebrated the progress of the cosmos from initial anarchy to government by the kingship of Marduk; hence the authority of earthly rulers, and of earthly monarchy in general, was implicitly supported and justified.

Ruling families in ancient civilizations frequently justified their position by invoking myths—for example, that they had divine origins. Examples are known from imperial China, pharaonic Egypt, the Hittite empire, Polynesia, the Inca empire, and India. Elites have also based their claims to privilege on myths. The French historian of ancient religion Georges Dumézil was the pioneer in suggesting that the priestly,

warrior, and producing classes in ancient Indo-European societies regarded themselves as having been ordained to particular tasks by virtue of their mythological origins. And in every known cultural tradition there exists some mythological foundation that is referred to when defending marriage and funerary customs.

Description : As myths deal with the origin of the world, the end of the world, or a ideal state, they are capable of describing what people can never “see for themselves” however rational and observant they are. It may be that the educational value of myths is even more bound up with the descriptions they provide than with the explanations. In traditional, preindustrial societies myths form perhaps the most important available model of instruction, since no separate philosophical system of inquiry exists.

Healing, renewal, and inspiration : Myths play a significant role in healing the sick; they are recited (e.g., among the Navajo Indians of North America) when an individual’s world—that is to say, his life—is in jeopardy. Thus, healing through recitation of a cosmogony is one example of the use of myth as a magical incantation. Another example is the case of Icelandic poets, who, in singing of the episode in Old Norse mythology in which the god Odin wins for gods and men the “mead of song” (a drink containing the power of poetic inspiration), can be said to be celebrating the origins of their own art and hence renewing it.

5.3.3 Ritual

A ritual is a sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects, performed in a sequestered place and according to set sequence. Rituals may be prescribed by the traditions of a community, including a religious community. Rituals are characterized, but not defined, by formalism, traditionalism, invariance, rule-governance, symbolism, and performance.

Rituals are a feature of all known human societies. They include not only the worship rites and sacraments of organized religions and cults, but also rites of passage, atonement and purification rites, oaths of allegiance, dedication ceremonies, coronations and presidential inaugurations, marriages, funerals and more. Even common actions like hand-shaking and saying “hello” may be termed as rituals.

The field of ritual studies has seen a number of conflicting definitions of the term. One given by Kyriakidis is that a ritual is an outsider’s or “etic” category for a set activity (or set of actions) that, to the outsider, seems irrational, non-contiguous, or illogical. The term can be used also by the insider or “emic” performer as an acknowledgement that this activity can be seen as such by the uninitiated onlooker.

In psychology, the term ritual is sometimes used in a technical sense for a repetitive behavior systematically used by a person to neutralize or prevent anxiety; it can be a symptom of obsessive-compulsive disorder but obsessive-compulsive ritualistic behaviors are generally isolated activities.

The social scientific study of religion, refers to symbolic actions, the customary ceremonies, the prescribed forms of rite that manifest belief in the Divine through patterned and closely regulated social means. (In older usage, ritual refers to the words involved in such events—both words spoken and written directions—while ceremony refers to the actions.)

Religious rituals have manifold functions of propitiation, of rendering worship, and of the conferral of powers and delegations. Rituals operate with a hierarchical order and proclaim a power to reconstitute the social and the physical. Religious rituals can be classified according to their stipulated functions and the elaborate or simple nature of their ceremonial forms.

Some forms of ritual have instrumental properties, hence are magical in their explanatory functions and the causal reconstitution of what they effect. But religious rituals, especially those of Christianity, operate in a more indirect and indeterminate manner in relation to the powers that transcend their basis. They display an absence of concern with tangible ends that lends a disinterested, objective quality to their rites. In their ritual actions, the actors give witness to a gift beyond their discretion to invoke, hence the proper distinction between religious rituals on the one hand and magic on the other.

Religious ritual forms are microcosms of social and cultural values. In a Durkheimian understanding, rituals sacralize the social, affirm the collectivity, and provide indispensable means of harnessing the social to heal fragmentation (Durkheim 1915). Even in civic and secular cultures, religious rituals have powerful legitimizing powers that rulers invoke through symbols to secure recognition of their right to rule (Bloch 1992, Cannadine 1983, Cannadine and Price 1987).

Sociological Interpretations of Ritual

Sociology faces a dilemma of interpretation of religious rituals, of either providing reductionist explanatory accounts of the social mechanisms that overturn the sensibilities and the self-understandings of the actors involved in the reproduction of rite, or of bracketing suspicion and trying to understand the link between the theology proclaimed and the ritual so enacted, which the actors strive to fuse together if the action is to be credible to themselves.

In these approaches, symbols are to be deciphered (Geertz 1968), tacit meanings in action are to be read for what is unstated, and sociology has to find a grammar for reading religious rituals in terms of their own criteria of authenticity and self-recognition. The move from reductionist functionalist accounts to those that seek to amplify the meanings rituals make manifest has facilitated a link between sociology and hermeneutics that has wider implications for debate on sociology and culture. Religious rituals, especially those of Catholicism, combine the ingredients of hermeneutic debate, action, symbol, text in a way that merges perspectives of Gadamer and Ricoeur with sociological considerations (Flanagan 1991).

As these rites are to be deciphered in the fullness of meanings they amplify, interest moves to understanding how actors convert the determinate into the indeterminate. But if rites are indeterminate in effect, the scope for deceptions becomes enormous, as “lies are the bastard offspring of symbols” (Rappaport 1979). Sociological questions emerge about the impression management of religious rituals that suggest that they are paradigms for understanding the sacredness of all social transactions.

Rituals provide a tale in their ceremonial orders, the reading of which tells much about a society, its cultural heritage, what it values and what it believes. In Catholicism, the link can be understood in the term inculturation, the imperative to reflect the cultural genius of a people in ritual styles (Chupungco 1982).

Using symbols and formalized actions, religious rituals convey a power for dealing with the mysterious through social means that has wider sociological implications. This sacramental power was understood by Max Weber and is central to the understanding of recent approaches to the sociology of culture (Bourdieu 1987).

The Wider Sociological Significance of Ritual

One of the interesting movements in contemporary sociology in relation to the debate on postmodernism is the rehabilitation and reappreciation of rituals. With growing concern with New Age religions and new religious movements, the issue of ritual practices has come to the fore in debates on postmodernity. These movements against secularization, that seek to reenchant, should not distract attention from the study of the more traditional rituals of the main religions that are still undertheorized.

5.4 Conclusion

For many of us, religion is the most dominating force in our everyday lives. Without the explanation for the world around us we cannot find our own identity within it, therefore our life has no meaning without religion. There is no simple definition of religion as there are plenty of religions claiming that their religious activities involve no worship of spiritual beings. Distinction gives us an accepted universal view of what religion is :

A propitiation of conallation of power superior to man which is believed to control and direct the course of nature and human life. Thus defined, religion consists of two basic elements, a theoretical and a practical, namely a belief in power than man and an attempt to propitiate of please them. (Hendry 2006 p.117)

Religion is still profoundly embedded into today's contemporary, postmodern, and secular society. A major facet of this intermingling between religion and society is the way individuals communicate with society as a whole, via their religious rituals and myths. Though myth is not entirely scientific, it is undoubtedly one of the best instruments for revealing the oftentimes hidden and complex meanings of religious beliefs, tenets, creeds, and principles. While myth in common parlance has coem to mean "what is not true", religious and academic connotations are quite a different story.

5.5. Summary

Religion is a system of beliefs, including belief in the existence of at least one of the following : a human soul or spirit, a deity of higher being, or self after the death of one's body. Myths are traditional stories accepted as history; served to explain the world view of people. Rituals are ceremonies in which a god and goddess, or a concept of the sacred are honoured; a milestone is celebrated, or energy is focused towards a specific goal. Religion is widely practiced through rituals which combine the ideas of mythology represented by symbols.

Rituals are inspired by stories of mythology passed down through generations to perpetuate the traditions of a religion and often enclose many ideas of symbolic meanings. Symbols are often based on specific episodes that are recounted in myths; signifying a certain worldview. During ancient times the complexity of human communication was made possible through the ability of humans to create and use symbols.

Symbolism for anthropology covers a vast area of human life, from the body to the significance of colours, to worship of idols and religious symbols; their defining characteristic is that they stand for something other than their intrinsic property. For example, the colour red has become associated with danger in a number of societies. Conversely, it can also be seen as the colour of luck or marriage for Chinese and Indian cultures. For Catholic, the bread and wine are symbolic of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, and in partaking of the elements the believer commemorates the sacrificial death of Christ.

A religious ritual is a standardized, repetitive sequence of activities. It involves the manipulation of religious symbols such as prayers, offerings, and readings of sacred literature. Rituals usually hold traditions prescribed by a religion and may be performed at regular intervals, or on specific occasions, or at the discretion of individuals or communities.

5.6 Questions

Short Answer Type Questions

1. Give a brief note on sacred?
2. Give a brief account on what is myth?
3. What does ritual mean?
4. How sacred, myth and ritual interlinked?

Broad Answer Type Questions

1. Explain the different forms and functions of myth?
2. Explain different kinds and functions of rituals?

Essay Answer Type Question

1. Explain with examples both the functions and types of myth and ritual.

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5.8 Glossory

1. **Sacred** – connected with God or a god or dedicated to a religious purpose and so deserving veneration.
2. **Myth** – a traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining a natural or social phenomenon, and typically involving supernatural beings or events.
"ancient Celtic myths"
3. **Ritual** – a religious or solemn ceremony consisting of a series of actions performed according to a prescribed order.
4. **Healing** – the process of making or becoming sound or healthy again.

Unit 6 □ Totemism

Structure of unit

6.1 Learning objectives.

6.2 Introduction

6.3 Totemism

6.3.1 The Nature of Totemism

6.3.2 Group Totemism

6.3.3 Individual Totemism

6.4 Conclusion

6.5 Summary

6.6 Questions

6.7 References

6.8 Glossary

6.1 Learning Objectives

- To know the term totemism
- To learn the nature and types of totemism
- Theoretical understanding of totemism.

6.2 Introduction

The word totemism denotes in a broad sense the complex of beliefs concerning the existence of a sort of kinship between a human group, or a single individual, and an animal or a plant serving as an emblem of this link. This relationship implies a range of rituals and taboos, especially alimentary and sexual ones, which bind those who recognize themselves as members belonging to the same totem. The word itself, in the variant totam, was used in 1791 by the English traveler J. Long to designate the link of kinship and the worship of plants and animals by the Algonquin Indians

of the Ojibwa, in Eastern North America. Although the term referred to the clan totem, Long used it to describe individual totemism, that is to say, the belief in the existence of a personal link between a person and an animal (more rarely a plant), which is considered as a guardian spirit.

In anthropology, the acceptance of the notion of totemism began in the late nineteenth century and diminished at the beginning of the twentieth century. During this period scholars focused their attention especially on religious aspects of totemism, and they considered it principally as one of the most archaic forms of worship. So conceived, the idea of totemism achieved widespread fame and it was analyzed by various disciplines. Its introduction in the anthropological debate goes back to McLennan, who stressed how totemism was typified by three elements: fetishism, exogamy, and matrilineal descent. To these aspects, Rivers would later add another, namely, prohibiting the group from eating the plant or the animal considered as a totem, except during certain ritual events.

While on the one hand the rapid increase of ethnographic data concerning totemism promoted their inclusion in great evolutionistic syntheses suggested by various authors, on the other it already heralded their superseding. The first important comparative exposition of known ethnographic data is due to Frazer's *Totemism and Exogamy* (1910), in which three different hypotheses concerning the origins of totemism are suggested. The first hypothesis states that the first form of totemism is the individual one, involving the idea that there is an external soul dwelling in animals and plants. The second hypothesis stresses the magical aspect of totemism, particularly expressed in its Australian variant. The third hypothesis stresses primitive humans' misunderstanding about the existence of a bond between sexuality and conception, with the consequent idea that the latter could depend on the action of an animal or vegetable spirit.

6.3 Totemism

In Frazer's monumental work the arrangement of the collected ethnographic data concerning totemism aimed particularly to stress western modern rationality, in contrast to primitive thinking. One of the results of this approach was to hide a large variety of differences existing in the ethnographic data. The continuous decrease of this concern enabled scholars to stress how the variety of totemic phenomena was too wide to be ranged in a single typology. Research put forward by other scholars enabled them to identify very different phenomena, and when agreement was rare it

was not easy to formulate universal hypotheses. Analogies began to be suggested with greater care, and with consideration of historical and geographical continuities and discontinuities.

Consequently, the age of major diffusion of the notion of totemism coincided with that of its major decline. In the year in which Frazer's monumental work appeared, another author, Goldenweiser (1910), stressed that it was misleading to include such different data as social organizations by clans, their being labeled by names of plants and animals, and, finally, the belief in a real or mystical relationship between clan members and a totemic species in a single institution. All these phenomena were not always equally present. Furthermore, in many cases they were independent of one another.

The evolutionistic approach to the problem of totemism did not necessarily presuppose the comparative method. It was sufficient to assume that totemism could be one of the most archaic forms of religion. Thus Durkheim (1912) was interested only in Australian totemism, which he claimed to be its most archaic form. According to Durkheim the totem is the main symbol of the society itself. In this way his analysis of totemism becomes an illustrative example of the inextricable link between the religious and the social. Durkheim's sociological approach was an alternative to a previous approach in which a psychological explanation concerning the creation of institutions and religious phenomena prevailed. The advance offered by this new approach was evident. Social phenomena were explained by the social itself and not by more or less imaginative conjectures about primitive thinking.

Although Durkheim's arguments were very incisive, the psychological approach to the study of totemism received a new impulse from the father of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud. In his work *Totem und Tabu* (*Totem and Taboo*) (1912), Freud tried to establish a parallelism between the two major prohibitions concerning totemism – alimentary and sexual – and the Oedipus complex. Ethnographic data were underestimated by him in favour of the Darwinian hypothesis concerning the prehistoric existence of the so-called primitive horde. Freud supposed a social scenario in which there is not yet a form of exogamy and the whole group is ruled in a despotic way by a single man, the father, who is unable to control his instincts. This despotic father claims to be the only person who has access to the females of the group. Such an intolerable situation would have triggered a violent rebellion of the sons against him. The youngest men killed the despotic father to devour him, and then they were racked with remorse. A sense of guilt for the crime committed led the sons to substitute the father with a symbolic figure, a totemic species. At the same time, the prohibition of

sexual relationships with the females of the group, previously ordered by their despotic father, was spontaneously observed by them. This would be the reason for the appearance of totemism and exogamy as well.

Although in opposition to the arguments put forward by Durkheim, this purely psychological explanation of totemism formulated by Freud is to some extent similar because both authors share an evolutionistic and universalistic vision of cultural facts. A loss of interest in the notion of totemism began only when the evolutionistic perspective of analysis was abandoned. Until it was assumed as valid, the interest in totemism was assured by its presumed universalistic aspect, being considered as expressing a particular stage of human evolution. The fact that a particular and empirical form of totemism could not include any traits considered as an integral part of the totemic institution did not seem a problem. In any case, they were necessarily supposed to exist in a different stage of cultural evolution. So ethnographic evidence was considered important not so much for its local relevance as for expressing something considered as universal.

A turning point toward the dissolution of the notion of totemism is represented by the publication of Levi Strauss's famous book, *Le Tote mismeaujourd'hui* (Totemism Today) (1962), in which the author speaks of "totemic illusion." He stresses that totemism does not correspond to a primitive form of religion but must be understood within the broader human tendency to classify everything in different species. According to Levi Strauss, the core of totemism is represented not so much by a relationship between a group and a species as by the fact that this correspondence with different species is used to conceptualize the differences between the various human groups. Thus the specific nature of totemism would consist in enabling the representation of differences between human groups by resorting to analogies taken from the natural world. Totemism can be understood only on the basis that entire systems of differences, not single elements, are compared. Through totemism, relationships and differences among human groups are conceptualized by analogies with differences among species of animals and plants. According to Levi Strauss, this would be the most important aspect of totemism. He supports his opinion through the statement that totemic species are useful for thinking and not for eating.

The analysis of totemism proposed by Levi Strauss does not merely represent one opinion among others. It tries also to explain why the notion of totemism had an enduring life among anthropologists, despite its illusory character. According to Levi Strauss, the idea of totemism was in a certain sense a sign of the ethnocentrism included in most anthropological works. To talk about totemism meant stressing the

discord represented by a kind of thinking that assumed a confusion between natural and cultural spheres, considered quite different in western cultural tradition. Despite the rightness of these observations, the intellectualistic approach adopted by the French anthropologist in his analysis of totemism on the one hand effectively synthesizes the old fashioned debate concerning the idea of totemism, while on the other it seems to discourage possible alternative ways of research undertaken by other authors. Among these, those which focus their attention on the material and moral implications of totemistic practices assume a certain importance today.

In the *Elementary forms of religious life*, Durkheim seeks to show that society is the soul of religion – that society is the foundation of all religious belief. Religion has its origins in totemism. Totems are collective symbols that represent both god and society. Therefore the primary purpose of religion is to allow a people to imagine its society and express its social unity – this explains the enduring relevance of religion (not to give a physical account of the world but to bind a people together). The collective thought of which totemism is an early expression is the basis of all religious thought, as well as philosophy and modern science. 1) What is a totem? Totems tend to be based on relatively insignificant animals or plants – lizard, rat, caterpillar. Not cosmic things that would give rise to great and powerful feelings – stars, sun moon. If the feelings totems inspired were of this order, the focus of the cult would be the animal or plant itself, but it is not – it is representations that are sacred. Therefore, totemism is symbolic: “...the totem is a symbol, a material expression of something else.” But of what? God and society. Therefore, god and society are one and the same: “...if the totem is both the symbol of god and of society, are these not one and the same?” “The god of the clan ... must therefore be the clan itself but transfigured and imagined in the physical form of the plant or animal species that serve as totems.” So how did this come about? 2) From where does society derive its power over the individual?

Society exerts a powerful hold over us: “...we are constantly forced to submit to rules of thought and behaviour that we have neither devised nor desired, and that are sometimes even contrary to our most basic inclinations and instincts.” Society’s power is derived from its moral authority, rather than its coercive power. Custom and opinion are more important than courts and prisons. Authority is the daughter of opinion – even the authority of science depends on opinion. However, social forces work in obscure ways and are not always perceived as social forces. An example from work – Are you busy? Not really a question but an assertion of expectation, though this is not obvious to either party. These social forces penetrate the individual and

become an integral part of his being, as in Freud's superego. Social forces also enlarge our being. Durkheim goes on to discuss crowd psychology: "Within a crowd, we become susceptible to feelings and actions of which we are incapable on our own." You only have to think of a rock concert, political protest or party conference, baptists speaking in tongues and laying on hands or Hitler at Nuremburg to see that this is the case. Public meetings are essential to keeping social sentiments alive. These social forces (opinion and collective activity) create moral consciousness. Because social forces work in obscure ways and because they are largely beyond our control (language, customs, opinions), moral consciousness is experienced as if it was divinely invested – i.e. as if it was the product of external agency and was not socially contingent. However, moral consciousness is invested by society. "This is moral consciousness, which the ordinary man has never distinctly imagined for himself except with the aid of religious symbols." "He could not escape the feeling that outside him there are powerful causes which are the source of his characteristic nature, benevolent powers that aid him, and assure him a privileged fate. And he necessarily granted those powers a dignity comparable to the great value of the benefits he attributed to them." Durkheim then shows how the two primary influences on man, the empirical/physical and the collective/social, result in him splitting the world into two distinct categories – sacred and profane.

The experience of these two external pressures, one tangible and one intangible, create two different orders of experience. The physical world inspires no special respect (profane), while the social world inspires veneration (sacred). Discussion of Australian societies and the corroboree – religious festivals at which all social conventions are flouted. Tribe gets together. Men and women, initiates and uninitiated take part.

Religious effervescence: boomerangs are banged together, bull roarers are whirled, rules on exogamy are breached. This derangement of the senses contrasts sharply with the daily life and the festivals give their participants a sharper sense of the sacred and profane worlds, as both are fully realised. This effervescence is the basis of religious feeling. 3) How does social authority become embodied in a totem? Totems are the clan's flag. The religious feelings inspired by society are therefore projected onto the totem. "The totem is the clan's flag. It is therefore natural that the feelings the clan awakens in individual consciousness ... are much more attached to the totem than to the clan. The clan is too complex a reality for such rudimentary minds to picture clearly its concrete unity." (There's the inevitable chicken and egg problem here. Which came first, religious thought or the totem? How can you have a totem without religious thought? Durkheim remains silent.) The totem becomes the

image of the clan and, psychologically, takes priority over it – a complex reality is represented in simple form. Same with national flags, or wearing black when in mourning. Complex entities simply represented. 4) The nature and validity of religion “First in the world, fear created the gods.” Durkheim refutes this – the gods were firstly friends, relations and protectors.

“To say that a man is a kangaroo, that the sun is a bird, is this not identifying one thing with another? But we do not think any differently when we say that heat is movement, that light is a vibration in the ether, and so on. Every time we yoke together heterogeneous terms by an internal bond, we are of necessity identifying contraries.” The genesis of this mode of thinking, which informs all philosophy and science, depends on collective thought, which allowed us to enter into a conceptual realm independent of sense perception.

The term totem is derived from *ototeman* from the language of the Algonkian tribe of the Ojibwa (in the area of the Great Lakes in eastern North America); it originally meant “his brother-sister kin.” The grammatical root, *ote*, signifies a blood relationship between brothers and sisters who have the same mother and who may not marry each other. In English, the word totem was introduced in 1791 by a British merchant and translator who gave it a false meaning in the belief that it designated the guardian spirit of an individual, who appeared in the form of an animal—an idea which the Ojibwa clans do indeed portray by their wearing of animal skins. It was reported at the end of the 18th century that the Ojibwa name their clans after those animals that live in the area in which they live and appear to be either friendly or fearful. The first accurate report about totemism in North America was written by a Methodist missionary, Peter Jones, himself an Ojibwa chief, who died in 1856 and whose report was published posthumously. According to Jones, the Great Spirit had given *toodaims* (“totems”) to their clans; and because of this act, it should never be forgotten that members of the group are related to one another and on this account may not marry among themselves. (see also Algonquian languages)

6.3.1 The Nature of Totemism

It is advisable to define totemism as broadly as possible but concretely enough so that some justice can be done to its many forms. Totemism is, then, a complex of varied ideas and ways of behaviour based on a world view drawn from nature. There are ideological, mystical, emotional, reverential, and genealogical relationships of social groups or specific persons with animals or natural objects, the so-called totems. It is necessary to differentiate between group and individual totemism. These forms exhibit

common basic characteristics, which occur with different emphases and not always in a complete form. The general characteristics are essentially the following: (1) viewing the totem as a companion, relative, protector, progenitor, or helper—superhuman powers and abilities are ascribed to totems and totems are not only offered respect or occasional veneration but also can become objects of awe and fear; (2) use of special names and emblems to refer to the totem; (3) partial identification with the totem or symbolic assimilation to it; (4) prohibition against killing, eating, or touching the totem, even as a rule to shun it; and (5) totemistic rituals.

Though it is generally agreed that totemism is not a religion, in certain cases it can contain religious elements in varying degrees, just as totemism can appear conjoined with magic. Totemism is frequently mixed with different kinds of other beliefs—the cult of ancestors, ideas of the soul, beliefs in powers and the spirits. Such mixtures make the understanding of particular totemistic forms difficult. The cultic veneration of definite animals and natural things and powers by all those who belong to an ethnic unit do not belong to totemism itself.

6.3.2 Group totemism

Group (social or collective) totemism is the most widely disseminated form of totemism. Though the following characteristics can belong to it, they must not be taken to be part of a whole system: (1) mystic association of animal and plant species, natural phenomena, or created objects with unilineally related groups (lineages, clans, tribes, moieties, phratries) or with local groups and families; (2) hereditary transmission of the totems (patrilineal or matrilineal); (3) names of groups that can be based either directly or indirectly on the totem (the same holds true for personal names used within groups); (4) totemistic emblems, symbols, and taboo formulas are, as a rule, a concern of the entire group, but they can also belong to subdivisions of that group. Taboos and prohibitions can apply to the species itself or they can be limited to parts of animals and plants (partial taboos instead of partial totems). (5) Totems for groups are sometimes connected with a large number of animals and natural objects (multiplex totems) whereby a distinction can be made between principal totems and subsidiary ones (linked totems). Totems are associated or coordinated on the basis of analogies or on the basis of myth or ritual. (Just why particular animals or natural things—which sometimes possess absolutely no recognizable worth for the communities concerned—were selected as totems is often hard to fathom and may be based on eventful and decisive moments in a people's past which are no longer known.) (6) Accounts of the nature of totems and the origin of the societies in question are

informative, even if they are sometimes valuable only as supplementary rationalizations; they are especially informative with regard to their presuppositions. If, for example, one group supposes that it is derived directly or indirectly from the totem, this may be recounted (as a rationalization) that an animal progenitor was changed into a human being who then became the founder of the group or that the ancestral lord of the group was descended from a conjugal union between a man and a representative of the animal species. Groups of men and species of animals and plants can also have progenitors in common.

Group totemism is now found especially among peoples in Africa, India, Oceania (especially in Melanesia), North America, and parts of South America who farm rather than simply gather food from nature. Peoples with hunting and partly harvesting economies who exhibit this form of totemism include, among others, the Australian Aborigines (hunters who occupy a special position due to the many forms of totemism among them), the African Pygmies, and various tribes of North America—such as those on the northwest coast (predominantly fishermen), in parts of California, and in northeast North America.

6.3.3 Individual totemism

Individual totemism is expressed in an intimate relationship of friendship and protection between a person and a particular animal or a natural object (sometimes between a person and a species of animal); the natural object can grant special power to its owner. Frequently connected with individual totemism are definite ideas about the human soul (or souls) and conceptions derived from them, such as the idea of an alter ego and nagualism—from the Spanish form of the Aztec word *naualli*, "something hidden or veiled"—which means that a kind of simultaneous existence is assumed between an animal or a natural object and a person; *i.e.*, a mutual, close bond of life and fate exist in such a way that in case of the injury, sickness, or death of one partner, the same fate would befall the other member of the relationship. Consequently, such totems became most strongly tabooed; above all, they were connected with family or group leaders, chiefs, medicine men, shamans, and other socially significant persons. In shamanism, an earlier trait of individual totemism is often ascertained: the animalistic protective spirits can sometimes be derived from individual totems. To some extent, there also exists a tendency to pass on an individual totem as hereditary or to make taboo the entire species of animal to which the individual totem belongs. In this can perhaps be seen the beginning of the development of totems that belong to a group. Many tales about the origins of the group totem could, perhaps, point in this direction.

Individual totemism is widely disseminated. It is found not only among the tribes of hunters and harvesters but also among farmers and herdsmen. Individual totemism is especially emphasized among the Australian Aborigines.

6.4 Conclusion

From the publications of Lévi-Strauss and the contributions of his predecessors, it is obvious that difficulties stand in the way of an adequate interpretation of the intricate profusion of totemistic phenomena. But it seems fair to many authorities to ask whether it is possible to dispose of totemism simply as an illusion, whether the very abstract structural interpretation of the facts is actually legitimate. To those who question the position, it seems clear that even though all totemistic forms of expression can hardly be seen under one common denominator, reality cannot be totally denied to totemism. A specific relationship between man and nature, one that serves as a basic scheme of classification, seems to be at the basis of all the various forms of totemism. Indeed, this can be regarded as the prevailing characteristic of totemism in the form in which it manifests itself. A special problem, however, must be taken into consideration: since totemism can be connected with different ideas and practices, of religious, magical, or ideological natures, it is difficult to decide what is “totemistic” and what is “nontotemistic.” (Jo.H.)

6.5 Summary

In conclusion, totemism is a belief system where the traits in the social organisation of people are believed to have kinship or a mystical relationship with a spirit-being such as an animal or plant which serves as the group or individual's emblem or symbol. As anthropology tries to understand different cultures and provides knowledge about cultural variation in the world through details studies anthropologist would find totemism an interesting topic which has been proved by the number of studies which have been discussed. The first study on totemism was undertaken by McLennan in (1889) who explored the origin of totemism. Boas (1916) studies American Indians and their totem poles, concluding the totem poles functioned as the emblem of the clan showing unity and the rights each clan was entitled to. Frazer (1919) gave the first comprehensive work on totemism; he came up with three theories the final of which saw the origin of totemism as and interpretation of the conception and birth

of children a belief he called conceptionalism. Durkheim (1915) hoped to discover a pure religion in a very ancient form and claimed to see the origin of religion in totemism. In 1925 Malinowski explored totemism as a function in a given society. Radcliffe-Brown (1929) researched from a structural functionalist perspective and explored how totemism upheld the solidarity of the social group. Elkin (1939) explored numerous forms of totemism. Evans-Pritchard (1956) explored Nuer religion and the symbolic nature of totemism. The final theory discussed on totemism was by Levi-Strauss (1962a/1969) who explored totemism from a structuralist perspective. He gave the most incisive critique of totemism by denying its reality and stating totemism is an illusion. Investigations of totemism has decline in recent times, those which have undertaken such research have moved away from its universality toward explorations which consider totem structures in a more precise context.

6.6 Questions

Short Answer Type Questions

1. Define totemism?

Broad Answer Type Questions

2. Theoretical explanation of totemism any two?

Essay Answer Type Question

1. Explain with examples nature of totemism?
2. What are the theories of totemism?

6.7 References

Mann, Douglas (2008). *Understanding Society: A Survey of Modern Social Theory*. Canada: Oxford University Press. pp. 207–210. ISBN 978-0-19-542184-2.

6.8 Glossary

1. **Totemism** – Totemism, system of belief in which humans are said to have kinship or a mystical relationship with a spirit-being, such as an animal or plant. The entity, or totem, is thought to interact with a given kin group or an individual and to serve as their emblem or symbol.

Unit 7 □ Rationality.

Structure of unit

- 7.1 Learning objectives.**
- 7.2 Introduction**
- 7.3 Rationality and Bureaucracy**
- 7.4 Conclusion**
- 7.5 Summary**
- 7.6 Questions**
- 7.7 References**
- 7.8 Glossary**

7.1. Learning Objectives

- To know the term rationality
- To learn the nature and types of rationality
- Theoretical understanding of rationality.

7.2. Introduction

In sociology, rationalization (or rationalisation) is the replacement of traditions, values, and emotions as motivators for behavior in society with concepts based on rationality and reason. For example, the implementation of bureaucracies in government is a kind of rationalization, as is the construction of high-efficiency living spaces in architecture and urban planning. A potential reason as to why rationalization of a culture may take place in the modern era is the process of globalization. Countries are becoming increasingly interlinked, and with the rise of technology, it is easier for countries to influence each other through social networking, the media and politics. An example of rationalization in place would be the case of witch doctors in certain parts of Africa. Whilst many locals view them as an important part of their culture

and traditions, development initiatives and aid workers have tried to rationalize the practice in order to educate the local people in modern medicine and practice (Giddens, 2013).

Many sociologists, critical theorists and contemporary philosophers have argued that rationalization, falsely assumed as progress, has had a negative and dehumanizing effect on society, moving modernity away from the central tenets of Enlightenment. The founders of sociology had critical reaction to rationalization:

Marx and Engels associated the emergence of modern society above all with the development of capitalism; for Durkheim it was connected in particular with industrialization and the new social division of labour which this brought about; for Weber it had to do with the emergence of a distinctive way of thinking, the rational calculation which he associated with the Protestant Ethic (more or less what Marx and Engels speak of in terms of those 'icy waves of egotistical calculation').

"It is the destiny of our era, with its characteristic rationalization and intellectualization, and, above all, the disenchantment of the world, that precisely the ultimate and most sublime values have withdrawn from the public sphere."

Max Weber (1864 - 1920), famed sociologist, was the first to term rationalization as a process of modern society. For Weber, the increasing rationalization of society, of politics, and of the affairs of humanity was something unique to contemporary times. According to Weber, rationalization is the central problem of the modern, industrialized world. Whereas for Karl Marx, the central problem of modernity was the capitalist structure of domination, and the ensuing alienation of people in said structure - for Weber, rationalization is the key to understanding modern society (in this case Western, capitalist society) and its effect on the individual. While on the one end it produces innumerable benefits in the way of efficiency, rational calculation and the best reasoning from means to ends, it is not without its consequences. The insistence on highly rationalized ways of conducting organizations and institutions leads to a twofold problem. First, through the rationalization process, values once embedded in a religious/ethical context are now lost in public life. The motivations for human action in society and in public affairs changes from values, emotion, and sympathy to rational calculation and efficiency. Second, this loss of values in the public sphere leads to the fragmentation of all cultural values. They become separated and disparate from each other, which in turn petrifies culture and turns it into an abstract "iron cage" over the individual. This iron cage, with its insistence on formal rationality, has turned irrational - irrational because a humanly created societal organization has begun to exert dominance over its creator.

Let us start from the beginning then, and unpack what Weber means by rationalization. Through this analysis, we will see how fundamentally speaking, rationalization is de-humanizing society and “disenchanted” the world. To such an extent that humanity becomes tied fatefully to the machine-like society they have built for themselves.

7.3. Rationalization and Bureaucracy

A. Rationalization

Rationalization as an ideal type and as an historical force appears in much of Weber’s writings. He regards the development of rational forms to be one of the most important characteristics of the development of Western society and capitalism. Weber viewed traditional and charismatic forms as irrational, or at least non-rational. The latter may rely on religion, magic, or the supernatural as a way of explaining the social world and authority may also derive from these. These may have no systematic form of development, but may rely on personal insight, revelation, emotions and feelings, features that are non-rational in form.

In contrast, rationality consists of a set of social actions governed by reason or reasoning, calculation, plus rational pursuit of one’s interests. Rationality forms a large part of rational-legal authority and there are several characteristics that Weber considers as aspects of rationality (Ritzer, pp. 124-125). Actions in the economic sphere or in formal organizations such as universities have most of these characteristics and many of these can be taken as examples of rationality.

- **Calculability** : Results can be calculated or estimated by adopting assumptions and considering the methods by which results will be achieved. This is especially the case in formal institutions or in businesses
- **Efficiency** : Actors have various ends and attempt to find the best means to achieving these ends.
- **Predictability** : Organizations have rules and regulations, and actors are subject to structures and authority. This, along with established procedures and ends, mean that the results of social action can often be predicted, perhaps not precisely, but certainly probabilities attached to the outcomes.
- **Non-Human Technology** : Technologies such as tools, machinery, and information technologies make predictability greater. That is, these technologies are constructed with certain purposes, and so long as they assist in achieving the desired ends, the results are generally predictable.

- **Control over Uncertainties** : This can never be complete, but rules and methods are adopted that deal with many possible contingencies. Rules are set up not so much to deal with specific people or personalities, but attempt to be generic, dealing with a variety of possibilities. These allow outcomes to be constrained within certain limits, thereby reducing uncertainties about outcomes.

These principles of rationality can be applied to many activities and actions in the economic sphere, and have become highly developed and visible there. In modern society similar principles emerge in most areas of the social world, even including religion, politics, administration, sports, and music. Organizations and actions governed by rationality may produce an overall rationality for the system as a whole, but this is not a necessary result. For example, studies of economics show how many producers each acting rationally to maximize their own profits, may produce too many products. As a result, the consequences for people involved in formally rational systems may not always be desirable. Weber considered rationality to be necessary for organizations to operate efficiently, and he felt that the trend was that rationality would may take over more and more spheres of society. At the same time, Weber feared that this could result in increased control over individual action, stifling charisma and tradition, and allowing few alternatives for creative human action.

Types of Rationality

In his writings, Weber used rationality in various ways. Four of the meanings of rationality are as follows.

a. Practical rationality involves the individual who considers ends, and on some systematic basis decide what is the best means or course of action to pursue in order to achieve these ends. This form of rationality can be considered to be pragmatic in that it provides individuals with a way of pursuing practical ends.

b. Theoretical rationality. Abstract concepts form an essential part of logical reasoning or or theoretical models. These attempt to describe, explain, or understand the world in terms of models that are constructed from observation and reasoning. These forms of rationality need not be associated with social action but are more a part of logical structures and theory.

c. Substantive rationality. Individuals might consider a range of possible values or actions, and attempting to make them consistent. Weber termed this substantive rationality and considered it problematic in modern society in that rationalization of social life makes it difficult for people to pursue particular values.

For example, pursuit of family or religious values may be difficult in modern society, given economic pressures and dominance of bureaucratic organizations.

d. Formal rationality is a broader form of rationality that characterizes organizations, especially bureaucratic ones. This leads to “universally applied rules, laws and regulations that characterize formal rationality in the West ... particularly in the economic, legal, and scientific institutions, as well as in the bureaucratic form of domination.” (Ritzer, p. 123). Rational-legal forms of authority such as the contemporary legal and judicial systems are examples of formal rationality.

Weber’s fear was that formal rationality was becoming more dominant in modern, western society, with substantive rationality declining in importance. Weber notes that formal rationality developed as capitalistic forms of organizations emerged and its expansion is associated with the development of formal organizations and methods. This formal rationality, and the organizational features associated with them, tend to crowd out other forms of rationality and limit the possibilities of creative social action.

Development of Rationality

Weber argues that capitalism is a rational system in the sense of being calculating, efficient, reducing uncertainty, increasing predictability, and using increasing amounts of non-human technologies. Accompanying the development of capitalism has been a decline of magic and religion, and there has been increased secularization. Weber notes that there are several preconditions that must be established before capitalist methods can become dominant. “The most general presupposition for the existence of this present-day capitalism is that of rational capital accounting as the norm for all large industrial undertakings which are concerned with provision for everyday wants” (Giddens and Held, p. 81). In order for capitalism to work, it is necessary to have a means by which a balance can be created, where various possible alternative lines of action can be considered, and where decisions can be made concerning how to organize production so that the balance at the end exceeds the balance at the beginning.

Weber lists six factors that he considers essential to the development of capitalist techniques (see Hadden, p. 149). Note how each of these can be connected to the development of formal rationality.

a. Appropriation: The appropriation of all physical means of production as disposable property. This provides the possibility that the resources necessary for production can be bought and sold on a market. Where land or resources are not available as private property, or where they are subject to traditional uses, it is not

possible to compute the costs of production. In earlier societies land may have been held in common or by feudal lords, making them unavailable for capital accumulation, thus retarding the development of capitalism.

b. Market Freedom : Limits to the development of markets, such as traditional rights and barriers to trade, restricted the possibility of the development of capitalistic methods, and limited their application geographically. Chances for expansion and a wider development of trade and markets are thwarted. Weber notes how status groups or class monopolies may result in such restrictions.

c. Rational Technology : Mechanization and other forms of rational technology allow methods to be more efficiently organized and costs to be reasonably accurately computed. Where handicraft and other traditional forms of production dominate, costs of production vary and predicting profits is difficult. In these circumstances, conditions of production may be different from region to region and this can retard the application of uniform methods.

d. Calculable Law : “Forms of adjudication and administration ... allow for predictable outcomes” (Hadden, p. 149). This means fewer arbitrary rules and laws which can be applied to some and not to others, with limited special favours. This permits for the administration of law and justice to be understood and implies fewer arbitrary or unforeseen developments.

e. Free Labour Markets : These permit employers to obtain the labour required for enterprises and they also mean that labour costs can be reasonably accurately determined. That is, the employer makes an agreement before the production process, concerning how much is to be paid for how much labour, and has some certainty concerning what will be produced from this labour. While Weber notes that the whip of hunger may be essential for this, “rational capitalistic calculation is possible only on the basis of free labour” (Giddens and Held, p. 82).

f. Commercialization of Economic Life : This is a development which allows capitalistic methods to be pursued on a more widespread basis using economic means such as bonds, shares, finance, banking, and stock markets. These permit capital to be more mobile and allow owners of capital to pursue maximum profits in any commercialized area. This leads to the progress of capital in all areas of economic life, and promotes the development of market mechanisms.

In order for the modern corporate form to emerge and become dominant, these features had to become well developed. Capitalistic enterprises initially begin as businesses under individual or family control but there is a strong tendency to develop

a bureaucratic form of management in order for the company to continue past the lifetime of the individual entrepreneur and survive in competitive markets. The separation of ownership from management developed in most corporations, and this separation promotes the increased rationality of the capitalistic corporation.

In summary, Weber had mixed view on the development of capitalism and western forms of formal rationality. On the one hand, they created the possibility for the development of modern, western society, with its wealth and efficient forms of economic and social organization. The development of formal rationality was necessary for modern economic life and corporate organization to emerge and become successful. At the same time, Weber feared that formal rationality, associated with organizations, bureaucrats, and capitalists would come to dominate in Western society. The autonomous and free individual, one whose actions had continuity by reference to ultimate values, would be less able to exercise his or her substantive rationality (Ritzer, p. 125). Many areas of life and social action, as well as organizations, would become dominated by rationality and rationalism, according to Weber.

Whether this would also create a rational society as a whole is not so clear. The irrationality of the market, and the unplanned nature of social organization may mean that there is no tendency towards overall rationality. It may have been that Weber hoped that there would be enough different sectors of life that were not tied together by an overall rationality, that formal rationality would not govern the whole system. Charismatic individuals, social movements, and forms of countervailing power are approaches that Weber might have encouraged.

Perhaps such a rationality would emerge in a socialist system, as both the economy and society became more and more under the control of the same authority. Weber looked on this rationality as further reducing human freedom. The official would increasingly be able to exercise legal authority in a wide range of areas.

B. Bureaucracy

One major type of organization that has emerged in modern, western society has been bureaucracy or bureaucratic administration. This is the primary way that rational-legal authority has developed in formal organizations. The dominance of bureaucratic organizations in modern society shows the effectiveness of formal rationality as a way of organizing society. Hadden notes that “bureaucratic administration is generally capable ... of efficiency, precision, and fairness” (p. 140). The ideal type of formal bureaucracy has a continuous and hierarchical organization of

official functions or offices, with rules that govern each positions and relationships in the organization. Ten characteristics are associated such an ideal type (Hadden, p. 140):

a. Personally Free : People in such an organization are not bound to others in a servant-master, slave-master, or family relationship. They are free to leave the job, and the corporation is free to end the individual's contract with the organization.

b. Hierarchy : Offices or positions within the bureaucracy are organized into a hierarchical system, where some have more power than others. But the power is associated with the position, not the individual.

c. Clearly Defined Sphere of Competence : The office or position carries with it a set of obligations to perform various duties, the authority to carry out these duties, and the means of compulsion required to do the job.

d. Office Contractual : Positions are not associated with particular people who have inherent rights to them, but are associated with a particular contract governing duties, expectations, rights, and other conditions associated with doing the job.

e. Technical Qualifications : The offices may carry with them technical qualifications that require that the participants obtain suitable training. Selection and promotion is on the basis of ability to perform the technical requirements of the job.

f. Salaried : Wages or salaries are associated with the position. These are likely to be part of the contract associated with the position. Note, how this allows for calculation in terms of costs associated with the position.

g. Primary Occupation : The individual filling the position is expected to devote time and energy to the position, and be devoted to the job.

h. Career : Individuals in the bureaucracy expect to have a career in the organization, and the organization is expected to commit itself to promoting individuals in the organization. This is to be done on the basis of technical qualifications and abilities, and not on the basis of friendship or personal likes and dislikes.

i. No Ownership of Positions : The staff that fills the offices does not own the means of production or administration associated with the position. Those filling the position cannot pass the position on to friends or family and once their contract ends, they have no rights to any aspect of the position. Individuals in the positions are provided with the means to carry on the duties associated with the position.

j. Discipline : While those who are higher in the bureaucratic hierarchy may be less subject to discipline than those lower in the hierarchy, everyone is subject to

discipline. If the individual does not meet the requirements of the position or breaks the rules, the individual may be disciplined or removed from the position.

A good example of a bureaucracy is a university, where most of these characteristics are expected to exist. Of course, in the social world, no bureaucracy conforms exactly to the ideal type, and there is often favouritism, bending of rules, or incompetence. But many organizations have a large number of characteristics of this ideal type. The manner in which any actual bureaucracy operates can be compared to the ideal type. Often the complaints of individuals in bureaucratic organizations relate to ways in which some part of the ideal type is not met. For example, rules may not be clear or incumbents of a particular office may misuse their position.

While bureaucracies may seem to limit freedom, and provide structures of domination, they are also necessary to carry out the administration of modern, complex society. If these bureaucratic forms did not exist, society would be worse off, in that actions would be carried out in an inefficient and wasteful manner.

The short section in Giddens and Held (pp. 76-77) entitled “Power and Bureaucracy” contains an argument that just because bureaucracy is indispensable does not mean that it is also powerful. After all, the proletariat is indispensable but not powerful. As further evidence, Weber notes that economic interest groups, lay representatives, various levels of parliament, etc. may also have influence, and thus limit the power of bureaucracies. This could be a forerunner of the theory of countervailing power. This section again shows Weber’s close attention to detail, and to carefully defining and analyzing each institution.

At the same time, Weber notes that bureaucracies do tend to have great power. Their rational and efficient methods of administration, and their legitimate forms of authority do act to eliminate human freedom. Like Marx’s alienation surplus value, Weber views bureaucracy as alienating (although he does not use this term) in that it is a set of structures which dominate people.

These bureaucratic structures also have a tendency to develop in most areas of life – in the economy, law, politics, and even in religion. Each area of life tends to become bureaucratized, and at times in Weber’s writings, these tendencies appear to be overpowering and inevitable. Weber sometimes writes as if there is a linear tendency toward rational-legal authority and bureaucracy which exists in history, and little can be done to resist this.

Weber’s analysis of bureaucracy has made it seem as if bureaucracies are inherently limiting to human freedom. While Weber praises bureaucracies for their

efficiency and predictability, he feared that people would become too controlled by them. Weber does not appear to focus on the forces of freedom and equality that can come from bureaucracy. Standardized rules make it less possible for personal favours to be provided and for arbitrary directive to be given. Members of an organization may generally benefit from bureaucratic rules and regulations, and these make it possible for hiring and promotion to occur on the basis of merit. Rewards can be given for performance, rather than through favouritism and arbitrariness. Before condemning bureaucracies in their totality, the overall effect of these organizations, both positive and negative, should be considered.

Means of Administration

Weber argued that there were enduring structures of domination “by which social action is governed on a regular basis and through which a system of inequality is established and sustained.” These could be traditional or charismatic forms in earlier societies, but in Western society, tend to be associated with some of the major institutions of capitalism. These may be economic, but they may be political, educational, religious, military, communications and media, etc. For Weber, each of these institutions and organizations hold power in their own right, and this power is based on a variety of different factors.

Each area of life tends to develop a bureaucracy or administration associated with it. These bureaucracies become enduring structures of domination. They govern social action on a regular basis, and they establish and sustain patterns of inequality. Access to economic power directly through market situation or property ownership may be important. But access to the means of administration is also a source of power, and a means of control. There is differential access to the means of administration, administrative structures, and the control of knowledge. Compared to the control of property, one difference in the control of means of administration is that access to this form of control is not easily inherited.

The development of the modern corporate form, with a bureaucratic management, is an example of this type of development. The separation of ownership from management is allowed by this, and this separation promotes the increased rationality of the capitalistic corporation.

For Weber, the means of administration provides a basis for power in the political or organizational arena. This is analogous to Marx’s control of the means of production in the economic arena.

A central feature of Weber's sociology was his belief that sociological inquiry should be grounded in the analysis of how individuals attach "meanings" to their "social actions." For Weber, an action was social and subjectively meaningful to the actor insofar as it embodied some consideration concerning how others had acted and would act. Individuals' social actions collectively gave rise to observed forms of social organization.

Rationality and Social Action

In Weber's view, social actions could be classified into four types: "instrumentally rational (*zweckrational*)," "value-rational (*wertrational*)," "affectual," and "traditional," though he noted that this list was not necessarily "exhaustive" (E&S 1.1.2).

- A traditional action was one that was habitual, which meant that, while it might be meaningful, it was done more out of routine than any conscious deliberation.
- An affectual action was one undertaken as a means of satisfying the immediate demands of an emotional state, such as romantic passion or anger. Like traditional action, affectual action did not arise from deliberation.
- A value-rational action was one taken out of the *self-conscious* conviction that the action has a value inherent to itself, independent of any outcome it might or might not have.
- Finally, an instrumentally rational action was one taken based on its anticipated ability to achieve some considered end (*Zweck*, in German).

Weber did not expect that these types of social action would ever be found in their "pure" form. Very often, empirically observed social actions would embody different types to varying degrees. Accordingly, Weber treated as fluid the boundaries among them, and the boundaries between them and actions lacking meaning. This fluidity could also function as a mechanism of social change.

For example, insofar as traditional "everyday action" became essentially mindless, it stood on the cusp of lacking meaning. Or, insofar as individuals became attached enough to their habits as to ascribe a emblematic or ritualistic significance to them, those habits could "shade over into value rationality."

Similarly, affectual action, if "uncontrolled," might not be meaningful; but, conversely, if it took the "form of conscious release of emotional tension," then that constituted a rationalization, which might embody either value rationality or instrumental rationality.

Because instrumental rationality necessarily involved making conscious choices between different means, and weighing the relative value of competing ends, it was “incompatible” with traditional and affectual action.

Instrumental rationality had a more complicated relation to value rationality. Most obviously, value rationality could select the ends that individuals pursued through instrumental rationality. Yet, selection among ends was not *necessarily* a product of the value rationality. An individual might also take different ends as “subjective wants and arrange them in a scale of consciously assessed relative urgency. He may then orient his action to this scale in such a way that they are satisfied as far as possible in order of urgency, as formulated in the principle of ‘marginal utility.’” In this case, the act of selecting ends became an instrumentally rational action.

From this perspective, the more ends were pursued “unconditionally,” because they were value rational, the more “irrational” value rationality began to seem. But that did not mean the rationality of value rationality was illusory. According to Weber, “The orientation of action wholly to the rational achievement of ends without relation to fundamental values is, to be sure, only a limiting case.” Few, if any, actions, would ever be *purely* instrumentally rational. At some level values did impinge on the selection of ends, and the means used to achieve them.

Rationality in Sociological Analysis

If Weber regarded rationality in social actions as merely connoting the *presence* of deliberation, not its quality, the sociological *analysis* of social action did nevertheless demand a comparison between the apparent rationality of individuals’ actions and the sociologist’s own conception of the rational.

Both before and after Weber, many analysts of human behavior preferred to limit analysis to observable relations, thereby avoiding difficult inquiries into individuals’ psychological motivations; or they sought to level all actions as a pursuit (however rational or irrational) of fixed ends (however they were selected).

But, for Weber, a delineation of motivation was critical to understanding why social structures could differ radically from each other. He well understood that this imposed a heavy analytical burden, and allowed that such motivations had to be inferred imperfectly through an examination of patterns of action, through empathy, and through the replication of social actors’ rational calculations. All these methods came with their own methodological quandaries.

Importantly, Weber believed that irrational social actions (i.e., habitual or affectual actions) were best identified and assessed by observing how they differed from rational actions, as defined by the sociologist:

For the purposes of typological analysis it is convenient to treat all irrational, affectually determined elements of human behavior as factors of deviation from a conceptually pure type of rational action. For example a panic on the stock exchange can be most conveniently analysed by attempting to determine first what the course of action would have been if it had not been influenced by irrational affects; it is then possible to introduce the irrational components as accounting for the observed deviations from this hypothetical course.

Rationality in Modern Life

Although Weber denied that sociology ascribed too much rationality to social actions, he did worry that rationality was coming to dominate modern life—a view he expressed as early as his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905). This rationality, he argued, was to be found in the market action of cap capitalism, in industrial production, in scientific inquiry, and particularly in the proliferation of bureaucracy.

In Weber's estimation—deeply and explicitly influenced by his experiences in post-Bismarck Germany—there was a pronounced danger that the bureaucratic "machine" was encompassing an increasing array of functional purposes and provided more and more people with their livelihood. In his view, service to this machine could begin to monopolize social action, to the exclusion of other ends. In the concluding pages of *The Protestant Ethic*, Weber referred to this scenario as an "iron cage" from which humanity would find it difficult to escape.

This concern continued to plague Weber after World War I, and up to his death. In his essay, "*Parliament and Government in a Reconstructed Germany*," he wrote:

An inanimate machine is mind objectified. Only this provides it with the power to force men into its service and to dominate their working life as completely as is actually the case in the factory. Objectified intelligence is also that animated machine, the bureaucratic organization, with its specialization of trained skills, its division of jurisdiction, its rules and hierarchical relations of authority. Together with the inanimate machine it is busy fabricating the shell [Gehäuse] of bondage which men will perhaps be forced to inhabit some day, as powerless as the fellahs of ancient

Egypt. This might happen if a technically superior administration were to be the ultimate and sole value in the ordering of their affair.

In the wake of the mass slaughter of trench warfare, Weber's fears concerning the uncertain end state of civilizational progress had become commonplace. The more specific idea that modern society had subordinated itself to the rationality of a system interested only in the action of its own mechanisms was well on its way to becoming a pervasive anxiety among twentieth-century intellectuals.

Rationalization and Our World

As we have seen, rationalization is the central problem of contemporary society; at once a leap of progress and step towards regression. Once again, we see the contradictions inherent in progress, and in a society which bases its whole method of action on it. The highly organized and hierarchical structure of society is necessary for such large and developed Western, capitalist societies. They could not exist without it. But as we all should know by now, every step in progress leads to one step back regressively. The highly efficient and bureaucratic model of society has led to calculability, results and predictability in the affairs of the world. But, with the increasing rationalization and bureaucratic organization of society has come the loss of shared values in the public realm. Not only that, it has led to the development of the iron cage and modern humanity's entrapment within it and the threat of increasing dehumanization and depersonalization in individuals and in whole societies. What does this spell for the future of our world?

Well, we see the effects of hard line rationality of the Enlightenment project running into its antithesis in the form of societal irrationality and the loss of common values. As many a philosopher and sociologist has lamented, the Enlightenment project, although grounded in the fundamental aspiration for human dignity and equality in the social and political sphere, does have some problems associated with it. The rationalization and bureaucratization of the Western capitalist world has led to great progress in the scientific and technological spheres - only to have little carry over into the public and social realms.

What Weber's diagnosis of modernity shows us is that even rationality has seeds of irrationality in it - and that truly, we cannot have one without the other. The greater the rationality of the social structure and organization of a society, the greater the irrationality, which exists underneath the surface and grows and festers. Are we perhaps seeing this irrationality finally come to the surface in the sphere of politics -

where rarely candidates share common values? Or perhaps in the rise of ISIS and its ideology, which is appealing to those who feel outcast by Western, capitalist ideology, and thus seek the most irrational means of warring against it? In a future post, I hope to track the progress of the project started out in the Enlightenment, and trace the seeds of irrationality and the destruction of values, emotions and sympathy found within it. Suffice it to say now, Weber's analysis of rationalization in modern society is a piercing insight into the nature of our contemporary world in the West. We would do best to heed what he has to offer us.

7.4 Conclusion

“All religions are one,” said poet William Blake; Huston Smith, the well-known philosopher of religions, said, “It is possible to climb life's mountain from any side, but when the top is reached the trails converge.” Many of us Unitarian Universalists want to believe just this. We tend to be religious pluralists who want to promote dialogue and cooperation between religions. We want different religions to share a common goal, to make it easier to work towards interreligious cooperation. Different religions are responding to different problems, and therefore each religion offers a different solution. For example, Christians identify the problem as sin, and the solution is salvation; for Buddhists, however, the problem is suffering and the solution is nirvana. In addition, each religion has different techniques for moving from problem to solution, and different exemplars who show us how to get to the solution. Christians use the techniques of faith and good works, and Christian exemplars are saints or ordinary people of faith. But Buddhists use the techniques of the Eightfold Path, and their exemplars are arhats, bodhisattvas, or lamas.

What is this common thread? He came to believe it is compassion:

It is my fundamental conviction that compassion—the natural capacity of the human heart to feel concern for and connection with another being—constitutes a basic aspect of our nature shared by all human beings, as well as being the foundation of our happiness.

While religions may differ in their *metaphysical views*, the Dalai Lama says that religious and secular views converge in the realm of ethics. He believes compassion is central to the ethical systems of all religious approaches, including theistic approaches like Christianity, non-theistic approaches like Buddhism, as well as non-religious secular ethical systems.

7.5 Summary

In a traditional society, human beings were focused on mysticism and spiritualism as a means of discovering everything in their surroundings and as a result they lacked comprehensive knowledge of their environment. An alternative interpretation to what rationalization might have meant to Weber is that it is the move from spiritual and mystical ways of seeing the world to a more scientific and empirical way of understanding our surroundings. A scientific interpretation might be seen as plausible because Weber's admiration for science can be seen when he states "Every scientific "fulfillment" raises new "questions"; it asks to be "surpassed" and "out-dated" (Weber, p.56). This is a very relevant reason for this interpretation because with scientific rise, one is able to ask more insightful questions than previously thought of. However, a disadvantage to an individual taking this interpretation is that although Weber supports scientific reasoning, he does not believe that it is only unique to Western society. "Empirical knowledge, reflection on the world and the problems of life, philosophical and theological wisdom of the deepest kind extraordinarily refined knowledge observation - all this existed outside the West" (Weber, p.53). This raises a huge flaw in rationalization with this interpretation because if rationalization is the move from better ways of thinking and more systematic calculable ways, then why would other individuals than the West develop it? A more unique perspective is to adopt the first interpretation where capitalism and bureaucracy are primarily found in the West. Weber, throughout the chapter entitled Scientific Vocation, makes reference to science not being able to answer the questions that govern a person's regular life and it falls short in this area. Weber, a sociologist, would be primarily interested in the social aspects of rationalization - something that science does not offer an answer to. The scientific interpretation would not be a suitable explanation for what Weber meant by rationalization.

It is clear that Weber did not provide a direct definition for what rationalization meant. However, it is possible to conclude that because of his strong interest in capitalism and bureaucracy, he meant rationalization is the ability to calculate and systematically change the world. Although some might propose the alternative interpretation that Weber might have meant that rationalization is the transformation from mysticism thinking in the world of how religion used to be and towards more scientific knowledge. This interpretation would not be a substantive one to explain the other forms of rationalization that Weber describes throughout his book.

7.6 Model Questions

Short Answer Type Questions

- a. Rationality as a concept.

Broad Answer Type Questions

- a. How rationality and bureaucracy related?
- b. Various types' rationality?
- c. Rationality of actions.

Essay Answer Type Question

- a. Explain with examples both the concept of bureaucracy and rationality?

7.7 References

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7.8 Glossary

1. **Rationalization** – the action of attempting to explain or justify behaviour or an attitude with logical reasons, even if these are not appropriate.
2. **Bureaucracy** – a system of government in which most of the important decisions are taken by state officials rather than by elected representatives.

Unit 8 □ Prayer

Structure of the unit

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- 8.3 Origins and early history**
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- 8.7 Prayer in different religions**
 - 8.7.1 Abrahamic religions**
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8.1 Learning Objectives

After reading this learners will be able to learn about :

- What is prayer
- Different names of prayer in different religion
- To understand origin of prayers
- Why everyone seeks for prayer

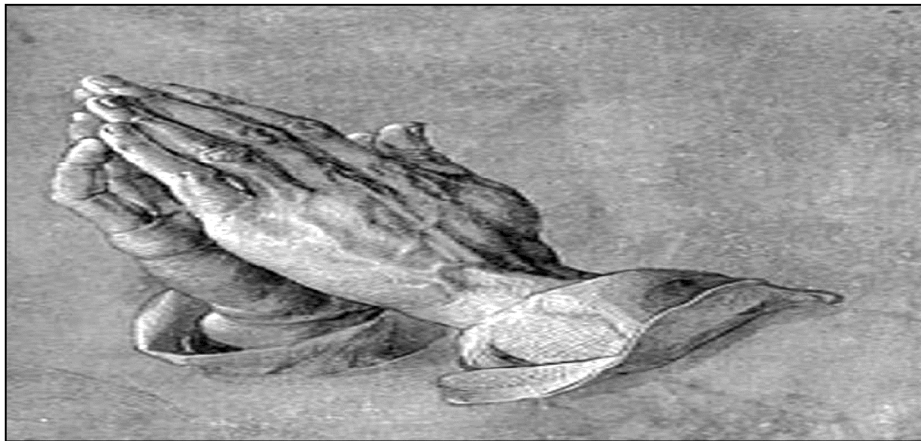
8.2 Introduction

The English word prayer is derived from Medieval Latin: ‘precaria’ that means ‘petition, prayer’.

Prayer is an act that seeks to activate a rapport with an object or supernatural thing, whom we communicate through worship. In the narrow sense, the term refers to an act of prayer directed towards worship ancestor. Generally, prayer can also have the purpose of thanksgiving or praise.

Prayer can take a variety of forms: it can be part of a set ritual, and it can be performed alone or in groups. Prayer may take the form of a anthem, chant, or a spontaneous utterance in the praying person. The act of prayer is attested in written sources as early as 5000 years ago. Today, most major religions involve prayer in one way or another. Some ritualize the act, requiring a strict sequence of actions or placing a restriction on who is permitted to pray, while others teach that prayer may be practised spontaneously by anyone at any time. Scientific studies regarding the use of prayer have mostly concentrated on its effect on the healing of sick or injured

people. The efficacy of prayer in faith healing has been evaluated in numerous studies, with contradictory results.



Praying Hands by Albrecht Dürer

Pic credit : <https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Duerer-Prayer.jpg#mw-jump-to-license>

8.3 Origins and early history

Anthropologically, the concept of prayer is closely related to that of surrender and prayer. The traditional posture of prayer in medieval Europe is kneeling or flat with clasped hands, in antiquity more typically with raised hands. The early Christian prayer posture was standing, looking up to heaven, with outspread arms and bare head. This is the pre - Christian, pagan prayer posture (except for the bare head, which was prescribed for males in Corinthians 11 : 4, in Roman paganism, the head had to be covered in prayer). Certain Cretan and Cypriote figures of the Late Bronze Age, with arms raised, have been interpreted as worshippers. Their posture is similar to the “flight” posture, a crouching posture with raised hands, observed in schizophrenic patients. and related to the universal “hands up” gesture of surrender. The kneeling posture with clasped hands appears to have been introduced only with the beginning high medieval period, presumably adopted from a gesture of feudal homage.



A kneeling position with raised hands expressed “prayer” in classical antiquity. The word for “prayer” and for “supplication” is identical in ancient languages (oratio, nposuxn, non etc.), with no terminological distinction between prayer addressed to human as opposed to divine powers, Statuette known as “Praying German” or “supplicating barbarian”. It is not known if this figure was originally set in a context of religious prayer or of military surrender.

Pic credit : https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Praying_Germanic_man_1890.jpg#mw-jump-to-license

Some of the oldest extant literature, such as the Kesh temple hymn (c. 26th century BC) are ritual addressed to goddess and thus technically “prayer”. The Egyptian Pyramid Texts of about the same period similarly contain charm or chant addressed to the gods. In the loosest sense, in the form of magical thinking combined with animism, prayer has been argued as representing a human cultural universal, which would have been present since the emergence of behavioral modernity, by anthropologists such as Sir Edward Burnett Tylor and Sir James George Frazer.

Reliable records are available for the polytheistic religions of the Iron Age, most notably Ancient Greek religion (which strongly influenced Roman religion). These religious traditions were direct developments of the earlier Bronze Age religions. Ceremonial prayer was highly formulaic and ritualized.

In ancient polytheism, ancestor worship is indistinguishable from theistic worship (see also Euhemerism). Vestiges of ancestor worship persist, to a greater or lesser extent, in modern religious traditions throughout the world, most notably in Japanese Shinto and in Chinese folk religion. The practices involved in Shinto prayer are heavily influenced by Buddhism; Japanese Buddhism has also been strongly influenced by Shinto in turn. Shinto prayers quite frequently consist of wishes or favours asked of the kami, rather than lengthy praises or devotions. The practice of votive offering is also universal, and is attested at least since the Bronze Age : In Shinto, this takes the form of a small wooden tablet, called an ema.

Roman prayers and sacrifices were often envisioned as legal bargains between goddess and worshipper. The Roman principle was expressed as *do ut des* : “I give, so that you may give”. Cato the Elder’s treatise on agriculture contains many examples of preserved traditional prayers ; in one, a farmer addresses the unknown deity of a possibly sacred grove, and sacrifices a pig in order to placate the god or goddess of the place and beseech his or her permission to cut down some trees from the grove.



The valkyrie Sigrdrifa says a pagan Norse prayer in Sigdrifumát , illustration by Arthur Rackham,

Pic credit : <https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ring48.jpg#mw-jump-to-license>

In Australian Aboriginal mythology, prayers to the “Great Wit” are performed by the “clever men” and “clever women”, or kadji. These Aboriginal shamans use

maban or mabain, the material that is believed to give them their purported magical powers. The Pueblo Indians are known to have used prayer sticks, that is, sticks with feathers attached as supplicatory offerings. The Hopi Indians used prayer sticks as well, but they attached to it a small bag of sacred meal.

8.4 Act of Prayer

Various spiritual traditions offer a wide variety of devotional acts. There are morning and evening prayers, graces said over meals, and respectful physical gestures. Some Christians bow their heads and fold their hands. Some Native Americans regard dancing as a form of prayer. Some Sufis whirl. Hindus chant mantras. Jewish prayer may involve swaying back and forth and bowing. Muslim prayer involves bowing, kneeling and prostration. Quakers keep silent. Some pray according to standardized rituals and liturgies, while others prefer extemporaneous prayers. Still others combine the two.



Muslim men prostrating during prayer in a mosque,

Pic credit: https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Muslims_praying_in_a_Masque_in_Bangladesh.jpg#mw-jump-to-license

Friedrich Heiler is often cited in Christian circles for his systematic Typology of Prayer which lists six types of prayer : primitive, ritual, Greek cultural, philosophical, mystical, and prophetic. Some forms of prayer require a prior ritualistic form of cleansing or purification such as in ghusl and wudhu.

Prayer may be done privately and individually , or it may be done corporately in the presence of fellow believers. Prayer can be incorporated into a daily “thought life”, in which one is in constant communication with a god. Some people pray throughout all that is happening during the day and seek guidance as the day progresses. This is actually regarded as a requirement in several Christian denominations, although enforcement is not possible nor desirable. There can be many different answers to prayer, just as there are many ways to interpret an answer to a question, if there in fact comes an answer. Some may experience audible, physical, or mental epiphanies. If indeed an answer comes, the time and place it comes is considered random. Some outward acts that sometimes accompany prayer

are : anointing with oil, ringing a bell, burning incense or paper lighting a candle or candles ; See , for example, facing a specific direction (i.e. towards Meccall or the East) ; making the sign of the cross. One less noticeable act related to prayer is fasting



Christians in prayer, Pic credit : <https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MOLITVA.JPG#mw-jump-to-license>

A variety of body postures may be assumed, often with specific meaning (mainly respect or adoration) associated with them : standing ; sitting ; kneeling ; prostrate on the floor , eyes opened ; eyes closed ; hands folded or clasped ; hands upraised ; holding hands with others ; a laying on of hands and others. Prayers may be recited from memory, read from a book of prayers, or composed spontaneously as they are prayed. They may be said, chanted, or sung. They may be with musical accompaniment or not. There may be a time of outward silence while prayers are offered mentally. Often, there are prayers to fit specific occasions, such as the blessing of a meal, the birth or death of a loved one, other significant events in the life of a believer, or days of the year that have special religious significance. Details corresponding to specific traditions are outlined below .

8.5 Approaches to Prayers

5.1 Direct petition

There are different forms of prayer . One of them is to directly appeal to a god to grant one's request. Some has termed this as the social approach to prayer.

Atheist arguments against prayer are mostly directed against petitionary prayer in particular. Daniel Dennett argued that petitionary prayer might have the undesirable psychological effect of relieving a person of the need to take active measures.

This potential drawback manifests in extreme forms in such cases as Christian Scientists who rely on prayers instead of seeking medical treatment for family members for easily curable conditions which later result in death.

Christopher Hitchens (2012) argued that praying to a god which is all - powerful and all - knowing would be too bold. For example, he interprets Ambrose Bierce's definition of prayer by stating that "the man who prays is the one who thinks that god has arranged matters all wrong, but who also thinks that he can instruct god how to put them right."

5.2 Educational approach

In this view, prayer is not a conversation. Rather, it is meant to inculcate certain attitudes in the one who prays, but not to influence. Among Jews, this has been the approach of Rabbenu Bachya, Rabbi Yehuda Halevi, Joseph Albo, Samson Raphael Hirsch, and Joseph B. Soloveitchik. This view is expressed by Rabbi Nosson Scherman in the overview to the Artscroll Siddur. Among Christian theologians, E.M. Bounds stated the educational purpose of prayer in every chapter of his book, *The Necessity of Prayer*. Prayer books such as the *Book of Common Prayer* are both a result of this approach and an exhortation to keep it.

5.3 Rationalist approach

In this view, the ultimate goal of prayer is to help train a person to focus on divinity through philosophy and meditation. This approach was taken by the Jewish scholar and philosopher Maimonides and the other medieval rationalists. It became popular in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic intellectual circles, but never became the most popular understanding of prayer among the believers in any of these faiths. In all three of these faiths today, a significant minority of people still hold to this approach.

5.4 Experiential approach

In this approach, the purpose of prayer is to enable the person praying to gain a direct experience of the recipient of the prayer. This approach is very significant in Christianity and widespread in Judaism. In Eastern Orthodoxy, this approach is known as hesychasm. It is also widespread in Sufi Islam. It has some similarities with the rationalist approach, since it can also involve completion, although the completion is not generally viewed as being as rational or intellectual.

The notion of “religious experience” is used by William James in his book, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. The origins of the use of this term can be dated further back. The notion of “religious experience” was adopted by many scholars of religion, of whom William James was the most influential. The notion of “experience” has been criticised. Robert Sharf points out that “experience” is a typical Western term, which has found its way into Asian religiosity via western influences. The notion of “experience” introduces a false notion of duality between “experiencer” and “experienced”, whereas the essence of kensho is the realisation of the “non duality of observer and observed. “Pure experience” does not exist, all



Old woman praying by Théophile Lybaert, Pic credit: [https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Theophile_Lybaert_-_Old_Flanders. jpeg#mw-jump-to-license](https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Theophile_Lybaert_-_Old_Flanders.jpeg#mw-jump-to-license)

experience is mediated by intellectual and cognitive activity. The specific teachings and practices of a specific tradition may even determine what “experience” someone has, which means that this “experience” is not the proof of the teaching, but a result of the teaching. A pure consciousness without concepts, reached by “cleaning the doors of perception”, would be an overwhelming chaos of sensory input without coherence.

8.6 Types of Prayers

It shouldn't be surprising but most of the people know how to pray. This is because prayer by definition is a petition of God or words spoken to him which most of us know how to do. In prayer, we are exercising a personal relationship with God asking him for what we want. Prayer specificity is one of the most important aspects of communication and knowing Gods mercy lets us know the communication requests no matter what type is being heard. There are mainly five types of Prayers. (i) Worship and Praise, (ii) Petition and Intercession, (iii) Supplication, (iv) Thanks giving, (v) Spiritual Warfare.

6.1 Worship and Praise :

This prayer acknowledges God for what He is. It does so by showing the love, respect and admiration we have for him. Go to any church on a Sunday morning and you'll be sure to witness the praising and worshiping at the beginning of most services.

6.2 Petition and Intercession :

This prayer is exercised when we are not concerned with our own needs but rather the needs of others. Intercession causes us to internalize God's words and exercise his power to change that for which we ask for.

6.3 Supplication :

This prayer involves the action of asking or begging for something earnestly or humbly through kneeling or bending down in the form of a plea . This is the most humbling of prayer types and takes total surrender and loss of control.

6.4 Thanksgiving :

This is when we express gratitude for having food, shelter, family, friends, employment, and health is valued by all philosophies. This type of prayer can be seen exercising in the morning when one wakes, during meals when one eats, or at night when one sleeps.

6.5 Spiritual Warfare :

This is when we deal with the battles within our self and others and use prayer to guard us against attacks, maintain focus, or receive deliverance. This prayer involves us asking Gods word to protect us and guard us against any harm.

8.7 Prayers in different religions

7.1 Abrahamic religions :

7.1.1 Hebrew Bible : In the Hebrew Bible prayer is an evolving means of interacting with God, most frequently through a spontaneous, individual, unorganized form of petitioning and / or thanking. Individual prayer is described by the Tanakh two ways. The first of these when prayer is described as occurring, and a result is achieved, but no further information regarding a person's prayer is given. these instances, such as with Isaac, Moses, Samuel, and Job, the act of praying is a method of changing a situation for the better. The second way in which prayer is depicted is through fully fleshed out episodes of prayer, where a person's prayer is related in full . Many famous biblical personalities have such a prayer, including every major character from Hannah to Hezekiah.



David Prays for Deliverance , 1860 woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld, Pic credit: [https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki File:Schnorr_von_Carolsfeld_Bibel_in_Bildern_1860_136. png#mw-jump-to-licens](https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Schnorr_von_Carolsfeld_Bibel_in_Bildern_1860_136.png#mw-jump-to-licens)

7.1.2 New testament : In the New Testament prayer is presented as a positive command. The People of God are challenged to include Christian prayer in their everyday life, even in the busy struggles of marriage as it brings people closer to God. Jesus encouraged his disciples to pray in secret in their private

rooms, using the Lord's Prayer, as a humble response to the prayer of the Pharisees, whose practices in prayer were regarded as impious by the New Testament writers. Throughout the New Testament, prayer is shown to be God's appointed method by which we obtain what He has to bestow. Further, the Book of James says that the lack of blessings in life results from a failure to pray. Jesus healed through prayer and expected his followers to do so also. The apostle Paul wrote to the churches of Thessalonica to "Pray continually."

7.1.3 Judaism : Observant Jews pray three times a day, Shacharit, Mincha, and Ma'ariv with lengthier prayers on special days, such as the Shabbat and Jewish holidays including Musaf and the reading of the Torah. The siddur is



Captain Samuel Case, a rabbi, conducting the first prayer service celebrated on German territory by Jewish personnel of the First Canadian Army near Kleve, Germany, 18 March 1945, Pic credit : https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jewish_Canadian_soldiers_during_WWII.jpg#mw-jump-to-license

the prayerbook used by Jews all over the world, containing a set order of daily prayers. Jewish prayer is usually described as having two aspects : kavanah (intention) and keva (the ritualistic, structured elements). The most important Jewish prayers are the Shema Yisrael ("Hear O Israel") and the

Amidah (“ the standing prayer”). Communal prayer is preferred over solitary prayer, and a quorum of ten adult males (a minyan) is considered by Orthodox Judaism a prerequisite for several communal prayers.



Orthodox Jewish men praying in Jerusalem's Western Wall , Pic credit : https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Muro_de_las_Lamentaciones,_Jerusal%C3%A9n,_2017.gif#mw-jump-to-license

There are also many other ritualistic prayers a Jew performs during their day, such as washing before eating bread, washing after one wakes up in the morning , and doing grace after meals.

7.1.4 Christianity : Christian prayers are quite varied. They can be completely spontaneous, or read entirely from a text, like the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. The most common prayer among Christians is the Lord's Prayer, which according to the gospel accounts (e.g. Matthew 6 : 9-13) is how Jesus taught his disciples to pray. The Lord's Prayer is a model for prayers of adoration, confession and petition in Christianity.

Christians generally pray to God. Some Christians, such as Catholics, Lutherans, Orthodox, and Methodists pray for the dead ; Roman Catholics, will also ask the righteous in heaven and “ in Christ”, such as the Virgin Mary or other saints to intercede by praying on their behalf (intercession of saints). Formulaic closures in many Christian denominations, such as Lutheranism and Catholicism include “through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You, in the

unity of the Holy Spirit, God, through all the ages of ages” and “ in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”



Jesus praying in Gethsemane. Depicted by Heinrich Hofmann, Pic credit : https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Christ_in_Gethsemane.jpg#mw-jump-to-license

7.1.5 Islam : The Arabic word for prayer is salah. In Islam, five daily obligatory prayers are considered one of the pillars of the religion. The command of ritual prayer repeatedly occurs in the Quran. The person performs the prayer while they are facing the Kaaba in Mecca. There is the “call for prayer ‘(the adhan or azan), where the muezzin calls for all the followers to stand together for the prayer . The prayer consists of actions such as glorifying and praising God (such as mentioning ‘Allhu Akbar’ (God is Great)) while standing, recitation of chapters of the Quran (such as the opening chapter of the book (Al - Fatiha)), bowing down then praising.

God, prostrating (sujud) then again praising God. It ends with the words : “ Peace be with you and God’s mercy. During the prayer, a Muslim cannot

talk or do anything else besides pray. Once the prayer is complete, one can offer personal prayers or supplications to God for their needs, known as dua. There are many standard invocations in Arabic to be recited at various times (e.g. after the prayer) and for various occasions (e.g. for one's parents) with manners and etiquette such as before eating. Muslims may also say dua in their own words and languages for any issue they wish to communicate with God in the hope that God will answer their prayers. Certain Shi'a sects pray the five daily prayers divided into three separate parts of the day, providing several Hadith as supporting evidence ; although according to Shia Islam, it is also permissible to pray at five times.



Muslims in prostration at the Umayyad Mosque in Syria, Pic credit : <https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mosque.jpg#mw-jump-to-license>

- 7.1.6 Mandaism :** Daily prayer in Mandaism called brakha. Brakha are recited three times per day. Mandaean stand facing north while reciting daily prayers. Unlike in Islam and Coptic Orthodox Christianity, collapse is not practiced. Mandaean priests recite rahma prayers three times every day , while laypeople also recite the Rushma (signing prayer) and Asiet Malkia (“ Healing of Kings ”) daily. The three prayer times in Mandaism are : • dawn (sunrise) • noontime (the “ seventh hour “) • evening (sunset).

7.2 Eastern religions :

7.2.1 Buddhism : In the earliest Buddhist tradition, the Theravada, and in the later Mahayana tradition of Zen, prayer plays only a supportive role. It is largely a ritual expression of wishes for success in the practice and in helping all beings, The skillful means (Sanskrit : upaya) of the transfer of merit (Sanskrit : parinman) is an evocation and prayer. Moreover, indeterminate buddhas are available for intercession as they reside in awoken - fields (Sanskrit. buddha - kshetra).



Buddhist praying with incense at Wat Phra Kaew, Thailand, Pic credit :
<https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Incense-LE.jpg#mw-jump-to-license>

7.2.2 Hinduism : Hinduism has incorporated many kinds of prayer (Sanskrit : prarthana) , from fire - based rituals to philosophical musings . While chanting involves ‘ by order ‘ recitation of timeless verses with timings and notations , dhyanam involves deep meditation on the preferred God . Again the object to which prayers are offered could be a persons referred as devtas , incarnation of either devtas or simply plain formless meditation as practiced by the ancient sages . These prayers can be directed to fulfilling personal needs or deep spiritual enlightenment , and also for the benefit of others .

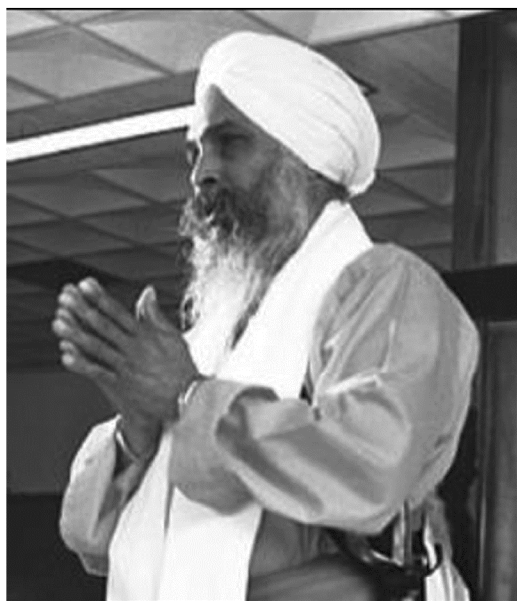
Ritual invocation was part and parcel of the Vedic religion and as such permeated their sacred texts. Indeed, the highest sacred texts of the Hindus, the Vedas, are a large collection of mantras and prayer rituals. Classical Hinduism came to focus on extolling a single supreme force, Brahman, that is made manifest in several lower forms as the familiar gods of the Hindu pantheon. Hindus in India have numerous devotional movements. Hindus may pray to the highest absolute God Brahman, or more commonly to its three manifestations, a creator god called Brahma, a preserver god called Vishnu and a destroyer god Shiva, and at the next level to Vishnu's avatars Rama and Krishna or to many other male or female goddess. Typically, Hindus pray with their hands joined in pranam. The hand gesture is similar to the popular Indian greeting namaste.



Shakta Hindus in Dhaka, Bangladesh, pray to the goddess during Durga Puja, October 2003, Pic Credit:https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bangladesh_Prayer.jpg#mw-jump-to-license

7.2.3 Shikhism : The Ards (Punjabi : ਦੇ) is a Sikh prayer that is done before performing or after undertaking any significant task ; after reciting the daily Banis (prayers) ; or completion of a service like the Paath (scripture reading

/recitation), kirtan (hymn singing) program or any other religious program. In Sikhism, these prayers are also said before and after eating. The prayer is a plea to God to support and help the devotee with whatever he or she is about to undertake or has done.



A Sikh holy man, doing Sikh prayer (Ardas), Pic credit : <https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BhaiSahibJiArdas.jpg#mw-jump-to-license>

The Ardas is usually always done standing up with folded hands. The beginning of the Ardas is strictly set by the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh. When it comes to conclusion of this prayer, the devotee uses words like “Waheguru please bless me in the task that I am about to undertake” when starting a new task or “Akal Purakh, having completed the hymn - singing, we ask for your continued blessings so that we can continue with your memory and remember you at all times”, etc. The word “Ardās” is derived from Persian word ‘Arazdashat’, meaning a request, supplication, prayer, petition or an address to a superior authority.

7.3 Iranian religion

- **Zoroastrianism** : Zoroastrians are not fire - worshippers, as some Westerners wrongly believe. Zoroastrians believe that the elements are pure and that

fire represents God's light or wisdom. Zoroastrian worship practices have evolved from ancient times to the present day. Over time, Zoroastrians developed the concept of worshipping in temples, sometimes called fire temples.

8.8 Indian context of prayer

India is a secular country. Here people of different religions and faiths live together. The main feature of prayer in Indian context is to seek blessings for all, to co-operate with all the religious faiths, and to live together in peace. India believes the key of all religions is the same, I.e, the emancipation of soul. In India, people of all religions celebrate their festivals with all the countrymen. Here the prayer, the good force plays the leading role. Rituals are observed for the welfare of all, irrespective of caste, creed and faith.

8.9 Conclusion

Prayer is one of the techniques to establish our direct connection with God/ supernatural. This technique is two-fold in nature. In one hand we as common human being through forming certain pattern of socially constructed language, try to establish connection with God/ supernatural. Sometimes priest community to maintain their power in society use techniques of magic/ black magic to mesmerize people and to stay alive their faith on both on priests and God/ supernatural. Historically it is found that charismatic preacher through their speech has helped people to get out of immense pain or psychological disturbances. Techniques of prayers have been changed as the society has gone through several changes due to internal and external reasons.

8.10 Summary

We find prayer in different religions, in (Abrahamic, Eastern, Iranian religions) Christian, Hebrew, Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Mandaism, Zoroastrianism in the same. Prayer is a faith to heal the sufferings, to gain mental strength, to fight with the illtime and all sorts of obstacles. Prayer is submission to God to find the true path.

8.11 Questions

A. Short questions

1. What is Prayer?
2. Write a short note about Indian context of prayer
3. What is the rationalist approach of prayer?

B. Long questions

1. Prayers in different religion
2. Write a detailed notes about Approaches of prayer
3. Elaborate the types of prayer
4. Write a note about Origins and early history of prayer

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UNIT 9 □ Craft

- 9.1. Learning Objectives**
- 9.2. Introduction**
- 9.3 History of witchcraft**
- 9.4 Magic and Sorcery**
- 9.5 Witchcraft in India**
- 9.6 Witch–Hunting in India**
- 9.7 Conclusion**
- 9.8 Summary**
- 9.9 Questions**
- 9.10 References**

9.1 Learning Objectives

- Understanding the meanings of Craft.
- Explain social construction of Craft.
- Explain relationship between gender and Craft.
- To understand magic as social construct and magic as mechanism of mass control

9.2 Introduction

In religion, crafts are of two types. One is the utensils or household products including decorative items like jewelry etc., related things are made as both sacred and profane, that are used as supportive instruments for worship or household. Another form of craft is associated with the religion that is known and myth/witchcraft/sorcery/or magical connotation associated with religion, Again, like religion, witchcraft and magic are socially constructed categories of human society. In every society throughout the world in the elementary level, the presence of witchcraft is considered as synonymous to magic. People believe in magic/ witchcraft from the perspective of consciousness which requires a healing system that is traditional by nature. Therefore, in this unit we would like to know the historical backgrounds of development of

witchcraft/ magic sorcery in human society and at present context how these categories are interacting with the changing role of religion.

Witchcraft and sorcery are terms that describe how humans engage with magic. Witches and sorcerers appear with remarkable consistency among worldviews that locate the existence of magic. While in the popular imagination the two roles may blur, usage is quite conventionalized in anthropology, owing to the impact of E. E. Evans-Pritchard's influential study of the Azande, first published in 1937 (Callan : 2018).

Do you know?

Magic is the foundational concept, which encompasses beliefs and behaviors in which the relationship between an act and its effect rests on analogy or a mystical connection rather than empirical or scientific validation. While at its core magic is an idea or belief, it manifests in acts and rituals, texts and spells, and objects such as amulets and talismans. Anthropological theories of magic, including attempts to treat it as either separate from or inseparable from religion, date back to the discipline's mid-nineteenth-century origins and reached a zenith in the mid-twentieth century through fieldwork-based ethnographic research, especially connected to the structural-functional school of thought.

Magic is a concept used to describe a mode of rationality or way of thinking that looks at invisible forces to influence events, effect change in material conditions, or present the illusion of change. Within the Western tradition, this way of thinking is distinct from religious or scientific modes; however, such distinctions and even the definition of magic are subject to wide debate.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/magic-supernatural-phenomenon>

Supernaturalism, a belief in an otherworldly realm or reality that, in one way or another, is commonly associated with all forms of religion.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/magic-supernatural-phenomenon>

9.3 History of witchcraft

In Europe, picture of a witch is the one who is a woman and use broom to move from one place to another and they love to do harm to people. In India, witches are again women, they can vanish using different potion, and they love to harm people. These witch women live in the outskirts of the village. They do not like to mix with other people. These women use various kinds of techniques like making voodoo doll to torture someone etc. If we look into this matter closely, we will see witchcraft is associated with gender, sexuality, identity and with politics of accumulation of resource. The politics of giving membership in the group is reflected by secluding someone by saying that person would bring evil to society. The easiest way of

seclusion is taking the help of religion and god. Mostly it is seen that woman were secluded by attaching the stigma of witch.

For anthropologist Roy Rappaport, social conventions, the sacred and religion, morality, and cosmology are entailments of ritual. In his ecologically framed theorizing, ritual is the basic social act, *the* fabricator, *the* device for world and meaning-making. Most cultures of the world have religious beliefs that supernatural powers can be compelled, or at least influenced, to act in certain ways for good or evil purposes by using ritual formulas. These formulas are, in a sense, **magic**.

By performing certain magical acts in a particular way, crops might be improved, game herds replenished; illness cured or avoided, animals and people made fertile. This is very different from television and stage “magic” that depends on slight-of-hand

Do you know the too?

Witch is used to identify people suspected of practicing, either deliberately or unconsciously, socially prohibited forms of magic, among other characteristics, and who are thus often scapegoats, members of persecuted groups, and reflective of social tensions, for example within close-knit communities or kin groups. In some cases, the witch is not a person but a substance or supernumerary organ inside a person's body. Witchcraft allegations tend to erupt in waves—“crazes”—in response to or along the lines of social tensions. Such tension may be inherent in social organization or, as the most recent research documents, perceived as an adjustment to modernity and social change. In contrast, “sorcerers” intentionally take on the role of magical practitioner, engaging in activity often labeled by others as magic with ill or evil intent. While some writers define sorcery simply as the use of magic, in a morally neutral sense, more typically the anthropological.

Source : The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology. Edited by Hilary Callan. © 2018 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. Published 2018 by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. DOI: 10.1002/9781118924396.wbiea1915

Witchcraft, the exercise or invocation of alleged supernatural powers to control people or events, practices typically involving sorcery or magic. Although defined differently in disparate historical and cultural contexts, witchcraft has often been seen, especially in the West, as the work of crones who meet secretly at night, indulge in cannibalism and orgiasticrites with the Devil, and perform black magic. Witchcraft thus defined exists more in the imagination of contemporaries than in any objective reality.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/witchcraft>

As used by anthropologists, the term “witch” identifies someone alleged to practice socially prohibited forms of magic, while “sorcerer” refers to someone who intentionally takes on the role of magical practitioner, often with the intent to harm.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/9781118924396.wbiea1915>

tricks and contrived illusions rather than supernatural power. Most anthropologists see connections between witchcraft, sorcery, and social tensions, erupting from conflicts inherent in social organization or in response to modernity and social change.

According to Versnel (1991) anthropologists in particular have argued that no meaningful contrast between religion and magic can be gained from this approach and that our notion of 'magic' is a modern-western construct which does not fit representations of other cultures. Consequently, in the view of some of them, the term 'magic' should be altogether avoided. Furthermore, with respect to the ancient and early modern world, in which the opposition religion-magic is supposed to have originated, it is argued that magic and religion function exclusively as value-judgments, terms indicating 'magic' being exploited to stigmatize illegitimate or undesired (religious) behaviour of socially or culturally deviant groups. He further explained the relationship between religion and magic by identifying characteristics of both which are as follows:

- 1) Intention. Magic is employed to achieve concrete, mostly individual goals. Religion is not primarily purpose-motivated, or at most focusses on intangible long-term goals which concern collective issues of society.
- 2) Attitude. Magic is essentially manipulative. Man is both the initiator and the executor of processes he controls with the aid of knowledge which he has, or which is put, at his disposal. Religion views man as dependent upon powers outside his sphere of influence. This entails an attitude of submission and supplication. The opposition is thus one between "instrumental, coercive manipulation" and "personal, supplicative negotiation."
- 3) Action. Magic is characterized by the attention paid to the technical side of the manipulation, precision of formula and modus operandi. Professional experience is often required since the knowledge is secret. But if all the instructions are observed, there is an expectation of direct results. In so far as religion, on the other hand, admits of intended effects (prayer for health, motives, private oracles), the results are never dependent upon a professional specialist, though his skill may be required as a mediating factor, nor on the suppliant, but solely and exclusively on the free favour of sovereign gods.
- 4) Social/moral evaluation. Since the goals of magic often run counter to the interests of other members of the society, magic easily acquires the connotation of an anti-social or at least a-social activity, thus leading to the Durkheimian

dichotomy: magic is immoral, anti-social, deviant, whereas religion has positive social functions, is cohesive and solidarizing. One might, of course, elaborate upon distinctions but these suffice for our purpose. In order to illustrate their influence it is noted that all, except the last, are implied in the definition given by no less an anthropologist than Sir Edmund Leach in 1964: "The term magic denotes a complex of belief and action on the basis and by means of which persons and groups may attempt to control their environment in such a way as to achieve their ends, the efficacy of such control being untested and in some cases untestable by the methods of empirical science. The core of the magical act is that it rests on empirically untested belief and that it is an effort at control. The first aspect distinguishes it from science, the second from religion. "

9.4 Magic and Sorcery

It has also been shown that magic can have social goals (for instance collective spells and devices for a good harvest or against catastrophes) and religion has social effects. Again people do not always display more belief in the "automatic" effects of spell or amulet. They do not show any surprise or even disappointment when they do not yield the intended result. And it has been argued that there is no essential or generally valid distinction between spell and prayer, since they sometimes exploit similar formulae in similar circumstances.' Once we have arrived at this point it is only a step to the final conclusion, defended by some scholars, and first by R.R. Marett, that any distinction between religion and magic is an illusion based on a variety of fallacies, especially ethnocentric projection and historical distortion.

The modern concept of magic, so these critics reason, is the product of an evolution which started in late antiquity in the context of Jewish-Christian conflict with remnants of pagan cult and which acquired its definitive Western connotations under the double influence of a comparable theological conflict between Protestants and Roman Catholics in the 16th century and the subsequent evolution of Western scientific ideas. Magic and its above-listed symptoms are an essentially modern-Western, rationalistic and biased concept and as such quite unsuitable for application to the study of non-Western cultures where similar dichotomies cannot always be demonstrated, either terminologically or conceptually. Such criticism, moreover, derived considerable support from the discovery that in addition to all other similarities between magic and religion, they also could exercise identical functions on the level of social psychology e.g. as conductors of socially unmanageable emotions or frustrations.

Following Evans Pritchard's lead, anthropologists nearly always use the term "witch" to identify people suspected of practicing, either deliberately or unconsciously, socially prohibited forms of magic, among other characteristics, and who are thus often scapegoats, members of persecuted groups, and reflective of social tensions, for example within close knit communities or kin groups. In some cases, the witch is not a person but a substance or supernumerary of excessive organ inside a person's body. Witchcraft allegations tend to erupt in waves—"crazes"—in response to or along the lines of social tensions. Such tension may be inherent in social organization or, as the most recent research documents, perceived as an adjustment to modernity and social change. Evans-Pritchard concluded that a belief in witchcraft serves three functions: it provides an explanation for the unexplainable; it provides a set of cultural behaviors for dealing with misfortune; and it serves to define morality.

A sorcerer, magician, or "witch" attempts to influence the surrounding world through occult (i.e., hidden, as opposed to open and observable) means. In Western society until the 14th century, "witchcraft" had more in common with sorcery in other cultures—such as those of India or Africa—than it did with the witchcraft of the witch hunts. Before the 14th century, witchcraft was much alike in villages from Ireland to Russia and from Sweden to Sicily; however, the similarities derived neither from cultural diffusion nor from any secret cult but from the age-old human desire to achieve one's purposes whether by open or occult means. In many ways, like their counterparts worldwide, early Western sorcerers and witches worked secretly for private ends, as contrasted with the public practice of religion. Witches or sorcerers were usually feared as well as respected, and they used a variety of means to attempt to achieve their goals, including incantations (formulas or chants invoking evil spirits), divination and oracles (to predict the future), amulets and charms (to ward off hostile spirits and harmful events), potions or salves, and dolls or other figures (to represent their enemies). Witches sought to gain or preserve health, to acquire or retain property, to protect against natural disasters or evil spirits, to help friends, and to seek revenge. Sometimes this magic was believed to work through simple causation as a form of technology. For example, it was believed that a field's fertility could be increased by ritually slaughtering an animal. Often the magic was instead an effort to construct symbolic reality. Sorcery was sometimes believed to rely on the power of gods or other spirits, leading to the belief that witches used demons in their work.

"Sorcerers" intentionally take on the role of a magical practitioner, engaging in activity often labeled by others as magic with ill or evil intent. While some writers define, sorcery simply as the use of magic, in a morally neutral sense, more typically

the anthropological use of the term highlights efforts to manipulate supernatural forces for malicious or deviant purposes.

The word “witchcraft” undoubtedly derives from the Anglo-Saxon witch-craft, just as “witch” derives from the related nouns *wicce*, signifying a female worker of that “craft” (plural *wiccen*) and *wicca*, meaning a male one (plural *wiccan*). What exactly the “craft” concerned was, however, is a difficult matter. The early English had more than thirty terms for magical practices and practitioners. The meaning of some can be recovered, if vaguely, by association with known words that they embody, thus, *galdorcraft* has connotations of song or incantation; *libcraft* of potions; and *scincraft* of delusion and phantasm. *Wiccecraft*, however, is not one of these, and can only be understood, if at all, from context. At first sight that is clear enough in the period, for churchmen used it confidently to describe (and condemn) all forms of magic.

The ideas that a society creates narratives about witches can be seen to support norms and values in that society, and, when analyzed along with a structural model of the society, can also provide insights into the organization of the culture and society. Ideas about the negative characteristics of the witch can be a way to guide behavior, as functionalist anthropologists argued in a series of studies showing that the belief in witchcraft served as a social control mechanism. In his work on the Navajo, Clyde Kluckhohn found that the fear of becoming the victim of witchcraft encouraged them to cooperate, share resources, and minimize public displays of anger. The socially permitted form of aggression toward the witch allowed other hostilities to be displaced onto an individual, a useful outlet in situations where in-group hostilities could threaten the survival of the group or damage people’s abilities to act collectively.

The central problem with studies that assumed a cohesive function for witchcraft was that, like other functional analyses, the theory could not be proved or falsified. Some sociologists and anthropologists such as Max Marwick were more interested in analyzing the social basis of witchcraft accusations and the life conditions that placed particular strain on these relationships. Against the dominant functionalist trend, Robert Murphy proposed that beliefs about witchcraft and accusations could have disruptive effects. Working with the *Mundurucú* in Brazil, he found that witchcraft accusations, combined with a rubber economic boom, created group divisions and family migration, which eventually supported a more dispersed settlement pattern. From her comparative analysis of African Studies, Mary Douglas (1963) came to a similar conclusion. It has been observed that people in relatively marginal positions

in society might be able to use witchcraft, or the threat of witchcraft, as a form of social power. This is the coping technique of the marginal to minimize some of the inequalities in the society.

9.5 Witchcraft in India

In India, according to Moniraj (2018) the Hindus generally believe that the world is balanced by opposites – ‘on the one hand prayers can heal and on the other hand spells can harm.’ Millions in India do pujas or prayers in order to protect themselves from all evils. Even in the big cities, people who fear the evil eye and counter it in various ways, for e.g.: a string of lemon and chilies can ward off the evil eye at entrance ways to home; demon masks are tagged on to homes and in construction sites; black cats in the path in front of a person is seen as a bad omen and seen as carriers of witchcraft; some trees are to be avoided since evil spirits are said to reside in those trees.

Magic, witchcraft, and sorcery in ancient Hindu texts :

Magic and witchcraft have a long history in Hinduism, which is recorded in the ancient Atharva Veda. This Veda contains mainly mantras used in witchcraft or sorcery, in the curing of diseases, for destruction of enemies, etc. They can be classified as the hymns, meant to secure long life, get good wishes of the deities, ward off misfortune, pardon the misdeeds, obtain the kingship, as well as others. Similarly, these hymns also include charms to cure diseases and heal wounds; protection against demons, sorcerers, and enemies; charms to obtain a husband, wife, or son; and charms to obtain prosperity in house, field, cattle, business, gambling, and kindred matters. The Atharva Veda also records the practice of faith healing in India and it refers to amulet use on many occasions; an amulet is a sacred thing charged with the strength of a spirit. Amulets could not only heal, but also protect the wearer from any evil consequences. The materials used to construct such amulets were of the utmost importance, along with certain preparations and certain observances of ritual formalities. Amulets made of rice could grant the wearer long life and to protect against demon possession splinters from ten holy trees were to be worn

Terminologies and the Related Practices

A witch is commonly known by different names, such as *daayan*, *dakain* (daini), *tohmi* and *chudail*, *manthiravathi*, I, in different states and languages. An *ohja*,

bhagat, *bhuni* or *gunia* is a witch-doctor, or an exorcist of sorts, who is believed to have supernatural powers to identify a witch, undo the curse and cure. The person who suspects witchcraft will often consult a witch doctor called an *ojha*. The witch doctor, who uses medicinal herbs, in part learned their skills to counter the darker powers of the witches, called *daayan*. *Daayan-Pratha* known in rural India as practitioner of witchcraft. The so-called custodians, known as '*Tantrik*', or '*Baba*,' claim to be able to resolve issues of marital discord, or health and financial problems.

***Ojha* – the rural medicine man**

Witchcraft is considered as an activity that cannot be detected easily and such acts can be divulged only through divination. It is a usual belief among the Bodos of Assam that a witch's charm can only be countered by the *Ojha* or the medicine man. They are said to possess special knowledge about folk medicine. He or she is supposed to possess the power to counter the activities of the witches. The *ojhas* too, collect herbs, root, barks of trees, flowers to prepare his medicine. Besides they are believed to possess magical properties which are kept in secret. Another popular belief to do with *ojhas* is the fact that it is in their dreams that they receive the remedy for their cures. It is believed the spirits speak to them in their dreams and lead them to those places where the required herbs for treating a disease is found.

Tantra and tantric

India is one of the birth places of magic with a rich mysterious tradition called *Tantra*. Hinduism believes in 'ghosts,' 'sorcery,' 'witchcraft' etc. and it falls under *Tantra*. A Tantric claims that any human can acquire magical powers by channeling their sexual energy. It can be acquired also by worshipping Kali which is a ferocious and fearless deity. Kali protects and destroys and gives her followers phenomenal powers through the practice of *Tantra*. People get tired trying all kinds of medicinal treatments and they still don't get well. It is said, but even a few seconds of *Tantra* is enough to help someone recover quickly. *Tantra* gives you super powers. One can use *Tantra* to control, to harass, and even to kill someone. The Tantrics have a small handbook called the *Dakini Tantra* (written in Bengali language) and it contains various instructions on how to enchant people, cure various bites, how to deal with ghosts and witches.

Maiba/Maibis—Bez/Ojha

In the north-eastern states of India, there are more than 130 tribal communities found who maintain a close relationship with the nature. Animism, symbolism and

superstitious beliefs etc., play an important part in the tribal cultures. One of the oldest practice of witchcraft can be seen in Manipur. Maiba/Maibis are the persons (either male or female) who perform good or bad rituals for the community. They execute this to bring benefit to the lives of the people. Many tribal communities practice indigenous faiths, and resort to mythical beliefs and related rituals for treating ailments too. The traditional witchcraft practitioner is called as Bez or Ojha who even today dominate many tribal areas. Bez is also meant as faith healer who heals by spell and medicine. Mayong in Assam is said to be the capital of magic and witchcraft in India. The most common tricks used here include fortune telling through shells, palmistry, and future projection through a piece of broken glass.

9.6 Witch–Hunting in India

Witch-hunting is most common among poor rural communities which have little access to education and health services, and longstanding beliefs in witchcraft. According to the Indian National Crime Records Bureau, 2,097 people were murdered from 2000 to 2012 in the name of witch-hunting. This brings us to the question of how a woman is branded a witch. If there is crop failure or if an individual gets sick or harm befalls the community, the blame falls not upon a virus or crop disease, but upon an alleged witch. Often a woman is branded as a witch so that she can be thrown out of the village and in order to grab her land, or to settle scores, family rivalry, or because powerful men want to punish her for spurning their sexual advances. Sometimes, it is used to punish women who question social norms. There are more than eleven states in India, which have reported high rate of increase in witch-hunting

A case study of a modern black magic practitioner

Baba Rama Singh is a black magic practitioner and he practices a very crude form of magic. He says, if someone abuses or attacks him, he will forgive them a couple of times, but if they continue to bother him, he uses his powers of witchcraft on them. He has three women disciples from his village who are learning witchcraft in secrecy. Witchcraft is practiced in many ways and for all kinds of reasons. Baba uses drugs and alcohol to perform witchcraft. His goal is to empower his disciples. All his three students are desperately poor and for one of them, this has been a last resort. Poverty can force one to all kind of things, says one of the followers of Baba. She is extremely poor and have no one to take care of her. People have always harassed her so she

started learning these skills as a tool in order to safeguard herself from her neighbors. Thus, this disciple of Baba look at witchcraft as a self-defence-tool.

Oral history says Baba and his disciples do some rituals and evoke a deity of witchcraft called Dayan. A Dayan is a blood thirsty spirit supposed to hold cremation grounds. Like the goddess Kali, she is pure female energy that can be used to heal or destroy.

Rebellion and Witch-hunting

Two periods of adivasi rebellion in Jharkhand were simultaneously periods of intense witch-hunting. This was during the 1857 Mutiny, at which time the Santhal hul (rebellion) led by the brothers Sidhu and Kanhu took place and later at the end of the 19th century when there was the Birsa Munda-led rebellion in the Khuti-Ranchi area. Preceding these rebellions were periods of colonial rule. The colonial authorities, along with missionary priests, obviously opposed witch-hunting and killing. There was a belief that witches flourished under British rule. In Africa too there was the belief that the colonial state protected witches by refusing to act against them (Geschiere, 1997: 15). In 1837, Wilkinson issued a directive with specific instructions against witch murders (Sinha, 2007). When the political space of the colonial state shrank during the 19th century adivasi rebellions, there was a rise in witch-killings. In a parallel manner, one might note that the ending of apartheid in South Africa is said to have seen a rise in witch-killings. 'The problem seems to be that as soon as a new political space is opened up, it is overrun by rumours about the use of sorcery and witchcraft' (Geschiere, 1997: 7). The Jharkhand adivasi rebellions combined anti-colonial and anti-women connotations. As colonial rule weakened, many women were killed as witches. But should the anti-witch drives of the adivasi rebels be seen as a type of James Scott's 'weapons of the weak', as argued by Shashank Sinha (2007)? It would rather be more straight forward to point out that the adivasi rebellions of the 19th century also contained within them anti-women aspects related to the traditional practice of witch persecution and killing.

9.7 Conclusion

People always have aimed to solve all their problems within very short time but they have realized that socially constructed problems are not easy to resolve alone.

Human being found helpless and sometimes envious to their fellow human being in such complex situations. Few people who belong to the priest community came forward to help people. Therefore, to maintain the importance of religion priests' group have developed a system of apparatuses that are called craft/ witch craft or black magic. This system is based on people's believe and knowledge about causal effect of various chemical reactions. Sociology is concerned about the impact of such practices on social relationships. One of the significant impacts of these practices are seen on women. Women with different identities are labeled as 'witch' or practitioner of black magic to do harm to her own husband or close relatives.

9.8 Summary

People in their attempt to know the future and to keep themselves out of multilayered dangers including unknown health problem, have developed this craft. This craft consists of both traditional medical system and chemical as well as magical practices. Gradual development of science technology and most importantly growth of reasons have helped people to know about the secrets and social causes of development and wide spread use of such crafts. In twenty first century people have not yet stopped using these crafts because in rural areas they do not get access to both medical system and education and in urban areas gradual growth of informality and economic uncertainty along with multiple poverty make people believe and take help of these crafts. Women are again the worst victim of usage of these crafts. They are being sexually harassed in the name of cure from both psychological and physical problems. Again patriarchy has played major role in sustaining such crafts in different corner of society.

9.9 Questions

Short Answer Type Questions

- a. Why does human being believe in magic/witchcraft?
- b. Critically examine the gender perspective of this craft

Broad Answer Type Questions

- a. Why do people believe in magic?
- b. What do you mean by witch?

- c. What is voodoo doll?
- d. What is witch-hunt?

9.10 References

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UNIT 10 □ Body

Structure of the unit

10.1 Learning Objectives

10.2 Introduction

10.3 Perception of body in different religions of the world

10.4 Body Mass Index (BMI) and religion

10.5 Devdasi System in India : body politics and religion

10.6 Conclusion

10.7 Summary

10.8 Question

10.9 Reference

10.1 Learning Objectives

- To know the perception of human body through religions meanings/symbols.
- Nature of body politics and gender spectrum
- Empirical evidence to understand the relationship between BMI and religion

10.2 Introduction

Relationship with my body with me and with other bodies is almost absent. We only search for the hands and feet of god when we are in danger and instead of giving due credit to the helping human hand we prefer to call them hands of God. The famous quote of football player Mara Dona in world cup final, "hand of God," reminds about our perception of our own body. We have banished our body in the name of religion. Therefore, we can say our body is the bearer of religious meanings. Moreover, we believe that our body is the vehicle for perceiving and interpreting the world. In late twentieth century, Fuller (2005) found that gradually human being has

started associating feelings of power and domination with ‘expansive body postures.’ Symbolic interpretation of the posture of human body which is culturally produced in a given society also points that physical constructs influence the thought process of human being. Therefore, social scientists are looking for the relation between human religiosity and body posture. Fuller (2013) mentioned that even casual observation reveals the significant bodily components of religious practices, for example Muslims prostrate themselves for devotional prayer five times a day. Even in many forms, Christianity devotees kneel down or divert their gazes when supplicating God. In all religion, people either bow down or cover their head with sacred cloth in sacred setting. Through these shared behavioral practices (rituals), religions of the world requires individual to adopt those rituals that render them smaller, lower, less confident and more vulnerable and dependable on God.

Our body is not an isolated object rather it is constructed according to our social needs. Therefore, body is the representative of the society. Particularly the institution of religion has transformed the natural body into the social body by introducing several kinds of rituals to continue the system of hierarchy of different kinds including patriarchy. Therefore, it is observed by social scientists that the relationship between body and religion are twofold. According to Robert Fuller (2005), first perspective emphasizes culture’s role in constructing human thought and behavior. This approach illuminates the diverse ways that religious traditions shape human attitudes toward the nature and meaning of their physical bodies. Newly emerging information about the biological body has given rise to a second approach to the body’s relationship to religion. Rather than exploring how religion influences attitudes toward our bodies, these new studies investigate how our biological bodies exert identifiable influences on our religious thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Neural chemistry, emotions, sensory modalities, pain responses, mating strategies, sexual arousal systems, and genetic personality predispositions all influence the personal salience of religious beliefs or behavior. Attention to the biological body unravels many of the enigmas that formerly accompanied the study of such things as the appeal of apocalyptic beliefs, the frequent connection between religion and systems of healing, devotional piety aiming toward union with a beloved deity, the specific practices entailed in ascetic spirituality, or the mechanisms triggering ecstatic emotional states.

Our body is biological entity. For our survival, we need to consume food. These bodily activities follow certain cultural models including psychological settings. However, eating habit is also used to signify the pure and polluted form of body. In

India, people who belong to higher caste or Bramhin do not consume non-vegetarian food. They do not consider the body pure, which has consumed non-vegetarian food. Widows are not allowed to consume non-vegetarian food to minimize their sexual desire and other material needs. Religious scriptures are very strict in prescribing food for widow. Women require doing fasting even if possible without taking water. Through these practices, society disciplined both body and mind. Religion that is the compendium of morality, norms and values of the particular society is used to maintain the desired order of the society. Body has been considered in religion as territory that needs to be controlled by the authority of the society.

According to Turner's (2008) explanation of the relationship between body and religion, the body is dangerous and its secretions, particularly semen and menstrual blood, have to be enclosed by ritual and taboo to protect the social order. Yet, at the same time, the body is sacred. The charisma of holy individuals typically flows through their physical secretions, being stored up in blood and sweat. The concept of 'salvation' itself is intimately bound up with the health of the body as the verbs 'to save' (the soul and body) indicate. The medieval idea of repentance gave expression to the notion that human sinfulness was a conflict between the body and soul which found its resolution in the healing ministry of the sacraments under the institutionalized monopoly of the universal church. The sacrifice of Christ's body had produced a beneficial supply of healing charisma which the church stored up in a Treasury of Merit and which could be redistributed through confessional absolution and through the wine and bread of Holy thanks giving. In Christianity, the bread of communion was symbolic of spiritual and physical reconciliation and well-being. Comparatively, it is interesting to note that in Islamic Su-fism, the *baraka* of the saints is also associated with bread which is symbolic of plentitude and health (Turner, 1974). The parallelism between spiritual and physical well-being is thus a common theme of the Abrahamic tradition.

Anthropological observations suggest that bodily systems are also conducive to facilitating the altered states of consciousness entailed in most every form of religious ecstasy (Goodman, 1986, 1990). Rhythmic movement, sonic driving, intoxication, and fatigue driven changes in neurochemistry are but some of the bodily mechanisms co-opted by religious rituals to achieve spiritual objectives. Instrumental roles of bodily hormones and neurotransmitters in inducing spiritual states of individual that help human being to maintain their identity in family / specific religious group / and sometimes nationalism. Bodily movements according to Fuller (2014) in religious rituals helps create a felt- sense of connection with others.

Synchronous, or shared, body movement generates greater social cooperation. Scott Wiltermuth and Chip Heath (2009) examined data obtained in a series of experiments comparing cooperative behaviours in persons who had or had not engaged in shared body movements. They conclude that, “acting in synchrony with others can increase cooperation by strengthening social attachment among group members...cultural practices involving synchrony (eg. Music, dance, and marching) may enable groups to mitigate the problem and more successfully coordinated in taking potentially risky social action” (Wiltermuth & Heath, 2009, p-4).

10.3 Perception of body in different religions of the world:

Hall and Thoennes (2006) identified two perspectives on the body within Christianity. The first is that of “radical dualism” which perceives the body and the soul as radically separate from each other and regards the material world (including the body) as inherently evil or corrupt, while the spiritual world is seen as the ideal. Hall and Thoennes argued that this radical dualism has had pervasive effects in some segments of contemporary Christianity, for example a belief in salvation as release from the body (seeing heaven as a merely spiritual existence) and elevation of bodily sins above other sins such as gossip.

Two studies that have examined radically dualistic beliefs have demonstrated that these have to do within Christian populations and that the presence of these views are related to discomfort with the idea that Jesus had a body (Beck 2008, 2009). Another view present in Christian teachings is that of the person as a psychosomatic unity. This view sees the body and soul as intricately connected and together impacted by sin and redeemed (Clarke 2010; Cox 2002; Greenwood and Delgado 2011; Hall and Thoennes 2006; Malony 1998). Malony emphasized the physical basis for spirituality and advocated for an understanding of human beings as body-soul unities. Clarke asserted that body-soul unity has implications for mental health care, as that which affects the body also affects the spirit. Drawing on the work of Mahoney et al. (2005), Jacobson et al. (2013) suggested that the psychological construct of sanctification of the body seems to capture this more positive perspective on embodiment represented in Christian theology. Mahoney and Pargament (2005) defined sanctification as perceiving something as having divine significance and character. Sanctification may be theistic in nature (seeing something as a manifestation of one’s images, beliefs, or experiences of God) or non-theistic in nature (something is imbued with value, purpose, or transcendence).

Sanctification also involves investing time and energy on something in order to protect and preserve it. Jacobson et al. (2013) and Mahoney et al. (2005) found links between sanctification of one's body and increased body satisfaction, decreased body objectification and depersonalization, and engaging in health-related behaviors. In both studies, the authors noted that this may be due in part to various Christian teachings which encourage people to view their bodies as worthy and acceptable in God's eyes.

Body in Hinduism

The body has been a central concern for Indian religions and philosophies, on the one hand being given a positive evaluation in some traditions as the vehicle of the journey to liberation (*Moksha*) or enlightenment (*bodha*), on the other hand being given a negative evaluation in some traditions as a restriction or confinement of the soul from which it must break free. Most traditions that we designate by the term 'Hindu' have understood the universe in cyclical terms as going through periods of creation and destruction over and over again. As part of this cyclic process, the soul (*âtman*) is believed to be reincarnated in different bodies, animal and human, according to its action (*karma*). Thus, the kind of body that a being has is constrained or determined by its actions in the past.

The body along with its pleasure and suffering is the result of previous action in a former life. Some traditions think that the soul can be set free from the confinement of the body through meditation and ritual while some Yoga traditions have believed that the body can achieve immortality or at least great longevity. In popular or folk Hinduism, the body is important as the locus of a deity in ritual possession, making the body analogous to the icon (*mîrti*) in the temple. In some forms of Hinduism, the body is theologically important in being part of the body of God and conversely as symbolically containing the cosmos within it.

The body is also of central importance sociologically; the kind of body a person has is a determining feature of the endogamous social group or Caste (*jâti*) to which s/he belongs. Thus caste is a property of the body that one is born with, although according to some *Tantric* and devotional tradition, caste is eradicated at initiation (*dîkcâ*) and also at formal renunciation (*saCnyâsa*). Apart from Sociological and ritual concerns, the body has been the focus of medical discourse, the Ayurveda that cannot be separated from general Hindu cosmological and philosophical categories.

In these various formulations, the mind, along with other psychic faculties, is

represented as a subtle form of embodiment—a subtle sheath or an aspect of the subtle body—while the physical body is represented as a gross form of embodiment. The mind, like the physical body, is a type of matter, although it is a more subtle form of materiality than the physical body. The mind/body problem that has preoccupied Western philosophy is thus not a central concern in Hindu philosophical traditions. The principal problem is rather the relationship between the psycho-physical organism—the body-mind continuum and the Self is variously termed like *atman*, *Brahman*, or *Purusa* which is represented as the ultimate reality that in its essential nature transcends all forms of embodiment. In Samkhya, this problem is formulated in terms of the relationship between Prakṛti, primordial matter, and Purusa, pure consciousness. In Advaita Vedānta the problem is reformulated in terms of the relationship between the phenomenal world of embodied forms which is ultimately deemed to be *māyā*, an illusory appearance and Brahman (see Koller 1993). Hindu conceptions of the subtle body and subtle materiality find their most elaborate expression in *Tantric* traditions, which, drawing on the ontological and psychophysiological categories of *Samkhya*, *Yoga*, and *Advaita* Vedānta. We can re-figure the subtle body as a subtle physiology this is constituted by a complex network of channels (*nadis*) and energy centers (*cakras*) and the serpentine power of the *kundalini*.

In Hindu traditions the human body is generally represented not as ‘individual’ but as ‘dividual’ to use McKim Marriott’s term that is, a constellation of substances and processes that is connected to other bodies through a complex network of transactions. In the Dharmasastras a person’s level of purity is determined not only by his or her caste but also by such factors as stage of life and gender. In the ideal schema of four stages of life (*asramas*) prescribed for male members of the three higher *varnas*, the householder (*gṛhastha*) is ranked as the least pure, followed, in order of increasing purity, by the student (*brahmacharin*), forest-dweller (*vanaprastha*), and renunciant (*sannyasin* or *yati*).

With respect to gender, significant distinctions are made between men and women, both in terms of their respective contributions in the process of procreation to the purity status of the offspring and in terms of the relative purity ascribed to male and female bodies. First, according to the Dharmasastras’ theory of reproduction, the male ‘seed’ is more important than the female ‘field’ into which it is sown, for it is the seed that ultimately determines the status and characteristics of the offspring. Thus although endogamous unions between a man and woman of the same caste are considered the norm, *anuloma* unions between a man of a higher *varna* and a woman of a lower *varna* are permitted because the power of the male seed prevails in

determining the status of the offspring, even though that status will be somewhat tainted by the mother's less pure status.

Pratiloma unions between woman of a higher varna and a man of a lower varna are prohibited for the same reason, for even though the female field may be relatively pure, the status of the offspring will be debased by the polluting influence of the male seed (Manusmṛti 9.33-40, 10.69-72, 10.5-6). Second, although women are at times extolled in the Dharmasastras for their purity, female bodies are generally characterized as less pure than male bodies because of their association with polluting processes such as menstruation and childbirth. Hence women are excluded, along with Sudras, from activities that require a state of ritual purity—in particular, studying and reciting the Vedas and performing sacrificial rituals.

Buddhism recognizes neither the mind/body dualism that characterizes much of Western philosophy, nor the concept of an essential self, such as the Hindu *atman*. For the Buddhist, mind and body are both subject to inevitable processes of change. The body is viewed ambivalently: attachment to physical pleasure and repulsion from pain are obstacles to enlightenment; yet enlightenment is of the human realm — even gods must be reborn in human bodies to reach this goal. The discipline of meditation presupposes and aims to enhance mind/body unity. The body can serve spiritual ends. In *Tantra* — an esoteric Indian school which forms a current of Tibetan Buddhism — powerful energy channels in the body are accessed through meditation and yoga. And in Zen, physical gesture is used to cut through discursive thinking and promote the spontaneity characteristic of enlightenment.

Trikaya, (Sanskrit: “three bodies”), in Mahâyâna Buddhism, the concept of the three bodies, or modes of being, of the Buddha: the dharmakaya (body of essence), the unmanifested mode, and the supreme state of absolute knowledge; the sambhogakaya (body of enjoyment), the heavenly mode; and the nirmanakaya (body of transformation), the earthly mode, the Buddha as he appeared on earth or manifested himself in an earthly bodhisattva, an earthly king, a painting, or a natural object, such as a lotus.

10.4 Body Mass Index (BMI) and Religion

The medical literature has clearly demonstrated that being overweight or obese is a risk factor for numerous serious medical conditions, including type-2 diabetes, hypertension, coronary heart disease, elevated cholesterol levels, depression,

musculoskeletal disorders, gall bladder disease, and several types of cancer (Bray 1992; Colditz 1992; Pi-Sunyer 1996).

Moreover, evidence from the Framingham Heart Study has indicated this increased risk of diseases can also result in relatively large decrements in life expectancy (Peeters et al. 2003). Although a substantial amount of research has been devoted to identifying and understanding the determinants associated with the rise in obesity, there has nonetheless been limited research directed to examining the role that religion may play in contributing to, or combating, the obesity epidemic. However, there has been a growing body of evidence to suggest that there is a positive relationship between religion and health (Ellison and Levin 1998; George et al. 2002).

Thus, from theoretical standpoint, while one might expect a priori a negative relationship between religion and BMI, there is little empirical evidence to support this proposition. In an effort to solve this ostensible riddle, four possible theoretical explanations have been considered in the seminal paper by Cline and Ferraro (2006). In the first place, religion may both condemn and serve to control certain types of aberrant behaviour, such as excessive drinking, smoking, and pre-marital sex. However, excessive eating—or the sin of gluttony—may not receive the same level of condemnation and could even be viewed as an ‘accepted vice’ by religious leaders and followers (Cline and Ferraro 2006, p. 271). Second, many religious functions and celebrations revolve around the consumption of food, which, in turn, may create an environment conducive to excessive eating (Cline and Ferraro 2006). Third, it is conceivable that religion may not affect BMI, but that a reverse causal relationship exists where obese people are drawn to religion for comfort, social support, and less stigmatisation (Cline and Ferraro 2006; Kim et al. 2003). Fourth, religion may be practiced at home (e.g., the viewing of religious television programs) and not at the place of worship.

Cline and Ferraro (2006) refer to this activity as ‘religious media practice’. Individuals engaged in this type of religious activity are more likely to have access to (and consume) household food and beverages, which may be high in caloric content and by extension contribute to weight gain. It is also possible that individuals who engage in ‘religious media practice’ may have a preference for a more sedentary lifestyle. In empirical terms, there is evidence to suggest a positive relationship between religion and BMI. For example, using data from the Pawtucket Heart Health Program, Lapane et al. (1997) observed that church members in two Southeastern

New England communities were more likely to exceed a 20% overweight limit compared to non-church members.

Ferraro (1998) found that there were more obese adults in US states with both a larger proportion of residents reporting religious affiliation and a higher share of Baptists. In another study, Kim et al. (2003) reported that Conservative Protestant men had a 1.1 higher BMI value compared with men who reported no religious affiliation. However, no statistically significant relationship between religion and BMI were observed for women. On the other hand, Cline and Ferraro (2006) found a statistically significant positive association between Baptist affiliation and obesity for US women. The authors also presented evidence that women engaged in 'religious media practice' are more likely to be obese.

Contrary to the study by Ferraro (1998), who found that religious practice was more common among overweight Americans, Kortt, Michael A., and Brian Dollery (2014) conducted an empirical study. According to that study one possible explanation for the difference in these findings is that the rising rate of obesity among US men has led US religious institutions to condemn the 'sin the gluttony' and promote the benefits associated with healthy eating. There is evidence in the US context that religious institutions are often involved in promoting positive health messages (Steinman and Bam bakidis 2008). By extension, men who attend religious services are, in turn, more likely to be exposed to the effects of positive peer reinforcement and support from other congregation members. Ayerset al. (2010) provides some evidence of peer effects. In their study of women of Korean descent living in California, it was observed that religion may be helpful in the prevention of obesity through religious-based social mechanisms.

10.4.1 Gendered body and religion: contemporary approach

According to Van den Berg, Mariecke & Bogert, Kathrine & Korte, Anne-Marie. (2017) as sign and site of individual and collective identity, the human body has gained increasing importance and attention in today's culturally and religiously diverse societies. Worldwide many ideological conflicts on the management of diversity and the role of religion in the public sphere are being played out on 'the body'. This is especially visible in recurring debates on – often women's – religious dress, like the recent 'burkini-ban' in Nice, France (Abdelaal 2017). The fierceness of debates concerning the public bodily expression of religion – in particular Islam – in Western societies, conceals the fact that bodies in present-day society are governed, regulated, shaped and represented in many ways, often unrelated, or even

in opposition, to religion. Akin to that, the enormous scholarly attention within both gender studies and religious studies to debates on Islamic women's dress (e.g. Ahmed 2011; Macdonald 2006; Read and Bartkowski 2000; Scott 2009), though an important corrective to dominant framings of Muslim women, risks taking attention away from other forms of religious and secular gendered body politics. As various social theorists have argued (Mascia-Lees 2011; Shilling 2012; Turner 1992), the central position of the body within contemporary society reflects a number of social insecurities.

Women's emancipation, first, has led to uncertainty about gender roles and, consequently, an over-emphasis on traditional expressions of masculinity and femininity for instance the secular 'neomasculine movement' and Christian initiatives like 'The 4th Musketeer'. Second, medical interventions to prolong or terminate life can lead to reformulations of insecurities about death and its effect on the body. Third, technological innovation leads to questions about the limits and boundaries of what actually constitutes the human body. Not only does the excessive focus on religious bodily practices conceal the fact that there are more general social insecurities about embodiment at work, it also conceals that in practice the boundaries between 'religious' and 'secular' body politics are often blurred (see e.g. Samie 2013).

In the study of religion and gender, like the public/private and religious/secular binaries, and Western and heteronormative dominant models of knowledge, are challenged. In his article *'Absence, the Body Politic(s) of the Jezebel Spirit'*, Jonathon O'Donnell explores the ways in which in US Evangelical 'spiritual warfare' discourse the body of the Biblical character Jezebel that functions as a site on which 'deviant' identities are projected. O'Donnell shows how in dichotomous 'third wave' neo-charismatic evangelical writings, different kinds of bodies are imagined in relation to each other: that of Jezebel, the church, and the state. In their attempt to frame the nation as a reality of God, light and righteousness versus a world of Satan, darkness, and sin, US third wave Evangelicals need a symbolic place to store those bodies that end up on the wrong side of the project of American spiritual warfare. The gendered, sexualized and culturally 'othered' body of Jezebel provides such a space. In unpacking the various ways in which Jezebel is imagined. However, O'Donnell simultaneously reveals the tensions and failures that are involved in the attempt to create an idealised America Jezebel, which becomes the site for the projection of anxieties towards 'nomadic' (black, LGBT) others. This forms an entry point for investigating the nomadic traits of third wave evangelicalism itself, for instance in its global formations and capitalist tendencies.

Jill Krebs, in her article '*The Body of Mary: Embodiment and Identity in Modern Apparitions*', discusses how Roman Catholic devotees construct a variety of their own bodily identities in relation to the body of Mary. As Krebs argues, it is important to take into account the material dimension of appearance, since it is precisely in the specifics of her body where the identities of her believers are projected. Drawing on recent literature on material religion, as well as post-colonial scholarship, Krebs explores the power relations that inform the constructions of various Marian bodies. She discusses how these constructions take place at the level of the formation of ethnic and national identity and believers' political concerns, often resulting in images of Mary which differ considerably from dominant, white, European-based imaginations. Like the Jezebel spirit in the article by O'Donnell, Mary resists her own passive inclusion into political projects, albeit in a different way.

10.5 Devdasi System in India: body politics and religion

The Indian institution of Devdasi, a religious practice consists of the offering of girls to the deities in Hindu temples. The dedication usually occurs before the girl reaches puberty and requires the girl to become sexually available for community members. Traditionally, it is believed that these girls are "serving" society as "ordained" by the goddess. In other words, "the Devadasis are courtesans in God's court" (Kadetotad, 1983). Due to her sacred condition and her belonging to the divinity, a devdasi cannot be married to one particular man, as in the traditional idea of marriage women are transferable property gifted to husbands. Instead, she is a property of a divinity that benevolently allocates her to the whole community. This concept is well summarized by a saying in that goes: "a Devdasi is servant of God but wife of the whole town" (Torri, 2009).

The Devdasi system is an old one, and apparently pre-Aryan. There is no mention of it in Vedic Sanskrit literature, but Tamil Sangam literature, which dates back to 200-300 BC, describes a class of dancing women called parattaiyar. They were courtesans who performed some ritual function, lived in a separate part of the city, and eventually came to be associated with temples. Later, in the post Vedic and post Buddhist age, the system seems to have spread through India, though it remained strongest in the south. Young girls were usually dedicated to the goddess, or occasionally to gods, very often after the appearance of matted hair called *jath* which is taken to be a sign of the call of the goddess. The dedicated girl was forbidden to marry (Omvedt, 1983).

There is a myth behind dedication of girls to the goddess goes like this. Renuka, consort of sage Jamadagni, was a pure woman. She was so pure, that she could carry water in a freshly-moulded pot. She would mould one pot everyday on the banks of the river where she went to fetch water. On one of these trips, she happened to see a Gandharva (Angelic beings from Heaven) couple bathing in the river. She was struck by the handsome looks of the male partner as she saw his reflection in the river waters. But, because of this 'alleged violation' of her marital vows, the pot broke and her husband 'caught' her in this 'act of adultery'. He decided that she had 'sinned' by coveting a man who was not her husband. Angered by this puncture to his saintly ego, the sage at once ordered their 12-year-old son Parashuram to behead his own mother. The son did as told. Happy with his son's unquestioned obedience, Jamadagni wished to bless him with a boon. The clever son requested his father to bring his mother back to life. At this point, the sage saw a matangi (low caste women) pass by. He beheaded her and attached the head to Renuka's body.

When Renuka was thus resurrected, with the body of a saintly woman and the head of a matangi, Jamadagni wished to make amends for having acted in fury. He blessed her saying that unmarried girls would worship her as their Goddess and these girls would be dedicated.

Features of Devadasis

There are certain features by which male and female 'Devadasi', 'Jogata' or 'Jogappa' can be identified. The following features identify a female Devadasi of Yellamma Goddess in the areas of Karnataka and Maharashtra state.

1. Jat (a thickened bunch of hair) : In the superstitious atmosphere of village, a girl or a woman who grows a 'Jat' in her hair necessarily to become a Devadasi. The 'Jat' appears because of unkempt hair and unclean habits, but it is interpreted as a summon from the Goddess to become a Devadasi. Other Devadasi in village frighten the girl's parents that if the girl is not offered in marriage the Goddess, the whole family would be destroyed under a curse from the Goddess. After becoming Devdasi, the 'Jat' is purposefully cultivated and made into a thick wad of all the hair on the head and bandied around proudly. From body hygiene point of view, this sticky, smelly, dirty and muddy wad of hair is crawling with the lice and bacteria, giving rise to skin diseases and mental agony. Those men who still wish to have a sex with the doomed woman must have really perverted minds.

2) Darshan (a Neckless of White and Red Glass beads) : A proclaimed Devdasi wears a 'Darshan' around her neck. As already stated, this announces her availability for sex, even in case of sexual abuse women Devadasi cult won't allow justice of police station or court.

3) Paradi (a Small Hand-held Bamboo Basket) : Devadasi uses this as a begging bowl. The Paradi carries in it the metal idols of Goddess Yellamma and a small cloth pouch with twin compartments, one containing yellow turmeric powder and another red Kumkum. She accepts money, pounded rice or the available grain as an alm and liberally applies turmeric powder on the giver's forehead.

4) 'Jag' (Large Bamboo Basket of Yellamma Goddess Idols carried on Head): This too is a begging basket and contains seven or more small metal idols of assorted Gods, a driven cobra head and one large idol of Yellamma. The alms received are put in this basket.

5) Jogwa or Joga (Begging) : Jogawa is the traditional right of a Devadasi. As per her oath taken before the Goddess, she must maintain herself by begging only. On reaching the door of alms giver, she hollers 'Akkandi Jogwa' meaning "continuous begging" or 'Yekkayya Jogayya'. The yell is associated only with the Devdasi and not with other beggars. An unattached Devdasi may beg throughout the week, but a housewife Devdasi would beg only from at least five houses each on Tuesday and Fridays the days marked for the Goddess. The Devadasis performs worship on behalf of devotees of deity and get gifts from the devotees.

6) Bhandara (Turmeric Powder): Bhandara is another name for the turmeric powder in Devadasi cult.

7) Observances : Devdasis generally observe Tuesday and Fridays by begging as the days of the Goddess. Some of them also do a fast on these days.

8) Possessed : Some female Devadasi put on show of begging possessed on certain occasions and days. When in trance, they will prophesize about future events concerning a person. Superstitious people accept these as pronouncements uttered by the Goddess herself.

Distinguishing Features of Male Jogata:

All the distinguishing features that appear in a 'Devdasi' are found in a 'Jogata'. Some features, however are particular to them. These are being described below: 1) Use of Sari : A male becoming a 'Jogata' is made to wear a sari at the time of his initiation, which he continues for his life.

2) **Feminine Gesture :** A Jogata tries to behave like accomplished women and overdoes his gestures and facial expressions. He also pretends to be attracted (or may be really is attracted) towards men. In any case, along with his sari and femininity felinity, he really is a pathetic figure. 3) Liberal use of Cosmetics: ogatas overuse

facial cosmetics to hide facial hair and shaving marks as also different skin cream on hands and feet to soften it up.

4) Menstruation : Due to acutely developed female psyche, a few Jogatas claim that they too undergo menstruation-an anatomical impossibility.

5) Change in Name : Many Jogatas change their original male names and only respond to adopted female names. It is observed that majority of the Devdasis children's are not known to their father. Such children adopted their mother's name in identification.

Devadasi Practice : The Present situation

There was a time when Devadasis were considered so auspicious and holy that their presence was compulsory at every wedding for the making of the Mangal Sutra. This was based on the belief that a devadasi is an eternally married Suhagan, who is never widowed. It was believed that if she made the Mangal Sutra with her own hands, the bride who would wear it would also die a Sumangali. Those days have gone. Exploited by wealthy and powerful classes of men on the one hand and beset with poverty on the other, Devadasis have been driven to prostitution. Present-day Devadasis are not the descendants of courtesans, nor are they proficient in any arts. They are not concubines of the well-to-do and are not wealthy. The lives of the Devadasis of Maharashtra and Karnataka are dedicated to Yellamma, the universal mother. They are married to her and can marry no one else. The only art they are conversant in is the art of submitting to any man who desires them and is willing to pay for their favours.

10.6 Conclusion

The relationship between body and religion is miscellaneous. In some religions embodiments of God/goddesses are seen through human body and few religions believe in various body involving rituals as part of their religious system. Human being has realized that their body and mind suffered from various diseases or discomforts. Therefore, to get rid of such material impact human being needs to undergo rituals involving their body. These rituals inclusive of fasting again have impacted on the forming identity of women. Widow women from India have to perform fasting and deglamorizing their body by chopping off their hair to maintain their purity. They have found their body as the vehicle that would help them to get redemption from mortal life. Sociologists have found that human being has associated the idea of purity and pollution with human body.

10.7 Summary

The relationship between religion and body has given birth of a new politics that is known as body politics. Within this, politics living body of both human being and animal are being connected with various rituals and interest of both state and religious institutions. One of the most important aspect of this politics is about the disciplining the body of women. Religion has been playing significant role in controlling the body movement and physical appearance of women both public and private domain to sustain patriarchy in society. ’.

10.8 Questions

Short Answer Type Questions

1. How have women body been disciplined through religion?
2. Explain the relationship between BMI and religious belief
3. Do a comparative analysis of perception of body in different religions of world

Broad Answer Type Questions

1. How do you explain “Sati -system”?
2. Write a note on perception of body in Christianity
3. Write a note on how women’s body are used in establishing religiosity in society

Essay Answer Type Question

1. What is “trikaya”?
2. Who are called Devdasi?

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Unit 11 □ Social Functions of Religion: Contemporary Trends

Structure of the unit

- 11.1 Learning Objectives**
- 11.2 Introduction**
- 11.3 What is religion?**
- 11.4 Fundamental Elements of Religion**
- 11.5 Religion as a System of Belief and Ritual**
- 11.6 Functions of religion**
- 11.7 Conclusion**
- 11.8 Summary**
- 11.9 Questions**
- 11.10 References**
- 11.11 Glossary**

11.1 Learning Objectives

After studying the unit you should be able to

- Know what religion is
- Grasp the components of religion
- Describe some functions of religion

11.2 Introduction

Human being is as the social as well as a religious or spiritual being. Religion is a key concern of man. It is widespread, permanent, omnipresent and perpetual interest of man.

Not only, human has biological, economic, cultural and social necessities but also he looks for religious quest making him to become impatient even beyond the satisfaction of his basic physical wants. Man is a rational being, as Man cannot live by bread alone, he has been religious from the beginning of mankind.

Religion is not a phenomenon of modern time. The institution of religion is widespread. All societies, past and present, have their own religion. Each and every culture has their religious belief and practices which are far from being identical. A person is being controlled by laws, customs, conventions, fashions, etc., but they are not only the means of social control. Apart from these, there are religion and morality which formulate and shape all of them. Thus, an individual becomes socialized to be the fittest member of the society. They are not only the most significant forces of social control but also the most useful guides of human activities. The social life of man is the combination of its economic, political, philosophical, scientific and other aspects like the religious aspect which plays a vital role in person's life. From the early stages of man's life religion not only has been in subsistence from the beginning but also it has been exercising an incredible influence upon other institutions. Religious doctrines have influenced and conditioned economic endeavours, political movements, property dealings, educational tasks, ideological passions, scientific inventions and artistic developments. Religion is the basis of the cultural needs. It has added a new aspect of human life and development.

11.3 What is religion?

Religion revolves round man's faith in the supernatural forces. It is an actual experience which is connected with emotions, especially with fear, awe, or reverence. Numerous societies contain a wide range of institutions associated with religion and a body of special officials, with forms of worship, ceremonies, sacred objects, tithes, pilgrimages etc. In present civilized and enlightened societies, religious leaders have developed intricate theories or theologies to explain person's position in the universe. Religion is intimately related with morality and has thorough rules of conduct.

Emile Durkheim (1859-1917) described the existence of religion in terms of the functions it performs in society. He argued that it was necessary to observe religion as a product of society, rather than as a product of a transcendent or supernatural presence (Durkheim, 1915/1964). He argued that religion fulfils real needs in each society, namely to reinforce certain mental states, sustain social solidarity, establish

basic rules or norms, and concentrate collective energies. These can be seen as the widespread social functions of religion that inspires the unique natures of diverse religious systems of the world, past and present (Sachs, 2011). Durkheim aspired to reveal religion's future in a new world that was breaking away from the traditional social norms that religion had maintained and held (Durkheim, 1915/1964).

The study of religion is a tricky enterprise which occupies quite special demands on the sociological imagination (Giddens, 2010). Sociologists define religion as a cultural system of commonly shared beliefs and rituals that provide a sense of ultimate meaning and purpose by creating an idea of reality that is sacred, all encompassing and Supernatural (Durkheim, 1976 [1912]; Berger, 1967 Wuthnow 1988).

This definition has three essential component as mentioned by Giddens:

- Religion is a form of culture. Culture consists of the mutual values, beliefs, norms and ideas that create a common identity among a group of people. Religion shares all these characteristics.
- Religion employs beliefs that take the forms of ritualized practices. Each religion, thus, has a behavioural facet – special activities in which the supporters take part and that identify them as members of the religious communities.
- Possibly, religion offers a sense of purpose— a feeling that life is eventually valuable and meaningful. Religion indicates it by explaining logically and interestingly what goes beyond or overshadows everyday life, in ways that they are feature of culture (such as an educational system or a belief in democracy) normally cannot (Geertz 1973; Wuthnow 1988).

Further, the world religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam—are really centres of elaborate cultural systems that have dominated 'whole' societies for centuries. These ideas will be discussed in the following unit.

14.4 Fundamental Elements of Religion

- ❖ **Belief in Supernatural forces:** Religion shows belief in supernatural forces. Some people trust in several kinds of forces and consequently worship them all. They are labeled as *polythesis*. A few others believe in

only one power, or the God or the Almighty. He is formless and shapeless. They think Him, the omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. They adore him in a diverse ways. They are called *monotheists*.

- ❖ **Man's Adjustment with the Supernatural Forces:** Religion creates an atmosphere for man so that he believes that he is at the pity of the supernatural forces. He shows his gratefulness and subordination to them by means of prayers, hymns and other works. Worship is the spirit of religion. Man considers that his disrespect to and negligence of them would bring him tragedy. Hence he is engaged in continuous endeavour to adjust himself with the divinity or the supernatural.
- ❖ **Acts, Defined as Righteous and Sinful or Sacred and the Profane:** Religion judges some acts as righteous and sacred and encourages such acts. It considers some acts as sinful and profane and condemns such acts. Behaving in accordance with the religious code or standards is righteous; going against them is sinful. The good or righteous acts are supposed to bring man good results, while the sinful acts result in ruin. As Durkheim opines, a distinction between the sacred and the profane is found in all the societies. The ideas of heaven and hell are woven around the righteous and sinful acts.
- ❖ **Some Methods of Salvation:** Every religion has its own clarification regarding *salvation*. It is observed as ultimate aim of a devotee. The Buddhist termed it *Nirvana*, a process of becoming one with the God. The Hindu called *Mukti* or *Moksha*—free from the chain of birth and death. They have prescribed four paths for its attainment—the *Yoga Marga*, the *Jnana Marga*, the *Bhakti Marga* and the **Karma Marga**.

The main defining feature of religion for Durkheim was its capacity to differentiate sacred things from profane things. In his famous published work, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, he defined religion as: “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them” (Durkheim, 1915/1964). **Sacred** objects are things said to have been felt by divine power. They are sanctified through ritual practices and viewed as prohibited to ordinary, everyday contact and use. **Profane** items, on the contrary, are items integrated into ordinary

everyday living. They have no religious implication. From Durkheim's social scientific perspectives, it is the act of setting sacred and profane apart which gives to their spiritual significance and reverence, rather than anything that actually inheres in them. This essential dichotomy creates two distinctive aspects of life, that of the common and that of the sacred, that exist in mutual elimination and in opposition to each other. This is the basis of many codes of behaviour and spiritual practices. Durkheim argues that all religions, in any form and of any culture, share this quality. Therefore, a belief system, whether or not it cheers faith in a supernatural power, is regarded as a religion if it outlines this divide and creates ritual actions and a code of conduct of how to interact with and around these sacred objects.

11.5 Religion as a System of Belief and Ritual

Religion is a matter of belief in mystic forces. As Durkheim has said the notion of sacred or holy and profane or unholy are fundamental in religion. What makes a thing sacred or unholy is our attitude, a characteristic of our mind. It is quality which we attribute to the thing. It is not innate in the thing. It is an attitude knotted with emotion and sentiments that makes us feel that certain things are beyond and distant from the ordinary matters of everyday life. In the flame of this subjective attitude two different aspects of the righteous acts can be recognized. They are belief and ritual.

Religion as a System of Belief

All religious organizations rely on beliefs, knowledge and training to implement authority upon their members. Religious belief is the cognitional aspect of religion. It attempts to explain the nature and origin of sacred things. It thinks that sacred things really exist. It informs us what this world is like, what kind of creatures dwell in it and what their past history and present interests are. It gives us message about the cosmos, creation, life and death, future of the world and such other profound but delicate matters. Belief gives information about the fantastic practical world. It also tells us how the world is linked to the one we in reality live in. It advises us what the nature of sacred objects is and how these objects relate to the super empirical world. But in both the cases belief rests upon an outlook, not upon an surveillance. *"It is belief based on faith rather than upon evidence; it is Biblical language the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."* The holy character is not visible to the sense. Hence, even a visible and tangible sacred object would be

just an ordinary object if it were not for the belief. For example, there is nothing to discriminate a sacred cow from any other animal apart from the faith of the Hindus who look upon the cow as sacred.

Religion as a System of ritual

Religious ritual is the practical side of religion. As M. Douglas in his *Purity and Danger*, 1966, says rituals refers to *symbolic actions concerning the sacred*. Kingsley Davis opines that ritual is behavior with reference to super empirical entities and sacred objects.

Rituals are an important part of the tradition of many religions. In various religions, it is the custom for people to meet for a celebration on one day in every week. There are also major celebrations that may be held only at certain times of the year, for example, on the birthday of a person who is honoured in that religion, such as Guru Nanak's Birthday, celebration of 25th December etc. A few religions boast celebrations for different seasons of the year(e.g. Nabanna in Bengal, Bihu in Assam), or when the sun or moon is in a certain part of the sky.

Almost in every religion, the important stages of a person's life have a religious celebration. Birth, naming, reaching an age to think for oneself, reaching adulthood, marriage, childbirth, sickness and death are all celebrated by some religions. Having a celebration or special traditions when a person dies is very common.

It is the traditions that are about death that give the earliest evidence of religious beliefs. Scientists have discovered that 120,000 years ago, Neanderthal people initiated burying their dead. Early Homosapiens set tools and other things into graves with the bodies, as if they could use them in the afterlife. From 40,000 years before, many of the objects in graves are small artworks. Scientists consider that these objects were put there for religious reasons.

Ritual is a ways to memorize the person of the sacred universe. Man's belief and supports are strengthened by the religion. This brings him emotional and sentimental ecstasy. When many individuals perform ritual together it becomes very effective as a unifying factor

If we comprehend belief and ritual then we, perhaps, understand religion. Early thinkers have paid attention to the intellectual aspects of religion and they neglect the importance of ritual. But in present scenario we are taking interest in the social functions of religious belief and rituals.

11.6 Functions of religion

The worldwide subsistence of religion shows that religion has a great survival value. The universality of religion does not depend on the forms of belief and practice, but upon the social functions which religion unanimously fulfills. These functions are promoting individual as well as social significance.

- 1. Religion offers religious experience.** It is the essential function of religion. Prayer, worship and meditation are the synopsis of religious experience. Through this means man conveys awe, reverence, gratitude and grace to the almighty or the God, or the divine power. When a person get in touch with the supernatural power he undergoes some sort of strange, mysterious experience. He subordinates with the Supernatural through prayers. He creates the worldly life and its problems. This religious experience promotes the human longing, ideals and values. It aids the development of personality sociability and creativeness among the members of the society.
- 2. Religion provides tranquility of mind.** Religion offers for the individual the most wanted peace of mind. At every crisis, personal or collective, religion is called in for consolation and peace of mind. It provides goodness and helps the development of character. The world is full of uncertainties, indefiniteness, dangerous, insecurities and unhappiness, the requirement for safety and security is truly great. Religion here acts as the healer of the ills of life. It decreases our complaint to some amount. It grants the individual, an emotional support in the face of ambiguity. It consoles them when they are upset. It brings them back while they are alienated from the goals and norms of society. In doing so it supports ascertained values and goals and strengthens their moral. It puts forth a man's inspiration, hope, faith, optimism and courage.
- 3. Religion encourages social solidarity, unity and identity.** Religion promotes and authenticates the traditional ways of life. Further, it unites people. It is acknowledged that a common faith, common value judgments, common sentiment, common worship are the important factors of merging people. By their participation in religious rituals and devotion, people try to recognize themselves as having something in common. As Davis remarks, 'Religion gives the individual a sense of identity with the distant past and a limitless future'. As Thomas F.O'Dea utters, "In periods of rapid social change and

large scale social mobility, the contribution of religion to identify may become greatly enhanced," A.W. Green has indicated that religion is "the supremely integrating and unifying force in human society."

- 4. Religion safeguards the value of life.** Religion is a valuable tool of preserving the values of life. It defines and redefines the values. Religion directly supports moral, spiritual and social values. It implements a remarkable influence over the younger ones and their behaviour. Some of the important agencies are the family and the church, through which religion inculcates the values of life in the minds of the budding children. In addition to this, "religion sacralises," as Thomas F.O'Dea opines, "the norms and values of established society." It controls individual impulses by the dominance of group goals.
- 5. Religion – an important agent of social control.** Religion is one of the varieties of informal means of social control. It controls the actions of people in its own way. It illustrates rules of conduct for people to follow. The creation of spirits, ghosts, taboos, souls, commandments, sermons etc. manage human deed and introduce discipline. Ideas of paradise and hell have a sturdy consequence on the behaviour of people. Therefore, religion has a great disciplinary value.

Religion possesses its own methods to deal with those individuals who go against its norms. It has its own methods to reintegrate the insubordinate into the social group. Besides, religious functions are widely utilized to support the ethical codes and moral practices amongst many people.
- 6. Priestly functions of religion.** By executing its priestly function religion plays an important role to maintain the stability and order of the society. Religion recommends a type of relationship through various kinds of worship and beliefs. By this it grants the emotional and touching ground for the new security. Through its authoritative teaching of beliefs and values, it promotes similar points of view and keeps away from conflicts. It maintains the status quo which creates equilibrium in the society.
- 7. Religion endorses welfare.** Religion renders services to the people and sponsors their welfare. It pleads to the people to be compassionate, merciful and supportive. It awakens in them the spirit of shared help and cooperation. It rouses that humanitarian attitude of the people. It strengthens the sense of belonging to the group. It upholds art, culture and supplies means for the

development of personality on the right lines. A variety of religious organisation like the *Brahmo Samaj*, *Arya Samaj*, *Ramkrishna Mission*, *Vishva Hindu Parishad*, *Hindu Seva pratisthan*, the Society of Jesus etc. involve various social, educational, aesthetic, cultural, medical and other activities.

- 8. Religion encourages recreation.** Religion provides recreation through religious lectures, *kirtanas*, dramas, dance, music, *bhajan*s *puranas*, *harikathas*, fair, festivals, musical concerts, and so on. It tries to make men sorrow less and be fearless. Various religious festivals and rituals can provide relief to the disturbed mind.
- 9. Religion attempts to enlighten individual's suffering and facilitates to integrate personality.** Man cannot be lived by knowledge only. Man has rationality as well as he is an emotional being. The things for which man struggles in this planet are in some measure refused to them. If the goal is to attain recognition, an average career may bring disappointment. With plurality of objectives no individual can escape dissatisfaction. But the culture affords him with the goals that anybody can achieve. These are ends that are exceeding the world of real experience, with the consequence that no indication of failure to attend them can be conclusive. If the individual believes that he has got them, that is enough. All he needs is adequate faith.
- 10. Religion augments Self—** Religion develops the self to infinite proportions. Religious beliefs associate the self to the endless or cosmic design. Through unity with the infinite the self is enhanced, made splendid. Man regards as himself the finest work of God with whom he shall be amalgamated. Thus, his self becomes ostentatious and humane.

No doubt that the Civilization has marched towards advancement by the wheel of rapid developments with the help of physical and biological sciences which have affected the functions of religion. Science has often upset the religious belief. With the advent of scientific innovations, upsurge in secular and the Nationalist attitude has posed a challenge, it is questionable whether societies have faith on the acceptance of certain ethical and moral principles without believing in the existence of a spiritual or super natural world. Still, the institution of religion is alive. It is so deep – rooted and it will survive and continuously remain functional in the near future.

Karl Marx, the promulgator of socialism, remarks that religion promotes inequalities. According to Kevin J. Christiano et al., “Marx was the product of the Enlightenment, embracing its call to replace faith by reason and religion by science.” But he “did not believe in science for science’s sake ... he believed that he was also advancing a theory that would ... be a useful tool ... [in] effecting a revolutionary upheaval of the capitalist system in favour of socialism.” For this reason, the heart of his arguments was that humans are best directed by reason. Marx’s theories centred on the oppressive economic situation in which he lived. Marx’s outlook of capitalism observed rich becomes richer and their workers become poorer as a result of “surplus value” and the mode of production. The consequences are that oppressed worker are alienated from the production they created. The common worker is forced to believe that he or she is a replaceable instrument, and is alienated to the point of extreme dissatisfaction. Christianity instructs that those who accumulate wealth and power in this life will almost certainly not be rewarded in the next while those who suffer exploitation and poverty in this life, they will certainly go to the heaven if they cultivate spirituality. Therefore Marx’s famous utterance, “religion is the opium of the people”.

Dysfunctions of religion

It is true that religion as a basic social institution has been satisfying certain positive functions. It promotes social solidarity, as Durkheim has noticed, and it necessitates inner individual peace and solace as Edward Sapir has seen. But one cannot think from the functions described earlier that religion plays its role positively always. There are numerous negative functions. It has certain malfunction also, for instance Sumner and Keller, Benjamin Kidd, Gillin, Karl Marx, Thomas F. O’dea and others have pinpointed the dysfunctions of the religion which were often created for the societies. The fundamentalist activities of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh and made Iran has presented the negative role of the religions. Even in our country we have faced the same scenario. One of functionalist, Thomas O’dea mentions the major dysfunctions of religions, such as:

1. **Religion restrains protest and hinders social changes.** Religion offers man emotional comforts and helps him to reconcile himself with situations. In doing so Thomas O’dea says, religion hampers protest and impedes social changes which may even show to be beneficial for the welfare of the society. All protest and conflicting behaviour are not always harmful. Protest and

conflicts often become essential for carrying out changes. Some changes would definitely lead to positive reforms. By slowing down protest and avoiding changes, religion perhaps, delay reforms. This effect of religion may build up a scenario of volatile resentment which ultimately results in bloodshed revolution leading to destructive changes.

2. **Religion creates obstacle to change conditions in society.** A religion can produce norms and code of conducts. It can also sacralise the norms and values of society. A number of the norms which loss their appropriateness under changed condition may also be compelled by religion. This can “impede a more functionally appropriate adaptation of society to changing conditions.” During the mediaeval period in Europe, the “Church refused to grant the ethical legitimacy of money -lending at interest, despite the great functional need of this activity in a situation of developing capitalism.” At present, traditional Muslims face religio-ethical problems concerning interest-taking. Like this, social conflict is apparent in the case of birth control measures including abortion, in the Catholic world. The debate of abortion in Ireland shows the same scenario.
3. **Religion boosts conflict and makes the evolution of realistic solutions more difficult.** By performing its visionary functions “religion may provide standards of value in terms of which institutionalized norms may be critically examined and found seriously wanting.” But this function can also have its dysfunctional outcomes. Religious criticism of the available norms and values may become so unrealistic that it blurs genuine issues. The religious “demands for reform may become so Utopian that they constitute an obstacle in working out a more practical action.” Religion always searches for its demands as the will of God, and thus, it may convey an extremism to the conflict that makes compromise impossible. For example because of religious passions, the left- wing Protestants sects of the Reformation period became the victims of prejudice. Due to this bigotry, some of these Protestants took some severe stands for which any negotiation between them and the general society was actually impossible.
4. **Religion obstructs the development of new identities.** In satisfying its identity function, religion may cultivate certain loyalties which may actually hamper the development of new identities which are more suitable to new situations. Religious identification may prove to be divisive for societies.

Religion penetrates deeply into the mental structures of people generating a strong hatred that makes them easier to combat their opponents tooth and nail. In the religious wars that pursued Reformation, this animosity (which was a result of religious identification) was very much obvious. Similarly the ideology of communism and nationalism help religion to promote an element of identity which provides intergroup conflict by dividing people along religious lines. The conflict between Hindus and Muslims in India shows the concepts of new identities.

5. **Religion may encourage reliance and liability.** Religion often makes its supporters become dependent on religious institutions and so called *Guru* or leaders. They never help them develop an ability to imagine individual responsibility and self direction. It is quite normal to experience in India that some people prefer to follow the advices of priests and religious leaders before initiating some great ventures instead of taking the ideas of those who are capable in the field. That is why, it can be said that religion's functions in accordance to individual development and maturation, is highly challenging.

Other dysfunctions

Some other dysfunctions are given below:

- **Religion is conservative and hinders progress.** Religion, undoubtedly, is said to be conservative. It is considered as pessimistic and not progressive. Religion sustains traditionalism and supports the status quo. It wants to maintain stability and equilibrium in the society and therefore, resists changes.
- **Religion upholds evil practices.** It promotes evil practices for instance, cannibalism, suicide, slavery, incest, killing of the aged, untouchability, human and animal sacrifice, etc.
- **It creates confusion, contradictions and conflicts.** Religion comprises of some inconsistencies. It has maintained war and peace, wealth and poverty, hard work and idleness, virginity and prostitution. No religion has offered any fixed standard of morality.
- **It endorses superstitious beliefs.** Superstition is closely associated with religion. Some kind of superstitions cause harms likewise, witchcraft, sacrifice of children, etc. Besides, there is a belief that *Maa Shasthi* (Goddess) is

responsible for child birth which hampers family planning programme in India.

- **Religion is the root of wastes.** Sumner and Keller say that religion often causes economic wastes— investing large sum of money on building temples, churches, mosque, etc. spending much on religious fairs, festivals and ceremonies, spoiling huge amount of food articles, material things, etc. in the name of offerings.
- **Religion destroys unity.** Religion in the name of creating harmony, also produces gigantic diversities among people. Individuals fight against each other in the name of religion. Loot, mass killing, rape, arson and such other cruel activities have been carried out in the name of God and religion.
- **Religion weakens human potentiality.** Religion makes people fetish. It creates an environment that divine power will bring luck. Due to this notion, people often believe in fortune.
- **Religion hampers scientific achievements.** Science is often regarded as antagonist to religion. Galileo, Darwin, Huxley and others experienced a pessimistic view from the supporters of religion.
- **Religion promotes fanaticism.** It often claims act without reasoning. For example, a few years ago there was a rumor that lord Ganesha drunk milk by his trunk.

So now we can say that religion play both positive and negative role in the society. Some prophets like Buddha, Chaitanya, Kabir, Mohammad, Jesus, Ramkrishna, Vivekananda show the light of peace whereas some fundamentalist leaders create the path of violence, riot, tension among the masses. History repeats that numerous wars fought in the name of religion.

11.7 Conclusion

Religion plays a pivotal role in human's life. No doubt human has unlimited desire. She/he has an intention to satisfy these through religious activities. It is obvious for them, probably, to be a religious person at the very beginning of the human society. Each and every society has some kind of religious performances controlling and regulating people. It is deeply concerned with a sense of morality. Religion has some fundamental components. It is a System of Belief, practices and

rituals. The main function of religion is to bind and unify people by bringing peace and harmony in the society. Religious functions, perhaps, sometimes show conservativeness. But it also brings some changes by enlightening people. Numerous prophets have brought some basic changes like eradication of caste inequality, promoting girls' education in society. In spite of its dysfunctions, religion plays an important role to maintain balance and equilibrium in society.

11.8 Summary

Religion is a key concern of man. The institution of religion is widespread. All societies, past and present, have their own religion. Each and every culture has their religious belief and practices which are far from being identical. The study of religion is a tricky enterprise which occupies quite special demands on the sociological imagination. Sociologists define religion as a cultural system of commonly shared beliefs and rituals that provides a sense of ultimate meaning and purpose by creating an idea of reality that is sacred, all encompassing and supernatural. Religion is a matter of belief in mystic forces. As Durkheim has said the notion of sacred or holy and profane or unholy are fundamental in religion. What makes a thing sacred or unholy is our attitude, a characteristic of our mind. It is a quality which we attribute to the thing. The worldwide subsistence of religion shows that religion has a great survival value. The universality of religion is not to depend on the forms of belief and practice, but upon the social functions which religion unanimously fulfills.

11.9 Question

Broad Answer Type Questions

1. Elaborate the functions of religion.
2. Discuss the components of religion.

Short Answer Type Questions

1. What is religion?
2. Write a note on belief.
3. Discuss rituals

Essay Answer Type Question

1. Define religion

2. What is belief?
3. What do you mean by rituals?

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11.11 Glossary

Religion: A system of belief and practices, and philosophical values shared by a group of people that defines the sacred, helps explain life, and offers salvation from the problems of human existence.

Sacred: Things that are awe inspiring and knowable only through extraordinary experience. Sacred traits or objects symbolize important values.

Profane: All empirically observable things that are knowable through ordinary everyday experiences.

Rituals: Patterns of behaviour or practices related to the sacred.

Unit 12 □ Religious Charisma: The Sociology of the Religious Sects

Structure of the unit

- 12.1 Learning Objectives**
- 12.2 Introduction**
- 12.3 Church and ecclesia**
- 12.4 The Universal Church**
- 12.5 The Ecclesia**
- 12.6 The Denominations**
- 12.7 Cult**
- 12.8 Cults or new religious movements**
- 12.9 Secularization and civil religion**
- 12.10 Hinduism**
- 12.11 Buddhism**
- 12.12 Jainism**
- 12.13 Sikhism**
- 12.14 Islam**
- 12.15 Christianity**
- 12.16 Judaism**
- 12.17 Conclusion**
- 12.18 Summary**
- 12.19 Questions**
- 12.20 References**
- 12.21 Glossary**

12.1 Learning Objectives

After studying the unit you should be able to

- Gather some fundamental knowledge of religion
- Describe some concepts of various religion
- Discuss functions of sects

12.2 Introduction

Scholars have proposed various sociological classifications of religious movements. In the sociology of religion, the most extensively used classification is the church-sect typology. The typology declares that churches, ecclesia, denominations and sects all form a continuum in the society.

A sect is a small religious group that adheres strictly to religious doctrine that often includes unconventional beliefs or forms of worship. Sects commonly symbolize a withdrawal from a secular society and an active refusal of secular culture. For instances, the Dead Sea scrolls explain clearly that the beliefs of both early Christian and Jewish sects, likewise the Essenes, were originated in an antipathy with society's self generous pursuit of old worldly pleasures and in a denial of the corruption distinguished in the widespread religious hierarchy (Wilson, 1969).

Prior to their development, sects often are so insensitive in their rejection of society that they provoke harassment. Some actually flourish on martyrdom, which causes members to strengthen their ardent promise to the faith.

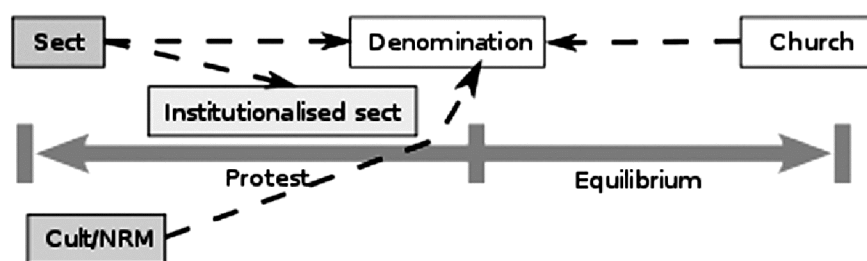
Troeltsch characterised sects as organisations that broke away from a church (through a schism) because they were frustrated with its tradition or practices. This would be a small-scale splitism with the sect formed by disappointed members of a congregation rather than the destruction of the top of the hierarchy.

Troeltsch's remarks may be noted below :

- ❖ Sects claim a monopoly over the truth and are often hostile to other religious organisations
- ❖ They do not have a complex, bureaucratic hierarchy, instead are usually being led by a charismatic leader.
- ❖ They are small.

- ❖ They demand total commitment from members, and therefore are not accessible without significant sacrifices on the part of members
- ❖ They are usually hostile to the state and to mainstream society (what Wallis called world-rejecting)
- ❖ Often made up of marginalised, deprived groups, such as those on low incomes or from marginalised minority-ethnic groups.

The Church-sect continuum



A diagram of the church-sect typology continuum is given above. This includes church, denomination, sect, cult, new religious movement, and institutionalized sect.

This church-sect typology has its basis in the work of Max Weber. The fundamental principle is that there is a continuum along which religions collapse, varying from the protest-like orientation of sects to the symmetry sustaining churches. Along this continuum are several extra types, each of which will be discussed in turn.

These contradictory religions are often classified by sociologists as ‘ideal types’. Ideal types are pure illustrations of the categories. As there is significant difference in each religion, how intimately an individual religion, in fact, grasps and comprehends their ideal type categorisation will differ. On the other hand, the categorisation design is useful as it also outlines a type of developmental procedure for religions.

Sects are inclined to grow quickly (especially if there is a charismatic leader) but can also turn down very fast. If the sect was set up around a leader, then that leader’s demise can also lead to the end of the sect. Also if the sect made some particular forecasts (for example, the end of the world!) then the prediction not coming about can also lead to the swift end of the sect.

12.3 Church and ecclesia

Johnstone(1997) offers the following seven characteristics of churches:

- Churches Claim universality, include all members of the society within their ranks, and have a strong tendency to equate “citizenship” with “membership”
- Exercise religious monopoly and try to eliminate religious competition
- Are very closely allied with the state and secular powers; frequently there is overlapping of responsibilities and much mutual reinforcement
- Are extensively organized as a hierarchical bureaucratic institution with a complex division of labor
- Employ professional, full-time clergy who possess the appropriate credentials of education and formal ordination
- Primarily gain new members through natural reproduction and the socialization of children into the ranks

Allow for diversity by creating different groups within the church (e.g., orders of nuns or monks) rather than through the formation of new religions.

12.4 The Universal Church

A universal church includes all the members of a society within one united moral community (Yinger, 1970). It is wholly a part of social, economic and political status quo and therefore, accepts and supports (more or less) the secular culture. In a preliterate society, in which religion is not really a distinguished institution but rather pervades the complete fabric of social life, a person fits in to the church simply by being a member of the society. In more advanced societies, this religious variety cuts across divisions of social structure, like social classes and ethnic groups, fastening all believers into one moral community. A universal church, however, does not look for change under any circumstance of social disparity created by the secular society and culture, and in fact, it may even legitimize them (Example: the Hindu religion of India, which used to carry on a rigid caste system).

12.5 The Ecclesia

The ecclesia is a church that shares the similar ethical system as the secular

society and has come to symbolize and endorse interest of the society at large. Like the universal church, an ecclesia widens itself to all members of a society but as it has so entirely adjusted its ethical system to the political structure of the secular society that it comes to signify and promotes the interest of the ruling classes. In this procedure the ecclesia lose some devotion among the subordinate social classes, who increasingly refuse it for membership in sects, be they sacred or 'civil' (Yinger, 1970). An ecclesia is usually the official or national religion. For most people, membership is by birth, rather than conscious decision. Ecclesia have been universal throughout human history, example include the Catholic Church in Spain and the Roman Empire, the Anglican Church, which is now the official church of England; Islams in Saudi Arabia and Iran; and Confucianism, which was the state religion in China until early in this century

12.6 The Denominations

A denomination *tends to limit its membership to a particular class, ethnic group, or at least to have its leadership positions dominated by members of such a group*. It has no official or unofficial relationship with the state, and any political participation is purely a matter of choice by the denomination's leaders, who may, either support or combated any or all of the state's activities and political positions. Denominations do not withdraw themselves from the secular society. Rather, they partake actively in secular affairs and also tend to cooperate with other religious groups. Those two characteristics differentiate them from sects, which are separatist and unlikely to be tolerant of other religious influences (Yinger, 1970), (for that matter, universal churches, by their very nature, also typically dismiss other religions. In America, Lutheranism, Methodism, other Protestant groups, Catholicism, and Judaism exemplify the characteristics of a denomination.

The denomination lies between the church and the sect on the continuum. Denominations come into life when churches lose their religious monopoly in a society. A denomination is one religion among many. When churches or sects turn into denominations, there are also some changes in their characteristics. Johnstone (1977) gives the following eight characteristics of denominations:

- ❖ Denominations are similar to churches, but unlike sects, they are in relatively good terms with the state and secular power and may even attempt to influence government at times.

- ❖ They maintain at least tolerant and usually fairly friendly relationships with other denominations in a context of religious pluralism.
- ❖ They rely primarily on birth for membership increase, though they will also accept converts; some even actively pursue evangelization.
- ❖ They accept the principle of at least modestly changing doctrine and practice and tolerate some theological diversity and dispute.
- ❖ They follow a fairly routinized ritual and worship service that explicitly discourages spontaneous emotional expression.
- ❖ They train and employ professional clergy who must meet formal requirements for certification.
- ❖ They accept less extensive involvement from members than do sects, but more involvement than churches.
- ❖ They often draw disproportionately from the middle and upper classes of society.
- ❖ Most of the major Christian bodies that formed post-reformation are denominations by this definition (e.g., Baptists, Methodists, Lutherans, Seventh day Adventists). (Dawson, 2006).

12.7 Cult

The concept of “cult” has lagged behind in the modification of the terms that are used in analyzing the other types of religious origination. Bruce Campbell considers Troeltsch’s concept in defining cults as non-traditional religious groups that are stood on belief. He provides three ideal types of cults:

- a mystically-oriented type
- an instrumental type, in which inner experience is sought solely for its effects
- a service-oriented type that is focused on aiding others.

He also offers six groups in the applications of analysis: Theosophy, Wisdom of the Soul, Spiritualism, New Thought, Scientology, and Transcendental Meditation.

In the late nineteenth century, several scholars, such as Joseph Campbell and Bruce Campbell, noted that cults are related with beliefs in a divine element in the individual. It is Soul, Self, or True Self. Cults are essentially temporary and loosely

organized. Campbell brings two key types of cults to attention. One is mystical and the other is instrumental. This can divide the cults into being either occults or metaphysical assemblies.

Campbell recommends about cults, they are non-traditional religious groups based on belief in a divine element in the individual. Other than the two main types, there is also a third type. This is service-oriented. Campbell (1978) observes that “the kinds of stable forms which evolve in the development of religious organization will bear a significant relationship to the content of the religious experience of the founder or founders.”

12.8 Cults or new religious movements

By sociological typology, cults are, like sects, new religious groups. But, unlike sects, they can shape without breaking off from another religious group, though this is by no means always the case. The characteristic that most differentiates cults from sects is that they are not campaigning a return to pure religion but rather the accepting of something new or something that has been fully lost or forgotten (e.g., lost scriptures or new prophecy). Cults are also much more likely to be led by **charismatic** leaders than are other religious groups and the charismatic leaders tend to be the individuals who are blessed with God’s grace and generate the new or lost element that is the main element of the cult.

Cults, like sects, can expand into denominations. As cults grow, they bureaucratize and develop many of the features of denominations. Some scholars are cautious to award cults denominational status because many cults uphold their more mysterious characteristics. Some denominations in the US that began as cults include Christian Science and the Nation of Islam.

Finally, there is a push in the social scientific study of religion to begin referring to cults as New Religious Movements (NRMs). This is the result of the often derogatory and offensive meanings attached to the word “cult” in popular language.

<p>Whereas Durkheim saw religion as a source of social solidarity, German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920) believed it was an agent of social change. He studied the effects of religious belief on economic activities and observed that seriously Protestant societies for example, those in the Netherlands, England, Scotland, and Germany were the most highly developed capitalist societies and that their most thriving business and other leaders were Protestant. In his writing</p>

The Protestant Work Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (1905), he asserts that the Protestant work ethic persuaded the development of capitalism by capsizing the traditional anti-materialist Christian values of poverty.

Weber noted that certain kinds of Protestantism maintained the quest of material gain by motivating believers to work hard, be successful, and not waste their profits on playful things. Material wealth was no longer seen as a mark of sin, but as a sign of God's favour. Since he sum up, "In [Puritan theologian Richard] Baxter's view the care for external goods should only lie on the shoulders of the 'saint like a light cloak, which could be thrown aside at any moment.' But fate decreed that the cloak should become an iron cage" (Weber 1905, p. 181). He published four major texts on religion in a context of economic sociology and his rationalization thesis: *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905), *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism* (1915), *The Religion of India: The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism* (1915), and *Ancient Judaism* (1920).

In this regard, Weber has often been seen as focusing an idealist explanation of the development of capital, as contrasting to Marx's historical materialist explanation. Weber's work structured on Marx's and to see his Protestant ethic thesis as part of a broader set of themes regarding the process of rationalization. The question roamed in his mind about the development of the west while the East lagged far behind. Weber argued that the modern types of society developed in the West because of the process of rationalization: the general tendency of modern institutions and most areas of life to be converted by the purpose of instrumental reason—rational bureaucratic organization, calculation, and technical reason—and the overcoming of "magical" thinking referred to as the "disenchantment of the world".

The irony of the Protestant ethic as one phase in this course was that the rationalization of entrepreneur business practices and organization of labour eventually meted out with the religious ends of the ethic. At the last part of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber unenthusiastically portrays the fate of modern humanity as an "iron cage." The iron cage is Weber's metaphor for the situation of modern humanity in a technical, rationally defined, and "efficiently" organized society. Having forgotten its divine or other intentions of life, humanity surrenders to an order "now bound to the technical and economic conditions of machine production" (Weber 1904). The modern subject

in the iron cage is “only a single cog in an ever-moving mechanism which prescribes to him an essentially fixed route of march” (Weber 1922).

Weber argues for making sense of religious action on its own terms. A religious group or individual is influenced by all kinds of things, he says, but if they claim to be acting in the name of religion, we should attempt to understand their perspective on religious grounds first. Weber gives religion credit for shaping a person’s image of the world, and this image of the world can affect their view of their interests, and ultimately how they decide to take action.

Weber also did considerable work on world religions, including Hinduism and Buddhism.

In his magnum opus *Economy and Society* Weber distinguished three ideal types of religious attitudes:

world-flying mysticism

world-rejecting asceticism

inner-worldly asceticism.

He also separated magic as pre-religious activity.

12.9 Secularization and civil religion

In relation to the processes of rationalization combined with the development of modernity, it was forecasted in the works of many classical sociologists that religion would decline. After World War II, various contemporary theorists have critiqued secularization thesis, arguing that religion has continued to play a crucial role in the lives of individual’s universe. The rise of Islam as a chief world religion, especially its new-found influence in the West, is another noteworthy development. Furthermore, points of view may be there regarding the concept of civil religion and new world belief systems. In a nutshell, presumed secularization as a demur in religiosity might seem to be a myth, depending on its definition, such as, some sociologists have argued that steady church presence and personal religious belief may coexist to influence religious authorities on social or political issues. Moreover, regular presence or attachment does not necessarily show off a behaviour according to their doctrinal teachings.

Peter Berger

Peter Berger notices that while social scientists are supporting the secularization theory, they have long maintained that religion must inevitably exhaust in the modern world, though today, much of the world is as religious as ever. On the contrary, Berger also reminds that secularization may be certainly have taken hold in Europe, while the United States and other regions have sustained to remain religious regardless of the increased modernity. Dr. Berger suggested that the grounds for this may have to do with the education system; in Europe, teachers are sent by the educational authorities and European parents would have to put up with secular teaching, while in the United States, schools were for much of the time under local authorities, and American parents, however unenlightened, could fire their teachers. Berger also notes that unlike Europe, America has seen the rise of Evangelical Protestantism, or “born-again Christians” (Berder, 2001)

The largest world religions are Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Taoism, Sikhism, Judaism and Jainism. There are various other religions. People who do not believe in any gods are called atheists. People who say that there is no proof are called agnostics.

12.10 Hinduism

Most Hindus worship one Being of ultimate oneness (Brahman) through infinite representations of gods and goddesses. These various deities become personified within idols, temples, gurus, rivers, animals, etc.

Hindus trust their fate in this present life was decided by their actions in a preceding life. Hinduism, therefore, promotes a probable explanation for misery and vice in this life. If a person’s behavior before was evil, they might rightly experience great adversity in this life. Pain, disease, poverty or a disaster like a flood is justified by that person as a consequence of one’s of their personal evil deeds, usually from a previous life.

A Hindu’s aim is to become liberated from the law of karma...to be free from continuous rebirths. Only the spirit matters which will one day be released from the cycle of reincarnations and one can relax.

Hinduism lets a person decide how to work toward divine perfection. There are three probable paths to end this cycle of karma:

- ✓ Be lovingly devoted to any of the Hindu deities;
- ✓ Grow in knowledge through meditation of Brahma (oneness)...to realize that circumstances in life are not real, that selfhood is an illusion and only Brahma is real;
- ✓ Be dedicated to various religious ceremonies and rites.

Hinduism comprises three sects. They are *Shaivism*, *Vaishnavism* and *Shaktivism*. *Shaivism* is one of the leading sects that believed *Shiva*, worshipped as a creator and destroyer of universe, is the supreme god overall. The devotees of *Shaivism* are regarded 'Shaivites' or 'Saivites'. Sub-sects in *Shaiva* tradition are *Pashupata Shaivism*, *Shaiva Siddhanta*, *Kashmir Shaivism*, *Siddha Siddhanta*, *Lingayata* and *Shiva Advaita*.

In *Vaishnavism (Vaishnava)*, Lord *Vishnu* is believed as the supreme being. The cause, sustainer and destroyer of all worlds. Vishnu is believed both in the form and as the formless infinite one. *Vaishnava* sect is the largest among Hindu sects. Several subsects are found in *Vaishnava* tradition. They are *Lakshmi sampradaya*, *Brahma sampradaya*, *Rudra sampradaya*, *Kumara sampradaya* and *Shaktism (Shakteya)*.

In *Shaktism*, *Shakti* (mother divine) is believed as the Supreme Being and all other (female/male) varieties are considered the manifestation of the supreme. *Shakti* tradition is a major sect in the Bengal, and Assam in India.

Besides, *Smarta* tradition is the mixture all the above three traditions and worships absolute god in the form of *Shiva*, *Vishnu*, *Shakti* and other forms as well. *Smarta* tradition has higher reverence for *Vedas* and *Upanishads*. Others are *Shrautism*. The word *Shrauti* originates from *Shruti*, *Shrauti* means the tradition of *Shrutis*. *Shrauti* tradition gives higher importance to practices from the earlier portion of *Vedas*.

In *Saurism*, *Surya* (sun god) is worshipped as the form of Supreme Being. This sect comes from the vedic traditions. In *Ganapatism*, the Supreme Being is worshipped through the form of Lord *Ganesha*. Teachings of Guru Kabir form the basic structure of *Kabir Panthi*. *Aghor panthi* is a branch of *Shaivism*, an usual adherent of this sect, is a wandering sadhu whose main purpose in life is to attain god through simple living. *Tantrik panth* advocates practice of *Tantras* for one's development on the path of self realization.

12.11 Buddhism

Buddhists do not worship any gods or God. People other than Buddhist often think that Buddha is worshipped by the Buddhists. On the other hand, Buddha (Siddhartha Gautama) never declared to be divine, but to a certain extent he is viewed by Buddhists as having achieved what they are also motivated to attain, which is religious enlightenment and, with it, independent from the constant cycle of life and death.

Most Buddhists think a person has innumerable rebirths, which certainly include distress and misery. A Buddhist seeks out to end these rebirths. Buddhists believe it is a person's longings, hatred and delusion that cause these rebirths. As a result, the aspiration of a Buddhist is to decontaminate one's heart and to let go of all yearnings toward bodily or corporeal wishes and the connection to oneself.

Buddhists follow a list of religious doctrines and follow personal self-control, fasting and very devoted meditation. When a Buddhist meditates it is not the same as praying or focusing on a god, it is more of self-discipline. Through practiced meditation a person may attain *Nirvana* — “the blowing out” of the flame of desire.

Buddhism offers something that is true in most main religions: disciplines, values and directives that a person may yearn for to live by.

After the death of Buddha, Buddhism was divided into two sects namely Mahayana and Hinayana. The terms Hinayana (Lesser Vehicle or Modest Vehicle) and Mahayana (Greater Vehicle or Vast Vehicle) originated in *The Prajnaparamita Sutras*. Hinayana chooses the original teaching of Buddha. It underlines individual salvation through self discipline and meditation. This sect of Buddhism relies in the heavenliness of Buddha and believes in Idol Worship. Mahayan sect spread from India to several other nations such as China, Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Nepal, Tibet, Bhutan and Mangolia. Mahayana believes in Mantras. Its chief principles were based on the prospect of universal liberation from misery for all beings. So, this sect is called Mahayana (The Great Vehicle). Its principles are also based on the existence of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas symbolizing Buddha nature.

12.12 Jainism

Jainism, Indian religion teaching, represents a path to spiritual purity and enlightenment through disciplined non violence (ahimsa, literally “non injury”) to all living creatures.

The name Jainism originates from the Sanskrit verb *ji*, “to conquer.” It talks of the ascetic battle that Jain renunciants (monks and nuns) must fight against the zeals and bodily senses to gain enlightenment, or omniscience and purity of soul. The most renowned of those few individuals who have achieved enlightenment are called Jina (literally, “Conqueror”), and the tradition’s monastic and lay adherents are called Jain (“Follower of the Conquerors”), or Jaina. This term came to substitute a more ancient designation, Nirgrantha (“Bondless”), originally applied to renunciants only. Jainism has been divided into two sects: *Shvetambara* and *Digambara*. With the *Shvetambara* (“White-Robed”) sect is claiming that monks and nuns should wear white robes and the *Digambara* (“Sky-Clad”; i.e., naked) sect is arguing that a true monk (but not a nun) should be naked. This controversy gave rise to a further clash as to whether or not a soul can attain liberation (*moksha*).

12.13 Sikhism

Sikhism is a religion whose disciples are called “Sikhs”. Their holy book is the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Many sources identify Sikhism as a monotheistic religion, while others call it a monistic and panentheistic religion. The major historic sects of Sikhism, have included *Udasi*, *Nirmala*, *Nanakpanthi*, *Khalsa*, *Sahajdhari*, *Namdhari Kuka*, *Nirankari* and *Sarvaria*.

12.14 Islam

Muslims consider there is the one almighty God, named Allah, who is considerably superior to and inspirational from humanity. Allah is regarded as the creator of the world and the foundation of all good and evil. Everything that occurs is Allah’s will. He is a commanding and strict judge, who will be kind-hearted toward disciples depending on the adequacy of their life’s good actions and religious commitment.

Although, a Muslim honors several prophets, Muhammad is believed the last prophet and his words and lifestyle are that person’s last word. Being a Muslim, one must follow five religious duties:

1. Repeat a creed about Allah and Muhammad;
2. Recite certain prayers in Arabic five times a day;
3. Give to the needy;

4. One month each year, fast from food, drink, sex and smoking from sunrise to sunset;
5. Pilgrimage once in one's lifetime to worship at a shrine in Mecca. At death — based on one's faithfulness to these duties — a Muslim hopes to enter Heaven. If not, they will be eternally punished in hell.

For several people, Islam matches their aspirations about religion and divinity. Islam teaches that there is one supreme deity, which is worshiped through good works and disciplined religious rituals. After passing away a person is rewarded or punished according to their religious devotion. Muslims trust that giving up one's life for Allah is a definite way of entering Paradise.

In the commencement Islam was typically divided into three major sects. These political divisions are well known as Sunni Islam, Shia Islam and Khariji Islam. Each sect developed several different jurisprudence systems reflecting their own accepting of the Islamic law during the course of the history of Islam.

For example, Sunnis are divided into five sub-sects, namely, *Hanafi*, *Maliki*, *Shafi'i*, *Hanbali* and *'ahiri*. The Shia, in contrast, first developed *Kaysanism*, which in turn divided into three major groupings known as Fivers, Seveners and Twelvers. In the Shia sect, the *Zaydis* separated first. The non-Zaydis are initially called as "*Rafida* Groups." These *Rafidis* were later separated into two sub-groups known as *Imamiyyah* and *Batiniyyah*.

12.15 Christianity

Christians rely on one eternal God who is creator of all that is. He is regarded as a loving God who recommends everyone a personal relationship with himself now in this life.

In his life on this world, Jesus Christ did not recognize himself as a prophet indicating to God or as a teacher of enlightenment. Later, Jesus claimed to be God in human form. He executed miracles, forgave people of their sin and said that anyone who believed in him would have eternal life.

Supporters of Jesus consider the Bible as God's written message to human civilization. Further, being an historical record of Jesus' life and miracles, the Bible discloses his personality, his love and truth, and how one can identify and communicate to God, as you could a friend.

Christians think that all people sin, including themselves. They perceive Jesus as their Savior, as the Messiah who was forecast by all the prophets of the Old Testament, in the Bible. They believe that Jesus Christ, out of love for us, paid for the sin for all of humankind by dying on a cross. Three days later, he arose from the dead as he swear, proving his deity.

Christianity is divided into two sects: the Catholic and the Protestant. Christianity can be taxonomically separated into five major groups: the Church of the East, Oriental Orthodoxy, Eastern Orthodoxy, Catholicism, and Protestantism. Protestantism contains many groups which do not follow any ecclesiastical governance and have extensively deviating beliefs and practices.

12.16 Judaism

Judaism, is a monotheistic religion, followed among the ancient Hebrews. Judaism is characterized by a faith in one inspirational God who exposed himself to Abraham, Moses, and the Hebrew prophets and by a religious life in accordance with Scriptures and rabbinic traditions. Jewish religious movements, occasionally called “denominations” or “branches”, include different groups which have grown among Jews from primordial times. At present, the main division is between the Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist movements, with several smaller movements alongside them.

12.17 Conclusion

Sociology of religion focuses on the charismatic character of religion using church sect typology claiming a continuum. There is a difference among church, sect, ecclesia, denominations etc. This variation developed on the basis of differences in membership criteria. Cults are another type creating a path of new religious movement. Durkheim finds religion as a source of social solidarity. On the other hand, Weber has faith on religion as an agent of social change with the advent of modernization, the religion is, perhaps, going to decline. Which the upsurge of rationalization, the concept of secularization comes into existence. But many scholars demand that religion plays a vital role in individual’s life after the Second World War. The largest World religion comprises of Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Taoism and Judaism. Some are polytheistic in the nature while others are monotheistic. All the religious leaders as well as secularists may significantly promote the interests of the dominant class elites.

12.18 Summary

In the sociology of religion, the most extensively used classification is the church-sect typology. The typology declares that churches, ecclesia, denominations and sects form a continuum with declining magnitude in society. Sects are separate from groups coming from more mainstream religions line. A sect is a small religious group that adheres strictly to religious doctrine that often includes unconventional beliefs or forms of worship. Sects commonly symbolize a withdrawal from a secular society and an active refusal of secular culture. A universal church includes all the members of a society within one united moral community. The ecclesia is a church that shares the similar ethical system as the secular society and has come to symbolize and endorse interest of the society at large, like the universal church, an ecclesia widens itself to all members of a society but as it has so entirely adjusted its ethical system to the political structure of the secular society, it comes to signify and promotes the interest of the ruling classes. Various sects from different religion has been discussed here.

12.19 Questions

A. Long questions

1. What is sect?
2. Discuss the role of Hinduism as sect.

B. Short questions

1. How does Weber relate economy with religion?
2. Describes denomination
3. Analyse the role of universal sect.

C. Short question

1. What is ecclesia?
2. Who are shaiva?
3. Who practices Judaism?

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12.21 Glossary

Charismatic leader: The power that derives from ruler force of personality. It is the capacity to inspire person and devotion among followers.

Ecclesia: A church that shares the same ethical system as the secular society and that has come to represent and promote the interests of the society at large.

Sect: A small religious group that adheres strictly to religious doctrine involving unconventional beliefs or forms of worship.

Unit 13 □ Religious Congregations and their Social Role

Structure of the unit

- 13.1 Learning Objectives**
- 13.2 Introduction**
- 13.3 What is religious congregation?**
- 13.4 Activities of Religious Congregation**
- 13.5 Further Functions of Religious Congregation**
- 13.6 Role of congregation in identity formation**
- 13.7 Congregation in Indian Society: Hindu Congregation**
- 13.8 Conclusion**
- 13.9 Summary**
- 13.10 Questions**
- 13.11 References**
- 13.12 Glossary**

13.1 Learning Objectives

After studying the unit you should be able to

- Know what religious congregation is
- Grasp the activities of religion congregation
- Describe some concepts on identity
- Role of congregation among Hindus

13.2 Introduction

Several religions have an organizational structure through which religious congregation takes place. Religious congregation, probably, work through many types of organizations in which specialists can be employed and trained, religious meeting conducted and communication facilitated between society and the members

of religion. The congregation also promoted interaction among the members of the religion to foster a sense of unity and group solidarity. Rituals may be performed in the presence of other members of religious congregation. They may be limited to certain location, like temples, mosque, church etc, or there may be processions from one place to another. Though some religious behaviour may be carried out by individuals in private, all religions demand some public and shared participation.

13.3 What is religious congregation?

In his research, Hertel notices the congregational nature of temples in North India. He defines a congregation as a “well-defined body of people who share the same priest(s) for purposes of worship and / or for performance of rites of passage. Congregations are membership groups surrounded by churches and sects.

Although all religions are social, there is extensive disparity in their organizational character so that some can be recognised as ‘churches’, while others drop far short of any legitimate definition of that term. A church religion has a comparatively steady, organized congregation of lay members who accept a particular religious creed, so, we include both ‘sects’ and ‘churches’ in church religions. An unchurched religion typically waits for a congregational life, generally existing as fairly free-floating culture based on loose networks of like minded persons who, if they assemble frequently, do not acknowledge a specific religious creed, while they may be inclined to share a common religious view. Unchurched religions may or may not unite around leaders.

In recent times, sociologists of religion have developed explicit definitions of religious congregations. Chaves argues religious congregations as: “relatively small-scale, local collectivities and organizations through which people routinely engage in religious activity: churches, synagogues, mosques, temples.” Stark *et al.* depict the boundaries of congregational religion by defining church and what he denotes as “unchurched religion,” but in this article we shall refer it as noncongregational religion:

Basically, Stark *et al.* locates congregations as “groups of *adherents* who *meet regularly* for religious reasons.” The above definitions center on regular, small religious assemblage of members.

Sometimes, congregations assemble to perform various services such as health camp for Aid/HIV people, Congregations offer a highly accessible context for social

entrepreneurship. In particular, clergy not only started entrepreneurial quests but also encourage an atmosphere in which congregants are encouraged to do the same.

Accordingly, one useful way to view congregation is through the lens of social entrepreneurship theory. Weerwardena & Mort, (2006) and Zahra et al. (2009) opine that congregation is:

- ❖ A social mission, alternately described as a vision, a commitment to create and sustain social value or an intent to bring about social change.
- ❖ A propensity to create and exploit opportunities to realize that mission. As Thompson noted in his study on social entrepreneurs, “Opportunity is at the heart of their activities.”
- ❖ Resourcefulness, particularly in compensating for resource limitations and dealing with setbacks.

What is a religious congregation?

A **religious congregation** is a type of religious institute for instance, the Catholic Church. They are legally distinguished from religious orders. Members in the religious institute take simple vows, whereas members of religious orders take solemn vows. A **religious institute** is a type of institute of consecrated life in the Catholic Church whose members take religious vows and lead a life in community with fellow members. By an **institute of consecrated life**, we mean an association of faithful in the Catholic Church erected by the system of law whose members profess the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, and obedience. In Christianity, the three **evangelical counsels** are the rules of **perfection** and these are chastity, poverty (or perfect charity), and obedience. As stated by Jesus in the Gospels, they are guidance for those who desire to become “perfect”.

The 1917 Code of Canon Law reserved the name “religious *order*” for institutes in which the vows were solemn, and used the term “religious *congregation*” or simply “congregation” for those with simple vows. The members of a religious *order* for men were called “regulars”, those belonging to a religious *congregation* were simply “religious”, a term that applied also to regulars. For women, those with simple vows were simply “sisters”, with the term “nun” reserved in canon law for those who belonged to an institute of solemn vows, even if in some localities they were allowed to take simple vows instead.

However, it abolished the distinction according to which solemn vows, unlike simple vows, were indissoluble. It recognized no totally indispensable religious vows

and thereby abrogated spiritually, though not altogether juridically, Latin-Rite religious orders. Solemn vows were originally considered indissoluble. Not even the Pope could dispense from them. If for a just cause a solemnly professed religious was expelled, the vow of chastity remained unchanged and so rendered invalid any attempt at marriage. The vow of obedience obliged in relation, generally, to the bishop rather than to the religious superior, and the vow of poverty was modified to meet the new situation. The expelled religious “could not, for example, will any goods to another; and goods which came to him reverted at his death to his institute or to the Holy See”.

Towards the end of the Second Vatican Council, superiors general of clerical institutes and abbots president of monastic congregations were authorized to permit, for a just cause, their subjects of simple vows who made a reasonable request to renounce their property except for what would be required for their sustenance if they were to depart, thus assimilating their position to that of religious with solemn vows. These changes resulted in a blurring of the previously clear distinction between “orders” and “congregations”, since institutes that were founded as “congregations” began to have some members who had all three solemn vows or had members that took a solemn vow of poverty and simple vows of chastity and obedience.

The 1983 Code of Canon Law maintains the distinction between solemn and simple vows, but no longer makes any distinction between their juridical effects, including the distinction between orders and congregations. It uses the single term *religious institute* to designate all such institutes of consecrated life alike. The word *congregation* (Latin: *congregation*) is instead used to refer to congregations of the Roman Curia or monastic congregations.

❖ **In reference to Catholic religious orders, the term congregation has two usages.**

Primarily, a congregation is one of the Catholic religious institutes in which simple vows, not solemn vows, are taken, as we have seen. In the canon law of the Catholic Church, public vows are divided into simple vows and solemn vows. Professed members of monastic and certain other orders (e.g., the Jesuits) take solemn vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience (the vows of religion) in which all claims to inheritances are renounced. Countries which recognized canon law as having legal force for the society would automatically enforce this religious practice. Members of religious congregations take simple versions of them, which allow for inheritance.

This innovation was introduced after the experience in the Catholic Church of the upheavals brought about the French Revolution and subsequent Napoleonic invasions of other Catholic countries. Thousands of monks and nuns were left to live in poverty, having forsaken any means of income to which they might have been entitled through inheritances. This was coupled with the rise of the new groups of religious men and women, whose way of life was oriented not to the ancient monastic way of life, but rather more to social service in response to the widespread poverty of the age, and to evangelization, both in Europe and overseas.

The other major use of this term is to denote the various grouping of Benedictine monasteries into independent associations, presided over by the abbot of a particular community. Religious orders generally follow one of the four great religious rules: Rule of St Basil, Rule of St. Benedict, Rule of St. Augustine, and the Rule of St. Francis. For example, a large number of the religious orders in the Catholic Church (Benedictines, Trappists, Cistercians, etc.) observe the Rule of St Benedict, a collection of precepts for what is called contemplative religious life. Thus one speaks of, e.g., the Cassinese or Camaldolese congregations. These different congregations vary in regard to the authority of the presiding abbot. Thus, in some congregations, the role of the presiding abbot is directly exercised upon the individual member of the congregation, while in others, it is more of a role of guidance to the monastic community.

❖ **List of congregations**

The 2000 *Annuario Pontificio* lists about 1 million persons in religious institutes worldwide. The *Annuario Pontificio* (Italian for *Pontifical Yearbook*) is the annual directory of the Catholic Church. This included 139,397 religious priests (and excluded 265,781 diocesan priests), 55,057 religious brothers, and 801,185 religious sisters.

The following list refers to some of the major religious congregations of the Catholic Church; it should be understood that communities using the same name may exist in also in the Anglican tradition, as well as there can be more than one Catholic congregation with the same name. Each is accompanied by its official name in English as well as the acronym (or “post-nominal initials”) commonly used to identify its members. In many cases name variations and/or alternative names are also in use. In parentheses is the year it was established.

- ❖ Some organizations in the following list are not Religious Institutes because they are Associations of the Faithful and have not yet received a decree of erection to become an Institute of Consecrated Life. For this reason, this list does not verify the canonical status of an organization:

Name	Initials	Founder	Date(s) of Founding
Adorers of the Blood of Christ	A.S.C.	Maria De Mattias	1834
Adrian Dominican Sisters			1923 (1233)
Albertines			1888
Alexians	C.F.A.		1469
Angelic Sisters of St. Paul	A.S.S.P.	Anthony Maria Zaccaria	1535
Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus	A.S.C.J.		1894
Assisi Sisters of Mary Immaculate	A.S.M.I.		1949
Assumptionists	A.A.		1845
Little Sisters of the Assumption	L.S.A.	Etienne Pernet	1865
Religious of the Assumption			1839
Society of the Atonement (Atonement Friars, Graymoor Friars/ Sisters)	S.A.		1909
Augustinian Sisters, Servants of Jesus and Mary	A.S.J.M.		1827
Society of Saint Augustine (Augustinians of Kansas)	S.S.A.		1981
Benedictine Oblates of St Scholastica	O.S.B.		1984
Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration			1874

Name	Initials	Founder	Date(s) of Founding
Bernardine Cistercians of Esquermes		Hippolyte Lecouvreur	1827
Bernardines (also call Cistercians)			1098
Bon Secours Sisters	C.B.S.		1824
Brigidine Sisters			1807
Brotherhood of Hope	B.H.		1980
Brothers of Charity	F.C.		1807
Brothers of Christian Instruction of St Gabriel	F.S.G.		1711
Brothers of Mercy of Our Lady of Perpetual Help	F.M.M.		1839
Brothers of the Christian Schools (Lasallian Brothers or Christian Brothers)	F.S.C.	John Baptist de La Salle	1680
Brothers of the Poor of St. Francis	C.F.P.	Johannes Hoever	1861
Brothers of the Sacred Heart	S.C.		1821
Brothers of Christian Instruction (De la Mennais Brothers, FIC Brothers)	F.I.C.	Gabriel DeshayesJean-Marie de Lamennais	1819
Camaldolese Hermits of the Congregation of Monte Corona	Er.Cam.	Paul Giustiniani	1525
Canons Regular of Saint John Cantius	S.J.C.		2006
Canons Regular of the Immaculate Conception			1871
Canons Regular of the New Jerusalem	C.R.N.J.		2002
Canossians (Canossian Daughters and Sons of Charity)	F.D.D.C.		1808

Carmelites of Saint Elijah Carmelitae Sancti Eliae	C.S.E.	1986
Carmelites of Mary Immaculate	C.M.I.	1831
Carmelite Daughters of the Divine Heart of Jesus	D.C.J.	1891
Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm		1929
Carmelite Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Los Angeles		1904
Claretians (Claretian Missionaries)	C.M.F.	1849
Claretian Sisters		1876
Comboni Missionaries		1867
Community of Betania		
Companions of the Cross	C.C.	1988
Company of Mary Our Lady	O.D.N.	1607
Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Scheutists)	C.I.C.M.	1862
Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament	S.S.S.	1659
Congregation of Christian Brothers (Christian Brothers of Ireland)	C.F.C.	1802
Congregation of the Disciples of the Lord Congregatio Discipulorum Domini	C.D.D.	1931
Congregation of Divine Providence	C.D.P.	1827
Congregation of Holy Cross	C.S.C.	1837
Congregation of Maronite Lebanese Missionaries	M.L.	1865

Name	Initials	Founder	Date(s) of Founding
Congregation of the Mission	C.M.		1624
Congregation of the Mother Co-Redemptrix	C.M.C.		1909
Congregation of Notre Dame	C.N.D.		1653
Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions			1861
Congregation of the Sisters of Nazareth	C.S.N.		1948
Congregation of the Sisters of the Resurrection			1891
Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary	SS.CC.		1800
Congregation of St. Basil	C.S.B.		1822
Congregation of St. Joseph	C.S.J.		1873
Congregation of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux	C.S.T.		1931 / 1945
Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy (Divine Mercy Sisters)	O.L.M.		1862
Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul	D.C.		1633
Daughters of Divine Charity	F.D.C.		1868
Daughters of Divine Love			1969
Daughters of the Holy Spirit	D.H.S.		1706
Daughters of Mary of the Immaculate Conception			1904
Daughters of Our Lady of Compassion	D.O.L.C.		1892

Daughters of St. Francis of Assisi		1894
Daughters of St. Paul	F.S.P.	1915
Daughters of Wisdom		1707
Dehonians (Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus)	S.C.J.	1878
Divine Word Missionaries	S.V.D.	1875
Dominican Missionaries for the Deaf Apostolate	O.P. Miss.	2004
Dominican Nuns of the Perpetual Rosary		1880
Dominican Sisters of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin		1856
Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne		1900
Dominican Sisters of the Immaculate Conception	O.P.	1861
Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia	O.P.	1860
Christian Doctrine Fathers (Doctrinaries) Congregatio Patrum Doctrinae Christianae	D.C.	1592
Eudists (Congregation of Jesus and Mary)	C.I.M.	1643
Fathers of Mercy Congregatio Presbyterorum a Misericordia	C.P.M.	1808
Felician Sisters (Congregation of the Sisters of St. Felix of Cantalice)	C.S.S.F.	1855
Franciscan Apostolic Sisters	F.A.S.	1954
Franciscan Brothers of Brooklyn	O.S.F.	1858

Name	Initials	Founder	Date(s) of Founding
Franciscan Brothers of the Eucharist	F.B.E.		2004
Franciscan Brothers of Peace	F.B.P.		1982
Franciscan Clarist Congregation			
Franciscan Friars of the Renewal	C.F.R.		1987
Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate	F.I.	Fr. Stefano Maria Manelli Fr. Gabriel Maria Pellettieri	1970
Franciscan Handmaids of Mary			1915
Franciscan Hospitaller Sisters of the Immaculate Conception	F.H.I.C.		1876
Franciscan Minims of the Perpetual Help of Mary	F.M.		1942
Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood	F.M.D.M.		1887
Franciscan Missionaries of the Eternal Word	M.F.V.A.		1987
Franciscan Missionaries of Mary	F.M.M.		1877
Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary			1859
Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Infant Jesus			1879
Franciscan Servants of Jesus			1997
Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity	O.S.F.		1869
Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist	F.S.E.		1973
Franciscan Sisters of the Family of Mary		Zygmunt Szczesny Felinski	1857
Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception	F.S.I.C.	Refugio Morales	1874

Franciscan Sisters of Mary Immaculate			1893
Franciscan Sisters of Penance of the Sorrowful Mother	T.O.R.		1988
Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration	O.S.F.		1849
Fransalians (Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales)	M.S.F.S.		1838
Friars of St. Francis	F.S.F.		1993
Good Shepherd Sisters	R.G.S.		1641
Grey Nuns	G.N.S.H.		1738
Handmaids of the Blessed Sacrament and of Charity	A.A.S.C.		1950
Handmaids of the Precious Blood	H.P.B.		1947
Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus	A.A.S.C.		1877
Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mary and Joseph			1978
Hermits of Saint Bruno	H.S.B.		2001
Holy Cross Fathers (Congregation of Holy Cross)	C.S.C.		1837
Holy Spirit Adoration Sisters (Pink Sisters)	S.Sp.S.A.P.	Arnold Janssen	1896
Hospital Sisters of the Mercy of Jesus			1200s
Infant Jesus Sisters	I.J.	Nicolas Barre	1666
Institut du Clerge Patriarcal de Bzommar	I.C.P.B.		1749

Name	Initials	Founder	Date(s) of Founding
Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest	I.C.R.S.S.		1990
Institute of the Incarnate Word	I.V.E.		1984
Josephite Fathers (St. Joseph's Society of the Sacred Heart)	S.S.J.		1893
Legion of Christ	L.C.		1941
Little Brothers of the Gospel			1956
Little Brothers of Jesus			1933
Little Brothers of St Francis	L.B.S.F.		1970
Little Sisters of the Assumption			1865
Little Sisters of the Gospel			1963
Little Sisters of Jesus			1933
Little Sisters of Jesus and Mary			1974
Little Sisters of the Poor	L.S.P.		1800s
Lovers of the Holy Cross			1670
Loreto Sisters (Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary)	I.B.V.M.		1609
Marian Fathers	M.I.C.		1673
Marian Sisters (Marian Sisters of the Diocese of Lincoln)	M.S.		1952
Marianists (Society of Mary)	S.M.		1817
Marianist Sisters (Daughters of Mary Immaculate)	F.M.I.		1816
Marianites of Holy Cross	M.S.C.		1841
Marist Brothers	F.M.S.		1817
Marists (Society of Mary)	S.M.		1816

Maryknoll (Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America)	M.M.	1911
Miles Christi	M.C.	1984
Mission Helpers of The Sacred Heart	M.H.S.H.	1890
Missionaries of Charity	M.C.	1950
Missionaries of La Salette	M.S.	1852
Missionaries of Mary		2007
Missionaries of St. Charles Borromeo)	C.S.	1887
Missionaries of the Gospel of Life		2005
Missionaries of the Poor	M.O.P.	1981
Missionaries of the Precious Blood (Precious Blood Fathers)	C.P.P.S.	1815
Missionaries of the Sacred Heart	M.S.C.	1854
Missionaries of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary		1836
Missionary Congregation for the Blessed Sacrament		1933
Missionary Society of St. Columban (Columbans)	S.S.C.	1916
Monastic Fraternities of Jerusalem		1975
Montfort Missionaries (Company of Mary)	S.M.M.	1705
Oblate Apostles of the Two Hearts	O.A.T.H.	1995
Oblate Sisters of Providence	O.S.P.	1829
Oblates of Mary Immaculate	O.M.I.	1816
Oblates of St. Joseph	O.S.J.	1878

Name	Initials	Founder	Date(s) of Founding
Oblates of the Virgin Mary	O.M.V.		1827
Oratorians (Oratory of St. Philip Neri)	C.O. or Cong. Orat.	Philip Neri	1500s
Pallottines (Society of the Catholic Apostolate)	S.A.C.		1835
Paris Foreign Missions Society	M.E.P.		1658
Passionists (Congregation of the Passion)	C.P.		1720
Passionist Sisters			1850s
Patrician Brothers	F.S.P.		1808
Paulist Fathers (Missionary Society of Saint Paul the Apostle)	C.S.P.		1858
Pious Disciples of the Divine Master	P.D.D.M.		1924
Sisters of the Reparation of the Holy Face			1950
Poor Clares Ordo Sanctae Clarae	O.S.C.	Clare of Assisi	1212
Poor Clares of Santa Barbara			
Poor Clare Nuns of Perpetual Adoration			1854
Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon <i>Pauperescommilitones Christi Templique Solomonici</i>			1129–1312
Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary	P.B.V.M.		1775
Presentation Brothers	F.P.M.		1802
Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter <i>Fraternitas Sacerdotalis Sancti Petri</i>	F.S.S.P.		1988

Putri Karmel		1982
Racine Dominican Sisters		1862
Redemptorists (Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer)	C. Ss.R.	1732
Les Religieuses de Notre-Dame-du-Sacre-Coeur		1924
Religious of the Assumption R.A.	R.A.	1839
Religious of Christian Education		1817
Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary	R.S.H.M.	1849
Religious of the Virgin Mary	R.V.M.	1684
Religious Sisters of Mercy of Alma, Michigan	R.S.M.	1973
Religious Sisters of Charity		1815
Resurrectionists	C.R.	1836
Rogationists of the Heart of Jesus	R.C.J.	1897
Rosminians (Institute of Charity)	I.C.	1828
Salesians of St. John Bosco	S.D.B.	1857
Salesian Sisters (Daughters of Mary Help of Christians)	F.M.A.	1872
Salvatorians (Society of the Divine Savior)	S.D.S.	1881
School Sisters of Christ the King		1976
School Sisters of Notre Dame	S.S.N.D.	1833
School Sisters of the Third Order of St Francis		1873
Sinsinawa Dominican Sisters		1847

Name	Initials	Founder	Date(s) of Founding
Sister Adorers of the Precious Blood	R.P.G.		1861
Sisters Adorers of the Royal Heart of Jesus Christ Sovereign Priest			2004
Sisters of Adoration, Slaves of the Blessed Sacrament and of Charity			1850
Sisters of the Apostolic Carmel			1870
Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament			1891
Sisters of the Cenacle	R.C.		1826
Sisters of Charity	S.C.		1633
Sisters of Charity of Saints Bartolomaea Capitanio & Vincenza Gerosa	S.C.C.G.		1832
Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati			1829
Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth			1858
Sisters of Charity of New York			1846
Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary	B.V.M.		1831
Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception			1854
Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word			1866
Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary			1803
Sisters of Charity of Our Lady of Mercy			1829
Sisters of Charity of Providence	S.P.		1844
Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth			1859
Sisters of Charity Federation in the Vincentian-Setonian Tradition			1947

Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul		1849
Vincentian Sisters of Charity	V.S.C.	1902
Sisters of the Destitute		1927
Sisters of the Divine Compassion		1886
Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill		1870
Sisters of the Holy Cross	C.S.C.	1837
Sisters of the Holy Family		1837
Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth		1875
Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary	S.N.J.M.	1844
Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of Castres	Emilie de Villeneuve	1800s
Sisters of Jesus, Our Hope	S.J.H.	
Sisters of Life	S.V.	1991
Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist	O.P.	1997
Sisters of Mercy	R.S.M.	1831
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur	S.N.D. or S.N.D. de N.	1803
Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy		1862
Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods	S.P.	1840
Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul	S.P.	1861
Sisters of La Retraite	Catherine de Francheville	1674
Sisters of Saint Agnes		1858

Name	Initials	Founder	Date(s) of Founding
Sisters of Saint Dorothy (Dorotheans)	S.S.D.	Paula Frassinetti	1834
Sisters of Saint Elizabeth			1842
Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi			1849
Sisters of St Francis of the Martyr St George	F.S.G.M.		1869
Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity			1835
Sisters of Saint Francis of Rochester, Minnesota			1877
Sisters of St Joseph (Sisters of Saint Joseph of Medaille)	C.S.J.		1650
Sisters of Saint Joseph of Bourg	S.S.J.		1650
Sisters of St. Joseph of Chambery			1812
Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace			1884
Sisters of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart	S.S.J.		1866
Sisters of St. Joseph of the Third Order of St. Francis			1901
Sisters of Saint Martha			1900
Sisters of St Rita			1911
Sisters of St Therese of the Child Jesus (St Therese Sisters)	S.S.Th.	Maria CrocifissaCurcio	1900s
Sisters of Social Service	S.S.S.		1926
Sisters of the Visitation			1610
Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary	I.H.M.		1845
Sisters, Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matara	S.S.V.M.		1988

Sisters, Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus	S.S.C.J.		1894
Society of African Missions Societas Missionum ad Afros	S.M.A.		1850
Society of the Helpers of the Holy Souls			1856
Society of the Holy Child Jesus	S.H.C.J.		1846
Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity	S.O.L.T.		1958
Society of St. Edmund	S.S.E.		1843
Society of Saint Paul	S.S.P.		1914
Society of the Sacred Heart	R.S.C.J.		1800
Sovereign Military Order of Malta (Order of Malta)	S.M.O.M.		1099
Spiritans (Congregation of the Holy Ghost) Congregatio Sancti Spiritus	C.S.Sp.	Claude Poullart des Places	1703
Stigmatines (Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata)	C.S.S.		1816
Sulpician Fathers (Society of Saint Sulpice)	S.S. or P.S.S.		1642
Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis, Cameroon			1700
Verbum Dei Missionary Fraternity	M.V.D.F.		1963
Viatorians (Clerics of Saint Viator)	C.S.V.		1831
Heralds of the Gospel		John Scognamiglio Cla Dias	1970
Virgo Flos Carmeli (Regina Virginum)	E.P.		2001
Vincentian Congregation	V.C.		1904

Name	Initials	Founder	Date(s) of Founding
Vocationists (The Society of Divine Vocations)	S.D.V.		1927
White Fathers	M.Afr.		1868
Xaverian Brothers	C.F.X.		1839
Xaverian Missionaries (Missionary Society of St. Francis Xavier)	S.X.		1895

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_order_\(Catholic\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_order_(Catholic))

The Congregation of Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI): An Instance

- ❖ The Congregation of Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI) is the first indigenous religious congregation in the Catholic Church of India. Fr. Thomas Palackal, Fr. Thomas Porukara and Fr. Kuriakose Elias Chavara of the Syro-Malabar Church, a Church of apostolic origin, felt that “a lot of good had not been done due to the absence of a Thapasu Bhavanam (House of Discipline) and a Darsana Veedu (House of Vision)”. These challenged the vision of providing spiritual leadership and fostering unity and growth in the Kerala Church. With the permission of Bishop Aurelius Stabilini, the then Vicar Apostolic of Verapoly, they founded a religious house at Mannanam on 11 May 1831. Jacob Kaniathara who later became the first professed brother in the Congregation, cooperated with the founding fathers from the beginning. The name of the Congregation was ‘Servants of Mary Immaculate’.
- ❖ Soon, some more priests and clerics joined the founding fathers and thus a small religious community took shape. On 8 December 1855, the religious Congregation was canonically approved and the first eleven fathers made their religious profession. Blessed Chavara, the only surviving founder, was appointed the first superior of the Congregation. During the early period of the religious Congregation, the Vicars Apostolic of Verapoly were Carmelites and thus the congregation had come under the Carmelite influence; hence, the rules of the Carmelites with some modifications were given to them in 1855. In 1860, the community was affiliated to the Order of Carmelites Discalced with the name, ‘Third Order of the Carmelites Discalced’ (TOCD). A discalced congregation is a religious congregation that goes barefoot or

wears sandals. These congregations are often distinguished on this account from other branches of the same order. The Constitutions were approved *ad experimentum* by the Apostolic See in 1885. In 1958, the name was changed to 'Carmelites of Mary Immaculate' (CMI).

- ❖ The **Order of the Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel**, known as the **Carmelites** or sometimes known simply as **Carmel**, is a Roman Catholic mendicant religious order for men and women. This **Catholic Church**, also known as the **Roman Catholic Church**, is the largest Christian church, with 1.3 billion baptised Catholics worldwide as of 2019. However, **Mendicant orders** are, primarily, certain Christian religious orders that have adopted a lifestyle of poverty, traveling, and living in urban areas for purposes of preaching, evangelization (the act of preaching the gospel with the intention of sharing the message and teachings of Jesus Christ), and ministry (*activity carried out by Christians to express or spread their faith*), especially to the poor. Historical records about its origin remain very uncertain, but it was probably founded in the 12th century on Mount Carmel in the Crusader States.^[2]
- ❖ The **Crusader States**, also known as **Outremer**, were four Roman Catholic realms in the Middle East that lasted from 1098 to 1291. These feudal polities were created by the Latin Catholic leaders of the First Crusade through conquest and political intrigue. The **First Crusade** (1096–1099) was the first of a series of religious wars, or Crusades, initiated, supported and at times directed by the Latin Church in the medieval period. The objective was the recovery of the Holy Land from Islamic rule. It usually refers to a territory roughly corresponding to the modern State of Israel, the Palestinian territories, western Jordan, and parts of southern Lebanon and south-western Syria. Jews, Christians, and Muslims regard it as holy. While Jerusalem had been under Muslim rule for hundreds of years, by the 11th century the Islamic takeover of the region threatened local Christian populations, pilgrimages from the West, and the Byzantine Empire itself.
- ❖ The Crusader states where 'Carmelites of Mary Immaculate' (CMI) was formed.
- ❖ Berthold of Calabria has traditionally been associated with the founding of the order, but few clear records of early Carmelite history have survived.^[3] The order of Carmelite nuns was formalised in 1452. The Congregation was granted pontifical exemption in 1967.



- ❖ From the very beginning, the religious life in the congregation was rooted in the Indian, Oriental and Carmelite spiritual traditions. Being contemplatives in action, the members engaged in such activities as the Church in Kerala was in need of at particular times. They preached retreats, conducted seminaries for the training of the local clergy, met the challenge of educating the youth and disseminating Christian literature, laboured for the propagation of faith and for the reunion of separated brethren, undertook works of mercy, and started charitable institutions.
- ❖ The apostolate of the CMI Congregation gathered new dimension and momentum as mission areas were entrusted to it beyond the boundaries of Kerala. In 1962, Chanda became the first mission ordinariate of the Syro-Malabar Church and was entrusted to the Congregation. Since then, more mission dioceses and regions were erected in Central and North India. There are now four dioceses in North India and one in South India entrusted to the

Congregation, viz., Chanda, Jagdalpur, Bijnor, Rajkot and Adilabad. Out of these five dioceses, four are headed by CMI Bishops. This is indeed a milestone in the progress of the CMI missions and an abiding evidence of the recognition by the Apostolic See. Besides, many members are engaged in various kinds of apostolate in other parts of India and also in other countries.

- ❖ The Prior General, assisted by four Councillors, is at the head of the administration; the Prior General's House at Chavara Hills in Kochi is the headquarters of the Congregation. For the sake of administration, the Congregation is divided into 15 provinces, 1 Region and 7 sub-regions. At present the Congregation has about 3000 members including 5 bishops, 1763 priests, 1 permanent deacons, 26 brothers and 1121 brothers in formation. More than half of the priests are working outside Kerala, of whom about 300 are doing pastoral services in 27 countries around the world.

13.4 Activities of Religious Congregation

Many religious congregations are decades or even centuries old. The divine and service-oriented missions of such congregations, together with their profound entrenchment as social institutions, offer them a special power. One might yet count religious congregations among the earliest social entrepreneurs, given their age-old community presence, unique consciousness of local needs, and innovativeness in the visage of ongoing resource limitations.

Specifically, a religious congregation's existence in the local community equips it with close knowledge of local social requirements. As Zahra and his colleague observe in their dialogue of "social bricoleurs," which they identify as somebody who uses resources at hand and advanced skills to deal with local social needs, "Many social needs are non-discernable or easily misunderstood from a far, requiring local agents to detect and address them."

The trust that many community members have towards religious congregations infuses and facilitates congregations' social entrepreneurship. This trust may not only stem from the personal attributes and reputation of individual clergy but is often regarded as inherent in the clergy role itself. Similarly, the confidence that a congregation enjoys is derived from the reputation and sincerity it has received over time as well as its status as an institution considered as a safe haven.

Some researchers have emphasized the significance of trustworthiness, social capital, and a talent to protect the faith of others. Drayton consigns to this capability as ethical fiber, which he thinks is crucial for social entrepreneurship because noteworthy social change needs “leaps of faith” and only in a unquestioning environment can different stakeholders have an open, honest dialogue. Waddock and Post takes about this quality as credibility, and note it facilitates the entrepreneur to gain essential resources and to develop an accommodating network.

People who worship in the same congregation are inclined to share many of the same characteristics, attitudes, behaviours, and beliefs. Additionally, these individuals hold in shared activities and rituals on a usual basis (Ellison & Levin, 1998). These rituals are essential for two reasons. First, they strengthen common values and principles (R. Stark & Finke, 2000). Second, rituals such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals bring people together to convey and share common emotions that come up when life course shifts intakes place. These shared emotions further reinforce the ties that exist among them. The organizational demography of congregations reveals yet another way in which similarities are found among people who worship collectively. More particularly, congregations are often homogeneous with respect to racial composition, level of educational attainment, and income (Davidson & Pyle, 2005).

The high degree of likeness within congregations has important inferences for the social relationships that occur within them. According to the homophily principle (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001), high levels of social similarity breed connectivity. This means that contact runs more freely in homogeneous groups and a high degree of similarity makes it simple for people to feel more loyal to each other. In addition, as McPherson et al. (2001) indicates, levels of advice, respect, and support normally tend to be higher among people who are more identical.

13.5 Further Functions of Religious Congregation

There is some proof that the social environment in some congregations is less than ideal. For instance, research discloses that social relationships may not always function easily in the church and from time to time they, perhaps, erupt into open conflict (Krause, Ellison, & Wulff, 1998). Further, it is found that some persons have doubts about their belief (Krause & Ellison, 2009) that may further fade their ties

with fellow church members. As soon as negative interaction or doubts about religion occur, people may not feel strongly bound to their fellow church members.

Religious Leaders

Religious leaders play an important role for congregation. “Religious leader” refers to leaders within religious groups, and “faith communities” refers to people who belong to a religious group. Religious leaders are time and again the most esteemed figures in their communities. Buddhist monks and nuns, imams, pastors, priests, *pujaris*, and leaders of other ‘faith communities’ play a dominant role in determining attitudes, opinions and behaviors as their members believe them. Even members of a congregation and political leaders follow the religious leaders mainly at the family and community level, religious leaders have the power to raise consciousness and influence attitudes, behaviours and practices. They may shape social values in line with faith-based teachings.

13.6 Role of congregation in identity formation

Joubert (2013) comments that identity describes who I am and who we are: both are socially fashioned and influenced by religion. The religious identity of both worshippers and congregations is not static; this is not possible in a fluid and changing context.

A changing virtual, socio-political and economic environment poses new and exciting challenges to congregations. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, three processes rule the development of a new society: information technology; the socio-economic restructuring of capitalism and the state, and the cultural and social movements that emerge in the Western world (Castells 2000).

Religion is a multidimensional phenomenon, and it is possible to identify various aspects or facets of religion. For example, a difference can be made between beliefs, practices (or behaviour), and affiliation (or identification) (Saroglou 2011). The interaction and association between religion and identity is a vital theme for congregations and their members. The condition of meaning and belonging are two significant functions of religion and, as a result, they help develop of people’s identity. Identity helps to portray who a person is, and religion is part of this crucial procedure (Greil & Davidman 2007). Further, religious identity has a social aspect; religious institutions help outline the social identity, membership and belief systems

of a group (Ysseldyk et al. 2010:61). As a social group, a congregation plays an significant role in the formation of the religious identity of its members. Congregations create rooms for the formation and growth of religious identities.

Identity: The notion of identity refers to a person's self-conception, social presentation and, more generally, the characteristics of a person that make him/her unique, or qualitatively diverse from others. "As a very basic starting point, identity is the human capacity - rooted in language - to know who's who (and hence what's what)." (Jenkins 2014). Identity is the creation of meaning through the achievements of social actors and it builds upon the use of the materials of understanding, experience that is historical and collective and/or individual (Castells 2000). This identifies 'me' and the 'other' not in a basic, but in a multidimensional style. Identity may be defined as the unique characteristic belonging to any given individual, or allocated by all members of a particular social category or group (Johnson *et al.* 2010). Personal and communal identity is, hence, best described both relationally and contextually. Identity issues, "... because it is the basic cognitive mechanism that humans use to sort out themselves and their fellows, individually and collectively" (Jenkins 2014). Identity is also formed within a social milieu. *Social identity* can be viewed as part of an individual's self-image, and stems from belonging to a specified group. Social identity has three aspects: cognitive (recognition of belonging to a group), evaluative (the value attached to belonging to the group), and emotional (attitudes towards insiders and outsiders) (Baker 2012). From a social outlook, the development of an identity is part of a social construction process. The diverse roles that a person plays contribute to the development of a social and religious identity. Persons are seeking individualized implication and are, as a result, working with transferring and multiple identities (Greil & Davidman 2007). They are constructing their own identity as part of a personal description within a social milieu.

Social groups play a significant role in the formation of an identity, and, therefore, a congregation should play an important role in the shape of its members' religious identities. In the formation of a social identity, it is essential to locate an equilibrium between impetus for individual uniqueness and belonging to a group (Ysseldyk *et al.* 2010). Religion facilitates individuals to identify with a religious group as a belief system. Thus, religion has intellectual and emotional value for the membership of the group or congregation (Ysseldyk *et al.* 2010). The interaction

between the members and the congregation helps to build a religious identity of both the person and the congregation.

Religious identity configuration takes place within a specific *context* and, in this way, the congregation is a part of this context. Diverse facets may be identified to explain a congregational identity: it is unambiguous and shared; it enhances fidelity and commitment; it gives way to action, and it promotes certain boundaries. It involves values, a shared history and heritage, and is part of a congregational culture (Woolever *et al.* 2006).

Congregational identity is contextual:

Not only are congregations and their memberships clearly traced within social structure, they are also dynamic entities within it, functioning within the processes of social and system integration and differentiation (Stringer 2013).

The social networks, relationships and interaction within a community impression on the way in which a congregation is working. In this way a congregation becomes a part of the local environment. The social structure of a community remains at the heart of the congregational dynamics (Stringer 2013; Brouwer 2008). The more the community and the congregation interact with each other, the more it affects the contextual presence of the congregation. Thus, the formation of its members' religious identities takes place.

Congregational identity is embodied by the attraction and relationship between its members. They have definitely shared preferences. (Nauta : 2007), "When its context changes, a congregation with an identity based on affinity may be unable to function effectively in those changed environmental conditions."

Changes in context and leadership guide to alter one's congregational identity, belief, belonging and engagement, which, in turn, lead to changes in the identity of the membership and the congregation. Wherever fellow-feeling is explicitly understood as the basis of the congregation's own identity, it is easier to openly replicate on what faith means to those who think themselves part of that congregation (Nauta 2007).

Congregation is found among various religious communities. Let's learn about an intense of Religious Congregation.

CMI (Carmelites of Mary Immaculate) :

The Congregation of Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI) is the first indigenous religious congregation in the Catholic Church of India. On 8th December

1855 the religious congregation was canonically approved and the first eleven fathers made their religious profession. Chavra, the only surviving founders, was appointed the first superior of the congregations.

In 1958, the name was changed to Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI). The congregation was granted pontifical exemption in 1966. From the very beginning, the religious life in the congregation was rooted in the Indian, Oriental and Carmelite spiritual traditions. The members of the congregation conducted seminars for the training of the local clergy, did the works of educating the youth and disseminating Christian literature, undertook works of mercy and started charitable institutions.

The CMI started work in Kerala, which is the meeting ground of all Indian religions, as well as the important religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The CMI congregation gathered new dimension as mission areas were expanded beyond the boundaries of Kerala. There are now four dioceses in North India and one in South India. The five dioceses *Chand, Jagdalpur, Biznor, Rajkot* and *Adilabad* are headed by CMI bishops.

For the sake of administration, the congregation is divided into 15th provinces, one region, and 7 sub- regions. More than half of the priests are working out side of Kerala, of whom about 367 are doing pastoral services in 27 countries around the world.

In a word, the CMI congratulation works for spreading education, preaching the Christian ethics, doing charitable works to serve humanity.

13.7 Congregation in Indian Society : Hindu Congregation

Four kinds of congregation served by three distinct kinds of priests can be found in Hinduism. The variety of congregations includes *Single Cast Congregations* for high and low casts, and *mixed higher cast congregations* which either local or associated with a families roots in which case the location may be diffuse types of priests includes Household priests (Purohits), Temple priests (Pujaris) and Non-Brahmin priests belonging to low casts and serving only the members of their respective casts.

■ Single Cast Congregations :

Different services are held at different intervals including the month, year and lifetime. For example : '*Katha*' or a recitation of stories from the Hindu

epics is held monthly at the time of full moon. Yearly '*Shraddha*' is held annually to honour the dead. Gatherings are associated with birth, marriage and other ceremonies. Brahmins perform *Katha* in the homes of moderately well-to-do families.

Single caste congregations, are, sometimes much larger than the household. For example, the *Ahirs* of a village, or group of villages assemble to thank God for the prosperity giving by Him, and to pray for more prosperity in the present and next year. This type of congregation celebrates the traditional occupation of that caste.

Kayasthas, for example pay tribute to their writing instruments once a year. These single caste congregations prevalent in the Hindu society, pay respect to their origins. In such congregations, only members of one caste attend. At the ceremony, in which dowry is offered, only the members of single caste attend. Sometimes, in single caste congregations, prayers are offered by the members of the caste, but, the neighbours, and other members of the other caste may also attend. Wedding is such a congregation. In case of '*Kathas*' also, neighbours, may not of the same caste, may attend.

The Brahmin priests, generally, do not serve lower castes. Usually, low castes select their own priests on the basis of charisma. There are only single caste congregations among the low castes, each of which constitutes a separate sect of Hinduism. Also, in case of low caste congregations, people served by the priest, gather from a village rather than a particular or group of families.

In case of the tribal people, the worship of deities performed by the group are not approved by the '*Vedas*', or the sacred Hindu literature. However, regardless of rank in the caste hierarchy, the Hindus marry only with their caste. Unlike, low castes, members of high and middle castes live in common neighbourhoods, and, for certain religious rituals, come together to worship in mixed caste congregations.

■ Mixed Caste Congregations :

It is seen that castes within the church participate in mixed congregations for household rituals. Mixed Congregations among high castes are evident in temples. In such congregation, priests (*Pujaris*) typically assist worshippers of many castes who come in steady stream throughout the day. These worshippers constitute a third type of congregation within Hinduism, the

local temple congregation. The local congregation does not meet to discuss church business. For important holidays, such as Diwali, Holi, or some such service, members of many castes gather together to worship.

Temple priests also serve a fourth kind of congregation. It is common for Hindu families to associate their caste origins or other important events of the family or caste with a particular temple. Infrequent visits are paid to that temple, for example, the children's ceremonial first haircuts, for the fulfillment of a promise etc.

Other forms of worship taking place in Hindu religion are called extra congregational ceremonies. These worships take place even in the absence of priests. For example, holy bathing on different occasions.

13.8 Conclusion

Organization structure of a religion may open an avenue of religious congregations. It helps to employ and train specialists, conduct religious meeting and communicate with society to facilitates religious functions as well as promulgates religious dogma. It promotes 'we feelings and solidarity. In contemporary society religious congregation plays an important role in private as well as public spheres. Temples, mosque, church and synagogues are the example of religious congregation. Sometimes, religious congregation may fulfill the local social requirements and build trust among the members. Though it has some negative impacts, yet it has a great role to create religious identity which take place in a specific context. Hindu Congregation also perform the role of various activities in Indian Society. Religious congregation turns on the advantages of religious social network.

13.9 Summary

In this unit we have tried to understand what is meant by religious congregation and why it is important to comprehend religion. Some religions have an organizational structure through which religious congregation takes place. Religious congregation, probably, work through many types of organizations in which specialists can be employed and trained, religious meeting conducted and communication facilitated between society and the members of religion. Congregations of different beliefs can be found in almost any community around the earth and their endeavours to meet

more than their communities' spiritual desires are ordinary internationally. People who worship in the same congregation are inclined to share many of the same characteristics, attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs. Religion facilitates individuals identify with a religious group as a belief system. Thus, religion has intellectual and emotional value for the membership of the group or congregation. Hindu religious behavior in general comprises of religious activities at temples, household shrines, and other holy and familiar places. General Hindu religious acts include prayer, conjoint sight of devotee and god (darshan), and various ritual practices. At the local level the common members establish groups such as *satsang*, *bhajan* or *kirtan mandal*. They often organize festivals and pilgrimages. Regular interactions among followers direct to the development of strong friendships. All these things are important for a religious congregation.

13.10 Questions

Long Questions

1. Write a note on the role of religious congregation.
2. What is religious congregation? How does it influence society?
3. Critically discuss the role of Hindu congregation in Indian society.

Short questions

1. Write a brief note on identity formation by religious congregation.
2. Discuss the role of congregation in a society.

Very short questions

1. Define congregation
2. What do you mean by identity?
3. Who are religious leaders?

13.11 References

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13.12 Glossary

Religious Congregation is a distinct body of people who share the same priests for purposes of adoration and for act of rites of passage. Congregations are membership groups surrounded by churches and sects. It is comparatively small-scale, local collectives and organizations through which people regularly connect in religious action: churches, synagogues, mosques, temples.

Religious Leaders: Religious leaders play an important role for congregation. Religious leader refers to leaders within religious groups, and “faith communities” refers to people who belong to a religious group. Religious leaders are time and again the most esteemed figures in their communities. Buddhist monk, priest, clergyman, *sant*, *fakir*, etc. are the examples.

Unit 14 □ The Religious Ideas

Structure of the unit

14.1 Learning Objectives

14.2 Introduction

14.3 Fetishism

14.4 Religion and Magic

14.5 Animism

14.6 Naturism

14.7 Totemism

14.8 The fear Theory

14.9 Shamanism

14.10 Bongaism

14.11 Taboo

14.12 Secularism

14.13 Conclusion

14.14 Summary

14.15 Questions

14.16 References

14.17 Glossary

14.1 Learning Objectives

After studying the unit you should be able to

- Grasp the religious ideas
- Describe the fetishism
- Discuss concept of totem
- Outline the study of animism

- Narrate the idea of taboo
- Describe the concept of secularism

14.2 Introduction

In previous units we learnt about religion, sects, congregation etc. Here we are trying to focus on religious ideas and beliefs. Religion is a **collection of cultural systems, belief systems, and worldviews that relate humanity to spirituality and, sometimes, to moral values**. Many religions have narratives, symbols, traditions and sacred histories that are intended to give meaning to life or to explain the origin of life or the universe.

The Vedic people were curious about the various forces in nature such as the sun, the wind, the rain, the rivers, lightning and storms. They offered prayers to these forces to secure their blessings. The idea of making ‘offerings’ to these forces in order to win their favour became common. They believed that fire would act as an agency to take the offerings to these forces. That is why they put their offerings or **havi** into the fire. This ritual of offering havi into the fire is called **yajna (yagya)**. Later, the technique of performing **yajna** became very complicated. It could not be performed without taking assistance from a priest. Yajna came to be considered as the soul and substance of religion. People in the Vedic period realised that all things in nature follow a definite pattern. They termed this regular pattern in nature as ‘**rita**’. The sages who sought to know how the universe was created maintained that the entire universe originated from a single primal principle called **Sat**. They believed that by whatever name god is worshipped, the worship ultimately reaches Sat or this divine principle. This thought helped to develop the idea of religious tolerance in India.

14.3 Fetishism

A **fetish** (derived from the French *fétiche*, which comes from the Portuguese *feitiço*, and this in turn from Latin *facticius*, “artificial” and *facere*, “to make”) is an object believed to have supernatural powers, or in particular, a human-made object that has power over others. Essentially, fetishism is the attribution of inherent value, or powers, to an object. Fetishism is a cult of inanimate things, expressed in deification or blind worship of these things.



BUNDU INCANTATIONS.

The dancers all wore fetishes peculiar to the order, each having special significance. These consisted of several ropes of cane cut into beads and of rows of seeds which had been bored and filled with bundu "medicine."

Teenage girls being initiated into the Sande society, Sierra Leone, West Africa. Text: "The dancers all wore fetishes peculiar to the order, each having special significance. These consisted of several ropes of cane cut into beads and of rows of seeds which had been bored and filled with Bundu (Sande) medicine. "Pic credit :https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9c/A_group_of_Bundu_female_dancers_all_wearing_necklaces_of_bea_Wellcome_V0015968.jpg

Initially, the Portuguese developed the concept of the fetish to refer to the objects used in religious practices by West African natives. The contemporary Portuguese *fetiço* may refer to more neutral terms such as charm, enchantment, or abracadabra, or more potentially offensive terms such as juju, witchcraft, witchery, conjuration or bewitchment.

The concept was popularized in Europe circa 1757, when Charles de Brosses used it in comparing West African religion to the magical aspects of ancient Egyptian religion. Later, Auguste Comte employed the concept in his theory of the evolution of religion, wherein he posited fetishism as the earliest (most primitive) stage, followed by polytheism and monotheism. However, ethnography and anthropology would classify some artifacts of monotheistic religions as fetishes.

The eighteenth-century intellectuals who articulated the theory of fetishism encountered this notion in descriptions of "Guinea" contained in such popular voyage collections as Ramusio's *Viaggio e Navigazioni* (1550), de Bry's *India Orientalis* (1597), Purchas's *Hakluytus Posthumus* (1625), Churchill's *Collection of*

Voyages and Travels (1732), Astley's *A New General Collection of Voyages and Travels* (1746), and Prevost's *Histoire generale des voyages* (1748).

The theory of fetishism was articulated at the end of the eighteenth century by G. W. F. Hegel in *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*. According to Hegel, Africans were incapable of abstract thought, their ideas and actions were governed by impulse, and therefore a fetish object could be anything that then was arbitrarily imbued with imaginary powers.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, Tylor and McLennan, historians of religion, held that the concept of fetishism fostered a shift of attention away from the relationship between people and God, to focus instead on a relationship between people and material objects, and that this, in turn, allowed for the establishment of false models of causality for natural events. This they saw as religious fetishism for Santa Claus on Christmas day and does not consider the birth of Jesus a central problem historically and sociologically.



A voodoo fetish market in Lomé , Togo , 2008. Pic credit : <https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Voodoo-fetischmarkt-Lom%C3%A9.jpg#mw-jump-to-license>

The use of the concept in the study of religion derives from studies of traditional West African religious beliefs, as well as from Vodun, which in turn derives from those beliefs.

Fetishes were commonly used in some Native American religions and practices. For example, the bear represented the shaman, the buffalo was the provider, the mountain lion was the warrior, and the wolf was the pathfinder, the cause of the war.

Made and used by the BaKongo of western Zaire, a *nkisi* (plural *minkisi*) is a sculptural object that provides a local habitation for a spiritual personality. Though some *minkisi* have always been anthropomorphic, they were probably much less naturalistic or “realistic” before the arrival of the Europeans in the nineteenth century; Kongo figures are more naturalistic in the coastal areas than inland. As Europeans tend to think of spirits as objects of worship, idols become the objects of idolatry when worship was addressed to false gods. In this way, Europeans regarded *minkisi* as idols on the basis of false assumptions.

Europeans often called *nkisi* “fetishes” and sometimes “idols” because they are sometimes rendered in human form. Modern anthropology has generally referred to these objects either as “power objects” or as “charms”.

The irrationally “animate” character of the ritual system’s symbolic apparatus, including *minkisi*, divination devices, and witch-testing ordeals, obliquely expressed real relations of power among the participants in ritual. “Fetishism” is about relations among people, rather than the objects that mediate and disguise those relations.

14.4 Religion and Magic

Magic continues to be widely perceived as an archaic worldview, a form of superstition lacking the intrinsic spiritual value of religion or the rational logic of science. Religion, according to seminal anthropologist Sir Edward Burnett Tylor (1832–1917), involves a direct, personal relationship between humans and spiritual forces; Magic, on the other hand, is characterized as external, impersonal, and mechanical, involving technical acts of power. Magic seeks to manipulate spiritual powers, while religious prayer supplicates spiritual forces, a distinction explored by Bronisaw Malinowski (1884–1942) in his work on the Trobriand Islanders. Moreover, according to Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), religion is communal because its adherents, bound together by shared belief, form a church. Magic, on the other hand, involves no permanent ties between believers and only temporary ties between individuals and the magicians who perform services for them. The fieldwork of A.R. Radcliffe-

Brown (1881–1955) among the Andaman Islanders, however, has made clear that magic, too, may have a communal dimension.

Although magic is similar in some respects to science and technology, it approaches efficacy (the ability to produce a desired material outcome) differently. Magic, like religion, is concerned with invisible, nonempirical forces; yet, like science, it also makes claims to efficacy. Unlike science, which measures outcomes through empirical and experimental means, magic invokes a symbolic cause-effect relationship. Moreover, like religion and unlike science, magic has an expressive function in addition to its instrumental function. Magical rainmaking strategies, for example, may or may not be effective, but they serve the expressive purpose of reinforcing the social importance of rain and farming to a community.

The claim that magic is found in all human societies rests on a definition that is rooted in Western cultural assumptions, and both these assumptions and the use of the term *magic* have undergone change over time and place. Consequently, to understand beliefs and practices in other societies that appear similar to European magic, it is necessary to apply the context-sensitive and comparative methods that become increasingly important in the study of anthropology, history, and religion.

The Western conception of magic is rooted in the ancient Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman heritage. The tradition took further shape in northern Europe during the medieval and early modern period before spreading to other parts of the globe through European exploration and colonialism after 1500. The view of Western civilization as a story of progress includes the magic-religion-science paradigm that traces the “rise” and “decline” of magic and then religion, along with the final triumph of science—a model now challenged by scholars. Moreover, the very origins of the word *magic* raise questions about ways in which one person’s religion is another person’s magic, and vice versa.

Western conceptions of magic, religion, and science were exported to other parts of the globe in the modern period by traders, conquerors, missionaries, anthropologists, and historians. European travellers in the 16th–19th centuries functioned as primitive ethnographers whose written observations are invaluable historical resources. However, their accounts, often coloured by their Judeo-Christian assumptions about religion versus magic, illuminate how indigenous peoples were treated as “children” to be educated or, in the case of some conquerors, as subhuman races to be enslaved. During the latter part of the 19th century, anthropologists began to analyse magic and its part in the evolution of the world’s religions. Their work was characterized by a

fundamental distinction rooted in the magic-religion-science evolutionary model: the world is divided between historical, literate urbanized cultures, or “civilizations” (for example, the ancient traditions of East and South Asia) and nonliterate, tribal archaic, or “primitive,” societies (such as those found in parts of Africa, the Americas, and Oceania). Historians viewed complex societies characterized by urbanization, centralization, and written traditions as more advanced and measured their progress as civilizations according to the evolutionary model.

Nomadic, tribal, agricultural, or nonurbanized societies with strong oral traditions were often perceived by early European observers as developmentally stagnant people without history. While these views are no longer accepted, their residual effect is still felt in the way magic, religion, and science are conceptualized. Anthropologists of religion traditionally distinguished between the “religion” practiced by the world’s main faiths, which often marginalize magic as superstition, and the beliefs of small nonliterate societies in which “magic” may in fact be central to religious belief. Here the distinction between religion and magic seems unfounded. Indeed, as some postcolonial societies endeavour to distance themselves from Western logic, ancient religious traditions are pivotal to the reassertion of cultural identity and autonomy. West African *Vodun* (Vodou), which spread to the Caribbean, the Americas, and elsewhere, is one example of an indigenous religious practice that is tied to cultural identity in art, music, and literature and used subversively as a rallying point for postcolonial resistance to Western modes of rationality.

Theorists, including sociologists Durkheim and Mauss, widened the discussion by defining magic in terms of its social function. In *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912), Durkheim argued that magical rites involved the manipulation of sacred objects by the magician on behalf of individual clients; the socially cohesive significance of religious rites proper (by priests) was therefore largely lacking. Durkheim’s views were furthered by A.R. Radcliffe-Brown in the “The Andaman Islanders” (1922) and to a lesser extent by Malinowski in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922) and *Magic, Science and Religion* (1925). Radcliffe-Brown posited that the function of magic was to express the social importance of the desired event, while Malinowski regarded magic as directly and essentially concerned with the psychological needs of the individual.

Subsequent studies of the working of systems of magic, especially in Africa and Oceania, built upon the work of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown along with that

of Sir Edward Evans-Pritchard in *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande* (1937). In his seminal book, Evans-Pritchard demonstrated that magic is an integral part of religion and culture used to explain events that cannot otherwise be understood or controlled. The Zande of South Sudan accept magic, together with witchcraft and oracles, as a normal part of nature and society. These phenomena form a closed logical system, each part of which buttresses the other and provides a rational system of causation.

14.5 Animism

Animism (from Latin: *anima*, ‘breath, spirit, life’) is the belief that objects, places, and creatures all possess a distinct spiritual essence. Potentially, animism perceives all things—animals, plants, rocks, rivers, weather systems, human handiwork, and perhaps even words—as animated and alive. Animism is used in the anthropology of religion, as a term for the belief system of many Indigenous peoples, especially in contrast to the relatively more recent development of organised religions. Animism focuses on the metaphysical universe, with specific focus on the concept of the immaterial soul.

Animism, belief in innumerable spiritual beings concerned with human affairs and capable of helping or harming human interests. Animistic beliefs were first competently surveyed by Sir Edward Burnett Tylor in his work *Primitive Culture* (1871), to which is owed the continued currency of the term. While none of the major world religions are animistic (though they may contain animistic elements), most other religions—e.g., those of tribal peoples—are. For this reason, an ethnographic understanding of animism, based on field studies of tribal peoples, is no less important than a theoretical one, concerned with the nature or origin of religion.

While it is futile to seek cases of animism in “pure,” “minimal,” or “elementary” form, some social contexts are undeniably simpler than others, and it may be tempting to suppose that the religions found in those contexts would follow suit. On that principle, however, nomads such as the Australian Aborigines might be supposed (as they were supposed by Durkheim) to enjoy an uncomplicated religious life, but this is emphatically not the case. What complicates Australian religions is an elaborate ceremonialism not usually found in nomadic societies. Ceremonialism generally can be treated as an emphasis in the area of expressive behaviour, usually

consistent with the animistic worldview and unlikely to displace it. While it is an emphasis most common among agriculturists, its presence among nomads is by no means confined to Australia. Though there is no reason to suppose that ceremony is of any more recent origin than any other way of expressing society's relation to the spirit world, animistic religions (religious systems in which animism plays an essential role) can be sorted into those with and those without a ceremonial emphasis, and, in this formal sense, the latter are the simpler. The salient characteristic of all animistic religions is their particularism, a quality opposite to the universalism of the "great religions," which conceive the individual as subject to global powers and personal destiny.

Animism encompasses the beliefs that all material phenomena have agency, that there exists no categorical distinction between the spiritual and physical (or material) world, and that soul, spirit, or sentience exists not only in humans, but also in other animals, plants, rocks, geographic features such as mountains or rivers, or other entities of the natural environment: water sprites, vegetation deities, tree spirits, etc. Animism may further attribute a life force to abstract concepts such as words, true names, or metaphors in mythology. Some members of the non-tribal world also consider themselves animists (such as author Daniel Quinn, sculptor Lawson Oyekan, and many contemporary Pagans).

In the Indian-origin religions, namely Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism, the animistic aspects of nature worship and ecological conservation are part of the core belief system. *Matsya Purana*, a Hindu text, has a Sanskrit language shloka (hymn), which explains the importance of reverence of ecology. It states, "A pond equals ten wells, a reservoir equals ten ponds, while a son equals ten reservoirs, and a tree equals ten sons." Indian religions worship trees such as the Bodhi Tree and numerous superlative banyan trees, conserve the sacred groves of India, revere the rivers as sacred, and worship the mountains and their ecology. Panchavati are the sacred trees in Indic religions, which are sacred groves containing five type of trees, usually chosen from among the Vata (*Ficus benghalensis*, Banyan), Ashvattha (*Ficus religiosa*, Peepal), Bilva (*Aegle marmelos*, Bengal Quince), Amalaki (*Phyllanthus emblica*, Indian Gooseberry, Amla), Ashoka (*Saraca asoca*, Ashok), Udumbara (*Ficus racemosa*, Cluster Fig, Gular), Nimba (*Azadirachta indica*, Neem) and Shami (*Prosopis spicigera*, Indian Mesquite). In Hinduism, the leaf of the banyan tree is said to be the resting place for the god Krishna.



Sculpture of the Buddha meditating under the Maha Bodhi Tree of Bodh Gaya in India.



During Vat Purnima festival married women tying threads around a banyan tree in India.

In Buddhism's Pali canon, the banyan (Pali: *nigrodha*)[67] is referenced numerous times. Typical metaphors allude to the banyan's epiphytic nature, likening the banyan's supplanting of a host tree as comparable to the way sensual desire (*kâma*) overcomes humans. Mun (also known as Munism or Bongthingism) is the traditional polytheistic, animist, shamanistic, and syncretic religion of the Lepcha people.

14.6 Naturism

Naturism means the belief that the forces of nature have supernatural power. Andrew Lang and Max Muller develop the theory of naturism. Max Muller, a German theorist, strongly advocates that the most ancient form of religious practice is naturism. Naturism, according to him, is primarily based on man's sensory experience out of which logical deductions are primarily made. It is through sensory organism that man obtains the surfaced experience of reality on the basis of which he makes logical deductions. The sensory experience further helps man to distinguish animate from the inanimate objects. Therefore, religion is primarily a derivative of sensory experience. To them religious embodiments are seen yet unseen, observable yet unobservable.

For example, rain is visible but the caution of rain is not; sun is visible but its creation is greatly unknown to man. Therefore, out of reverence and dependency man

greatly worshipped all the greatest powers of nature: sun, moon, air water without which man's life and living will is exclusively impossible. Therefore, man worships them out of fear, Out of dependency and as a token of respect. They further advocated that the first religious conception is derived from the personification of the natural phenomenon.

For primitive man nature was a vast domain of surprise, horror, miracle and unknown. But the great powers definitely hold the key to human survival and continuity. Man was so moved by the great powers of nature that he started personifying all these abstract forces and started worshipping them. Finally, they advocate that Ancestor Cult is a derived version of Nature Cult. Likewise, man was being apprehensive about his dead ancestors, started worshipping them thinking that their spirits, if worshipped, instead of being destructive can primarily be protective ones. So Ancestor Worship is a derived version of Nature Worship, according to scholars belonging to this school. Naturism is man's response to the effect of the power and wonder of nature upon his emotions.

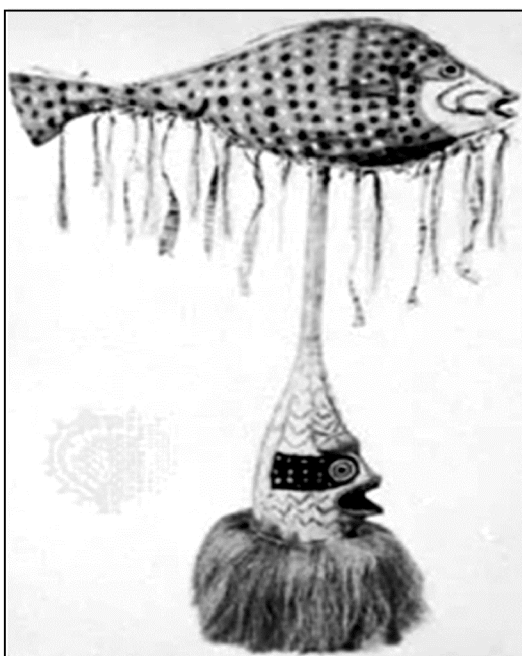
There was some criticism of the evolutionary approach of religion. Though Taylor and Max Mullar came up with plausible reasons for certain beliefs being held by members of particular societies they do not necessarily explain why those beliefs originated at all. Nor can it be argued that all religions necessarily originated in the same way. Furthermore the precise stages for the evolution of religion do not fit the facts. As Andrew Lang points out many of the simplest societies have religions based on monotheism which Taylor claimed was limited to modern societies.

14.7 Totemism

Totemism, system of belief in which humans are said to have kinship or a mystical relationship with a spirit-being, such as an animal or plant. The entity, or totem, is thought to interact with a given kin group or an individual and to serve as their emblem or symbol.

The term *totemism* has been used to characterize a cluster of traits in the religion and in the social organization of many people. Totemism is manifested in various forms and types in different contexts and is most often found among populations whose traditional economies relied on hunting and gathering, mixed farming with hunting and gathering, or emphasized the raising of cattle.

The term *totem* is derived from the Ojibwa word *ototeman*, meaning “one’s brother-sister kin.” The grammatical root, *ote*, signifies a blood relationship between brothers and sisters who have the same mother and who may not marry each other. In English, the word *totem* was introduced in 1791 by a British merchant and translator who gave it a false meaning in the belief that it designated the guardian spirit of an individual, who appeared in the form of an animal—an idea that the Ojibwa clans did indeed portray by their wearing of animal skins. It was reported at the end of the 18th century that the Ojibwa named their clans after those animals that live in the area in which they live and appear to be either friendly or fearful. The first accurate report



totem fish mask

Totem fish mask from the Orokolo Bay area of New Guinea. Painted bark cloth over rattan frame with fringe of dried grass. Height 1.63 m.

Courtesy of the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, England

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/totemism-religion>



tapa cloth

Tapa (bark cloth) painted with animal clan emblems, from the Humboldt Bay area, Irian Jaya, Indon.; in the Volkenkundig Museum Justinus van Nassau, Breda, Neth.

Holle Bildarchiv, Baden-Baden, Ger.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/totemism-religion>

about totemism in North America was written by a Methodist missionary, Peter Jones, himself an Ojibwa, who died in 1856 and whose report was published posthumously. According to Jones, the Great Spirit had given *toodaims* (“totems”) to the Ojibwa clans, and because of this act, it should never be forgotten that members of the group are related to one another and on this account may not marry among themselves.

Totemism is a complex of varied ideas and ways of behaviour based on a worldview drawn from nature. There are ideological, mystical, emotional, reverential, and genealogical relationships of social groups or specific persons with animals or natural objects, the so-called totems.

Although totems are often the focus of ritual behaviour, it is generally agreed that totemism is not a religion. Totemism can certainly include religious elements in varying degrees, just as it can appear conjoined with magic. Totemism is frequently mixed with different kinds of other beliefs, such as ancestor worship, ideas of the soul, or animism. Such mixtures have historically made the understanding of particular totemistic forms difficult.

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- ***Group totemism***

Social or collective totemism is the most widely disseminated form of this belief system. It typically includes one or more of several features, such as the mystic association of animal and plant species, natural phenomena, or created objects with unilineally related groups (lineages, clans, tribes, moieties, phratries) or with local groups and families; the hereditary transmission of the totems (patrilineal or matrilineal); group and personal names that are based either directly or indirectly on the totem; the use of totemistic emblems and symbols; taboos and prohibitions that may apply to the species itself or can be limited to parts of animals and plants (partial taboos instead of partial totems); and a connection with a large number of animals and natural objects (multiplex totems) within which a distinction can be made between principal totems and subsidiary ones (linked totems).

Group totemism was traditionally common among people in Africa, India, Oceania (especially in Melanesia), North America, and parts of South America. These peoples include, among others, the Australian Aborigines, the African Pygmies, and various Native American people—most notably the Northwest Coast Indians (predominantly fishermen), California Indians, and Northeast Indians. Moreover, group totemism is represented in a distinctive form among the Ugrians and west Siberians (hunters and fishermen who also breed reindeer) as well as among tribes of herdsmen in north and Central Asia.

● ***Individual totemism***

Individual totemism is expressed in an intimate relationship of friendship and protection between a person and a particular animal or a natural object (sometimes between a person and a species of animal); the natural object can grant special power to its owner. Frequently connected with individual totemism are definite ideas about the human soul (or souls) and conceptions derived from them, such as the idea of an alter ego and nagualism—from the Spanish form of the Aztec word *naualli*, “something hidden or veiled”—which means that a kind of simultaneous existence is assumed between an animal or a natural object and a person; i.e., a mutual, close bond of life and fate exists in such a way that in case of the injury, sickness, or death of one partner, the same fate would befall the other member of the relationship. Consequently, such totems became most strongly tabooed; above all, they were connected with family or group leaders, chiefs, medicine men, shamans, and other socially significant persons.

Individual totemism is widely disseminated. It is found not only among tribes of hunters and harvesters but also among farmers and herdsmen. Individual totemism is especially emphasized among the Australian Aborigines and the American Indians.

The founder of a French school of sociology, Émile Durkheim, examined totemism from a sociological and theological point of view. Durkheim hoped to discover a pure religion in very ancient forms and generally claimed to see the origin of religion in totemism. For Durkheim, the sphere of the sacred is a reflection of the emotions that underlie social activities, and the totem was, in this view, a reflection of the group (or clan) consciousness, based on the conception of an impersonal power. The totemistic principle was then the clan itself, and it was permeated with

sanctity. Durkheim held that such a religion reflects the collective consciousness that is manifested through the identification of the individuals of the group with an animal or plant species; it is expressed outwardly in taboos, symbols, and rituals that are based on this identification.

The most incisive critique of totemistic phenomena, one that denied the “reality” of totemism, was supplied by the French ethnologist Claude Lévi-Strauss in *Le Totémisme aujourd’hui* (English translation, *Totemism*, 1963). As a chief representative of modern structuralism, Lévi-Strauss was especially stimulated by Radcliffe-Brown, whose views he attempted to further expand. Lévi-Strauss believed that he was to approach the apparent, acknowledged difficulties in the study of totemism from the viewpoint of a study of structure. In order to study the structure of totemism, Lévi-Strauss devised a scheme to illustrate the abstract polarities that he saw in totemism as a phenomenon in human culture.

14.8 The fear Theory

Fear, a psychological phenomenon is often said to be the cause for the emergence of religion. This view is quite old, as old as the ancient Greeks and Romans. Ancient Roman philosopher and poet Lucretius contended that the belief in the gods was based on an illusion and that fear was at the root of religion.

David Hume, a British philosopher of the 18th Century, in his “Natural History of Religion” pointed out that a fear of natural forces led man to believe in gods who manipulated nature. Hence man felt and believed that gods would intervene in his behalf if he tried to please them. German scholar Max Muller also supported this theory.

According to him, the basis of religion is to be found in man’s awe in the presence of extraordinary and terrifying natural phenomenon. According to Prof. Giddings, the awe and fear of the “Great Dreadful” and of the mysterious forces have been responsible for the genesis of religion.

14.9 Shamanism

Shamanism is a religious practice that involves a practitioner (**shaman**) interacting with what they believe to be a spirit world through altered states of consciousness, such as trance. The goal of this is usually to direct spirits or spiritual energies into the

physical world for the purpose of healing, divination, or to aid human beings in some other way.

Beliefs and practices categorized as “shamanic” have attracted the interest of scholars from a variety of disciplines, including anthropologists, archaeologists, historians, religious studies scholars, philosophers and psychologists. Hundreds of books and academic papers on the subject have been produced, with a peer-reviewed academic journal being devoted to the study of shamanism.

In the 20th century, non-Indigenous Westerners involved in counter-cultural movements, such as hippies and the New Age created modern magico-religious practices influenced by their ideas of various Indigenous religions, creating what has been termed neoshamanism or the neoshamanic movement. It has affected the development of many neopagan practices, as well as faced a backlash and accusations of cultural appropriation, exploitation and misrepresentation when outside observers have tried to practice the ceremonies of, or represent, centuries-old cultures to which they do not belong.

There are many variations of shamanism throughout the world, but several common beliefs are shared by all forms of shamanism. Common beliefs identified by Eliade (1972) are the following:

- Spirits exist and they play important roles both in individual lives and in human society
- The shaman can communicate with the spirit world
- Spirits can be benevolent or malevolent
- The shaman can treat sickness caused by malevolent spirits
- The shaman can employ trances inducing techniques to incite visionary ecstasy and go on vision quests
- The shaman’s spirit can leave the body to enter the supernatural world to search for answers
- The shaman evokes animal images as spirit guides, omens, and message-bearers
- The shaman can perform other varied forms of divination, scry, throw bones or runes, and sometimes foretell of future events

As Alice Kehoe notes, Eliade’s conceptualization of shamans produces a

universalist image of indigenous cultures, which perpetuates notions of the dead (or dying) Indian as well as the noble savage.

14.10 Bongaism

According to Majumdar (1956), belief in *mana* is the beginning of religion. It is a supernatural power and exists as a quality or attribute of objects. Such a religious complex of beliefs has been found among the Indian tribe of Munda, Ho and other cognate tribes of Chota Nagpur. They use the term *bonga* to designate this power and quality.

Among the Ho the *bonga* are understood as powers indefinite and impersonal; they do not seem to have any objective appearance or existence. The overall supremacy of the *bonga* over Munda life shows only the extent of anthropomorphism. The impersonal *bonga* use the medium of dreams to foretell, day dreams being used for fore warning about bad things. *Bonga* is manifestation of a vague supernatural power one that is the cause of all energy.

Differences between individuals, differences of power, prestige and so on are regarded to be due to the degree of the *bonga* power possessed by a person. Anything that is new requires a new adjustment and anything that upsets the personality is a *bonga*. Tradition and myth may also separate certain things and animals as not parts of the environment to which man adapts himself. These may then become the *bonga*.

14.11 Taboo

The term “taboo” comes from the Tongan *tapu* or Fijian *tabu* (“prohibited”, “disallowed”, “forbidden”), related among others to the Māori *tapu* and Hawaiian *kapu*. Its English use dates to 1777 when the British explorer James Cook visited Tonga, and referred to the Tongans’ use of the term “taboo” for “any thing that is forbidden to be eaten, or made use of”.

The term was translated to him as “consecrated, inviolable, forbidden, unclean or cursed”. *Tabu* itself has been derived from alleged Tongan morphemes *ta* (“mark”) and *bu* (“especially”), but this may be a folk etymology (Tongan does not actually have a phoneme /b/), and *tapu* is usually treated as a unitary, non-compound word inherited from Proto-Polynesian **tapu*, in turn inherited from Proto-Oceanic **tabu*, with the reconstructed meaning “sacred, forbidden”. In its current use on Tonga, the

word *tapu* means “sacred” or “holy”, often in the sense of being restricted or protected by custom or law. On the main island, the word is often appended to the end of “Tonga” as *Tongatapu*, here meaning “Sacred South” rather than “Forbidden South”.

A **taboo** or **tabu** is a ban on something (usually against an utterance or behavior) based in a cultural sensibility that perceives it as excessively repulsive, sacred, or allowed only by certain persons. Such prohibitions are present in virtually all societies. Taboos are explicitly prohibited by custom and/or religion.

The meaning of the word “taboo” has been somewhat expanded in the social sciences to strong prohibitions relating to any area of human activity or custom that is sacred or forbidden based on moral judgment, religious beliefs, or cultural norms. “Breaking a taboo” is usually considered objectionable by society in general, not merely a subset of a culture.

According to Joseph Campbell, taboos are used in religion and mythology to test a person’s ability to withhold from violating a prohibition given to them. Should one fail the test and violate a taboo, they would be subsequently punished or will face the consequences of their actions. It is important to note, however, that taboos are not societal prohibitions (such as incest); rather, the use of “taboo” in these stories relates to its original meaning of “prohibition”: for example, a character could be prohibited from looking, eating, and speaking or uttering a certain word.

Communist and materialist theorists have argued that taboos can be used to reveal the histories of societies when other records are lacking.[46] Marvin Harris explains taboos as a consequence of ecologic and economic conditions.

Sigmund Freud speculated that incest and patricide were the only two universal taboos and formed the basis of civilization. However, although cannibalism, in-group murder, and incest are taboo in the majority of societies, exceptions can be found, such as marriages between brothers and sisters in Roman Egypt. Modern Western societies, however, do not condone such relationships. These familial sexual activities are criminalised, even if all parties are consenting adults. Through an analysis of the language surrounding these laws, it can be seen how the policy makers, and society as a whole, find these acts to be immoral.

Common taboos involve restrictions or ritual regulation of killing and hunting; sex and sexual relationships; reproduction; the dead and their graves; as well as food

and dining (primarily cannibalism and dietary laws such as vegetarianism, kashrut, and halal) or religious (treif and haram). In Madagascar, a strong code of taboos, known as *fady*, constantly change and are formed from new experiences. Each region, village or tribe may have its own *fady*.

The word “taboo” gained popularity at times, with some scholars looking for ways to apply it where other English words had previously been applied. For example, J. M. Powis Smith, in his book *The American Bible* (editor’s preface 1927), used “taboo” occasionally in relation to Israel’s Tabernacle and ceremonial laws, including Exodus 30:36, Exodus 29:37; Numbers 16:37–38; Deuteronomy 22:9, Isaiah 65:5, Ezekiel 44:19 and Ezekiel 46:20.

Albert Schweitzer wrote a chapter about taboos of the people of Gabon. As an example, it was considered a misfortune for twins to be born, and they would be subject to many rules not incumbent on other people.



**Cannibalism, Brazil. Engraving by Theodor de Bry for Hans Staden’s
*account of his 1557 captivity.***

Some argue that contemporary Western multicultural societies have taboos against tribalisms (for example, ethnocentrism and nationalism) and prejudices (racism, sexism, homophobia, extremism and religious fanaticism).

Changing social customs and standards also create new taboos, such as bans on slavery; extension of the pedophilia taboo to ephebophilia; prohibitions on alcohol, tobacco, or psychopharmaceutical consumption (particularly among

pregnant women), also sexual harassment and sexual objectification are increasingly becoming taboo in recent decades.

Incest itself has been pulled both ways, with some seeking to normalize consensual adult relationships regardless of the degree of kinship[50] (notably in Europe) and others expanding the degrees of prohibited contact (notably in the United States). Although the term *taboo* usually implies negative connotations, it is sometimes associated with enticing propositions in proverbs such as *forbidden fruit is the sweetest*.

In medicine, professionals who practice in ethical and moral grey areas, or fields subject to social stigma such as late termination of pregnancy, may refrain from public discussion of their practice. Among other reasons, this taboo may come from concern that comments may be taken out of the appropriate context and used to make ill-informed policy decisions that would lead to (otherwise preventable) maternal death.

14.12 Secularism

The term secular is derived from the Latin *saeculum* meaning age or century it is the irreverent time and the time of general historical progression as contrary to sacred time. Taylor(1998) notices that time is intertwined with superior times such as ‘eternity’, the time of the ideas, the time of the Origin, or the time of the God. Individuals have lived in these times but merely some activities, lives, societal forms, social institutions are more systematically guided towards worldly and divine goals. Government at that time was more ‘in the saeculum’ in comparison with the Church.

Secularism is the principle of seeking to conduct human affairs based on secular, naturalistic considerations.

Secularism is most commonly defined as the separation of religion from civic affairs and the state, and may be broadened to a similar position concerning the need to remove or to minimize the role of religion in any public sphere. The term “secularism” has a broad range of meanings, and in the most schematic, may encapsulate any stance that promotes the secular in any given context. It may connote anticlericalism, atheism, naturalism, non-sectarianism, neutrality on topics of religion, or the complete removal of religious symbols from public institutions.

As a philosophy, secularism seeks to interpret life based on principles derived solely from the material world, without recourse to religion. It shifts the focus from religion towards “temporal” and material concerns.

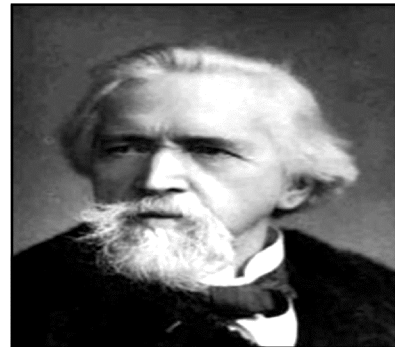
There are distinct traditions of secularism in the West, like the French, Turkish and Anglo-American models, and beyond, as in India, where the emphasis is more on equality before law and state neutrality rather than blanket separation. The purposes and arguments in support of secularism vary widely, ranging from assertions that it is a crucial element of modernization, or that religion and traditional values are backward and divisive, to the claim that it is the only guarantor of free religious exercise.

The first to use the already-extant word “secularism” in a modern sense, was the British agnostic writer George Holyoake, in 1851. Finding “Atheism” too aggravating, he sought a term that would describe a stance advocating to conduct life based on naturalistic (secular) considerations only, but without necessarily rejecting religion, thus enabling cooperation with believers. Holyoake’s definition of secularism differs from its usage by later writers. As the Humanist Heritage website notes, Holyoake provides a definition of secularism “much akin to modern definitions of humanism... broader than just atheism.” More modern definitions of secularism are likely to pertain to separation of church and state rather than personal beliefs.

Secularism may be categorized into two types, “hard” and “soft”. “Hard” secularism considers religious propositions to be epistemologically illegitimate and seeks to deny them as much as possible. The “soft” variety emphasizes neutrality, tolerance and liberalism; arguing “the attainment of “absolute truth” is “impossible and therefore scepticism and tolerance should be the principle and overriding values in the discussion of science and religion”.

In studies of religion, modern democracies are generally recognized as secular. This is due to the near-complete freedom of religion (religious beliefs generally are not subject to legal or social sanctions), and the lack of authority of religious leaders over political decisions. Nevertheless, it has been claimed that surveys done by Pew Research Center show Americans as generally being more comfortable with religion playing a major role in public life, while in Europe the impact of the church on public life is declining.

Modern sociology has, since Max Weber, often been preoccupied with the problem



The British writer George Holyoake (1817–1906) employed the term “secularism” in 1851

of authority in secularized societies and with secularization as a sociological or historical process. [25] Twentieth-century scholars, whose work has contributed to the understanding of these matters, include Carl L. Becker, Karl Löwith, Hans Blumenberg, M.H. Abrams, Peter L. Berger, Paul Bénichou and D.L. Munby, among others.

14.13 Conclusion

In modern society industrialization and secularization go hand by hand. It has shaken the supremacy of religious activities. Durkheim, Weber and Marx – three eminent sociologists – try to explore the relationship between religion and society. Their ideas enrich modern sociology. The genesis of religion lies in the sources of religion. The idea of fetishism has maintained the origin of religion. It is the most primordial form of religion. The idea of magic has different aspects. But both religion and magic are two ways of binding over dangers. Religion have been classified in various categories like polytheism, monotheism, atheism, animism and totemism. The theories of animism, naturism, totemism, etc. also show how the concept of religion has arisen. All these observe the difference between sacred and profane. The concept of secularism also indicates a different connotations, i.e. , the state is now free from religion. The people, perhaps, try to balance between religion and secularism that allow the state to put apart from any type of religious prudence.

14.14 Summary

In awaken of the 19th century European industrialization and secularization, three sociologists tried to examine the relationship between religion and society: Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Karl Marx. Some religions, probably, practised in different categories. Fetishism has been defined both as religion and as magic. In beginning, it is the most primordial form of religion. Animism is basically a belief in the survival of some supra- physical being within the body of every living being. Durkheim narrates religion to the whole nature of the institution of the humanity. His study of religion is based on the study of totemism. *Bongaism* is an occult power and subsists as a virtue and a proficiency of entities. The term implies to label this type of power and attribute. In this way various and diversified religious ideas have discussed.

14.15 Questions

Long question

1. Explain, in brief the ideas promoted by religion.
2. What do you mean by animism?
3. Describe the idea of totemism as presented by Durkheim.
4. What is magic? Narrate the difference between magic and science.

Short question

1. Describes fear theory.
2. Write a short note on animism.
3. What is fetishism?
4. Write a note on magic.
5. What do you mean by naturism?
6. What is bongaism?

Very short questions

1. What is mana?
2. What do you mean by totem?
3. Who coined the term secularism?
4. What do you mean by taboo?

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14.17 Glossary

Fetishism: Fetishism has been defined both as religion and as magic. In beginning, it is the most primordial form of religion. It bestows objects with ghostly or spiritual powers for evil or good. The person who acquires the fetish can ward off bad fate and will have good luck. Fetishism is nothing but the worship of material things because of their mysterious power.

Animism: The theory of animism is the coined of E.B, Tylor. Animism is basically a belief in the survival of some supra- physical being within the body of every living being. This Supernatural being endures even after the collapse of the physical body in which it is enclosed. After the death of a person this so call super natural being is free from the physical restraints and can wander anywhere without being limited by time and space.

Totemism: A totem is a class of material objects which a savage holds with superstitious admiration believing that there subsistence between him and every member of the clan an intimate and altogether a special relation. A totem is normally and animal, seldom a plant which presents its names to clan or may be otherwise related with it.

Mana: A Melanesian or Polynesian concept of the divine power that refers to a diffuse, non-personalized force that acts through anything that lives or moves.

Magic: Magic means interaction with the supernatural. It does not involve the worship of gods, but an attempt to coerce spirits or control supernatural forces.

Bongaism: Bongaism is an occult power and subsists as a virtue and a proficiency of entities. The term implies to label this type of power and attribute.

Naturism: Max Muller, German theorist, is associated with the perspective of naturism. His outlook is that the primordial type of religion may have been the veneration of objects of nature.

Taboo: The exclusion of an act depended on the conviction that such behaviour is either too sacred and sanctified or too risky and accursed for common folks to accept.

Unit 15 □ Religious Fundamentalism and Religious Pluralism

Structure of the Unit

15.1 Learning Objectives

15.2 Introduction

15.3 Religious Fundamentalism

15.3.1 Basic Concepts and Definitions

15.3.2 Related Perspectives from Classical Sociological Thinkers

15.3.3 Perspectives of Women in Fundamentalist Religious Groups

15.4. Religious Pluralism

15.4.1 Basic Concepts and Definitions

15.4.2 Types of religious pluralism

15.4.3 Religious Pluralism in the Indian Context

15.5 The relevance and role of globalization and the internet in this context

15.6 Conclusion

15.7 Summary

15.8 Questions

15.9 Reference

15.1 Learning Objectives

- To understand the meaning and significance of religious fundamentalism
- To understand the meaning and significance of religious pluralism
- To learn the importance of women's perspectives in fundamentalist religious practices
- To develop the critical ability to understand the socio-political consequences of religious pluralism in India.

15.2 Introduction

In everyday life one often tends to use terms like ‘religious fundamentalism’ in a loaded manner, implying specific kinds of political, moral and religious positions. These are intrinsically connected to a sense of orthodoxy that embodies a possibility of predisposition towards oppression and/or violence. On the other hand, the term ‘religious pluralism’ also entails certain socio-political implications and experiences. When one studies it in the context of India, religious pluralism is a relevant issue since the constitution as well as the existing culture of this nation espouses values of tolerance and acceptance towards multiple religions. This unit thus elaborates on the concepts of religious fundamentalism and religious pluralism to help develop a more grounded sense of these concepts and understand their deeper political, moral, religious and social relevance in everyday life and in the realm of discourses produced.

This unit also elaborates on perspectives of classical thinkers and their views which are closely related to religion, religious leadership and so on. It also aims to highlight the significance of women’s roles in fundamentalist religious groups. This, as will be shown subsequently, is important because women occupy a peculiar, unique and much negotiated space within fundamentalist religious groups as they are both the objects of hegemonized dominance, active agents who perpetuate the existing structure of dominance as well as embodiments of magnificent potential for struggle and negotiation within fundamentalist religious groups. The position of women is not necessarily homogenous even within a single group, a deeper study of these issues reveal the roles of various women struggling and negotiating for various kinds of positions in fundamentalist religious groups. In a world that is rapidly globalizing through various developments in information technology, religious fundamentalism itself occupies a rather unsteady position. For while on the one hand religious fundamentalist groups oppose forces of modernization – which include globalization and information technology – on the other hand, globalization and information technology offer a vast potential for the outreach of such groups.

15.3 Religious Fundamentalism

15.3.1 Basic Concepts and Definitions

Religious fundamentalism has been broadly defined as ‘a system of absolute values and practiced faith in God that firmly relies on sacred canonical texts’ (Barzilai, 2005). Religious fundamentalists are opposed to modernity and modern

value systems as they view such modern value systems as threats to their fundamentalist religious existences. Religious fundamentalists adopt an excessively conservative reading of the text such that they may not have to negotiate with the influences of modernity.

One of the most intrinsic values of religious fundamentalism is hierarchy. Hierarchy within fundamentalist religious groups helps to control the flow of information. This helps the religious elite to maintain their control over their fundamentalist group and its members. There is thus an extreme censorship on the use of the internet by members in the lower rungs of religious fundamentalist groups (Barzilai, 2005).

Fundamentalist religious groups are also known for their patriarchal structure and functioning. While women are beginning to use modern technology and the internet to negotiate their statuses within such patriarchal structures, the inherent existence of the patriarchal structure itself is far from absent. In fact the very fact that women feel the need to resort to modern technology to create their own spaces within fundamentalist religious groups is testament to the fact that patriarchy has always been and continues to be deeply ingrained within fundamentalist religious groups (Barzilai, 2005).

Another feature of fundamentalist religious groups is their heightened sense of discipline. As they attempt to preserve the original versions of the religious texts and maintain a hygiene from modernist cultural influences, they worship the inculcation of discipline in their lives and even see it as the opposite of blasphemy. The internet often helps to perpetuate this system of discipline through the preservation of these cultures and their Peculiarities (Barzilai, 2005).

Fundamentalist religious groups also depend on the practice of seclusion to preserve themselves. Their fear of and dislike for modern cultures naturally entails that the element of seclusion should be primary in their lives and methods of conducting themselves. Furthermore, seclusion also helps to solidify and concretize the inner bonding within the group itself, thereby ensuring that the followers continue to harbour faith in the group and don't abandon it to follow their own individual choices and desires. The element of seclusion helps to ensure the dominance of the religious elite as well, within the fundamentalist group. With lesser and lesser contact with the reality outside their own, the followers grow increasingly dependent on the dictates and instructions of the religious leaders as well. This implies that the leadership has a stake in furthering the method of seclusion within their fundamentalist religious community as well (Barzilai, 2005).

15.3.2 Related Perspectives from Classical Sociological Thinkers

Max Weber and Emile Durkheim have made significant contributions to theories of religion, among other things. Weber's work on the protestant ethic and its relation to the spirit of capitalism is one such contribution in the realm of religion and its impact on society and social change. In the context of religious fundamentalism, it may be useful to look at Weber's elaborations on the concept of charismatic leadership. Weber defines charismatic leaders as leaders vested with divine authority, their sense of power and authority are derived from the faith that people have in their divine authority. In the case of religious fundamentalist groups, such myths of divine authority have been proven to be useful in consolidating one's power and position as a leader. Charisma depends to a large extent on the public perception of one's personal characteristics as well. Weber thus says, 'The natural leaders in distress have been holders of specific gifts of the body and spirit; and these gifts have been believed to be supernatural, not accessible to everybody' (Weber, 1946). Leaders in fundamentalist religious groups thus propagate this hierarchy, based on claims of divine authority. Consequently, charismatic leadership, make their own legitimacy and acceptability more concrete. It is only through such consolidation of their legitimacy would they be able to create a compliant mass of followers (Barzilai, 2005).

Emile Durkheim has elaborated on the difference between the sacred and the profane, in his work on religion. In his seminal work, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim elaborates on the various aspects of primitive religion and how they are significant in social life. In the context of primitive religion, Durkheim discusses Animism, Naturism and Totemism. Animism essentially refers to the worship of spirits and dead ancestors, Naturism, in essence, refers to the worship of nature, while Totemism is essentially the worship of a particular totem (which could exist in various forms) which is supposed to represent divinity. In the context of religious fundamentalism, Durkheim continues to be relevant. Durkheim had suggested that modernity has a secularizing drive which weakens hierarchies among and within religious groups. Such weakening of hierarchies is a threat to fundamentalist groups since, as has been shown above, fundamentalist religious groups depend, to a large extent, on hierarchies within the groups to sustain their legitimacy and the legitimacy and elitism of their leaders.

15.3.3 Perspectives of Women in Fundamentalist Groups

At its inception, most studies on religious fundamentalism and religious fundamentalist groups have had the tendency to lay greater emphasis on the study of its structure and authoritative functions. Such focus on the structure of the institution

may run the risk of overlooking or glossing over the study of everyday lived experiences of members of fundamentalist religious organizations and groups. In order to capture the experiences of women however, it is essential to focus on the mundane, the everyday experiences. As several authors have shown, there are different ways in which women carve out their spaces in fundamentalist religious groups and institutions. Certain women may struggle against the patriarchal structure of fundamentalist religious groups, certain other women may accept the patriarchal dominance and oppression and reluctantly or actively submit themselves to it, certain women may also find ways to benefit from the existing patriarchal structure of fundamentalist religious groups (Brink & Mencher, 1997). Janet Bennion for instance has shown how women in a polygynous group find solace and spaces of collective action in their friendships with their sister-wives and even collectively perform their ritual activities in their fundamentalist religious groups, including the worship of female deities. Saba Mahmood, on the other hand, discusses the role of a section of Egyptian Muslim women in bringing about a peculiar change by performing a fundamentalist reading of their religious text which was forbidden to them by the orthodox patriarchal religious structure; they thus pose a challenge not only to the patriarchal structure but also to mainstream western feminism which may view their activities as illiberal and regressive.

The role of women is thus a significant factor in the construction as well as perpetuation of fundamentalist religious groups. Women are the repositories of historical traditions and cultures, as well as the **conduits** of contemporary movements within such cultures. They are thus both, the upholders of specific values, as well as have the potential for reform or change. The role of women in fundamentalist religious groups, it can be argued, is best understood not through a simplistic analysis of the institutional or authoritative structure of the fundamentalist religious group itself, but rather, through a more in-depth, ethnographic study of the everyday lives of women in such fundamentalist religious groups. Such ethnographic studies have the capacity to bring out the nuances of women's experiences and their constant negotiations with and submissions to the existing hierarchical patriarchal structure.

15.4 Religious Pluralism

15.4.1 Basic Concepts and Definitions

Religious pluralism exists in a condition where the existing culture of the land allows for the existence of different religions. Religious pluralism has the potential

to be harmonic wherein it allows for the existence of various religions without any attempt to impose any one on the other. However, the co-existence of several religions could also prove to be a threat to some of them.

All social groups need a boundary with which to define themselves. These boundaries become the conditions of their existence, the conditions of their possibility. These boundaries also pose as exclusive borders, that which help to distinguish between the insider and the outsider. These exclusivities then begin to define the religion or the religious group. Without such exclusivities, the religious group could begin to lose its essential characteristics. These exclusivities could exist in the form of practices, rituals, cultural affairs, and in the form of dogmatic texts. The existence of these features doesn't necessarily imply that the group is a fundamentalist religious group but rather, it implies that the group has a distinct, self-conscious existence that distinguishes it from other religious groups and organizations.

Thus, every religion is, to some extent, exclusive, it is inevitable. While a greater emphasis on the exclusivity of a particular religious group could potentially result in it becoming a fundamentalist group, a relatively moderate degree of exclusivity could produce a condition of religious pluralism (Sagi, 1999).

Religious inclusiveness is a condition wherein the followers of the faith believe that while they are chosen for salvation, there is hope yet for followers of other faiths since God is merciful and allows for the salvation of all souls. Religious pluralism, on the other hand, is a condition wherein each and every religion is valued in and of itself (Sagi, 1999).

Proponents of religious pluralism realize that not every religion is compatible for every culture or every individual. Further, not every religion can be judged by the same yardstick for every person or every culture. Thus, in order for every individual and culture to have the right to follow and endorse a religion that has become a part of their system, it is important that a culture of religious pluralism exist – one which would allow for the harmonic existence of all religious faiths without any one trying to bypass any other faith (Sagi, 1999).

15.4.2 Types of Religious Pluralism

Religious pluralism could itself exist in a moderate form. A relatively moderate religious pluralism could be further subdivided into one that believes that different religions are not necessarily incompatible. It defies the need to choose any one religious system from within a religious plurality. The first kind, which believes that the various religions of the world are not incompatible, is a universal pluralism which

claims that God is one, and that all existing religions are simply various representations of the one God and therefore, they are not incompatible with one another. This assumes that since God is one, God's teachings are essentially the same, and that the various religions of the world propagate the same teachings, and are thus not incompatible with one another (Sagi, 1999).

Yet another kind of religious pluralism believes that all religions have something in common, that they all reflect the divine in their own particular ways and so, there is no need to choose any one religion over and above the other. David Hartman explained this in the following manner: 'God's revelation expresses God's will "to meet human beings in their finitude, in their particular historical and social situation, and to speak to them in their own language."' (Sagi, 1999). Thus, this kind of religious pluralism advocates the idea that there are multiple divine revelations rather than one divine revelation that is represented in multiple ways. It believes that we are all practicing various fragments of the divine revelation, in our finite, limited ways, and that all our finite, limited ways come together to unite with the ultimate divine revelation(Sagi, 1999).

There also exists the condition of 'radical religious pluralism.' This approach believes that each religion provides an exclusive and closed world of beliefs which has no connection with other religions. The truth of a religion thus depends on an intra-religious context and not on a comparison with other religions.

From such a complex of religious pluralism develops the idea of 'expressive religious pluralism.' Expressive pluralism believes that God is not an absolute entity that has an external existence and relationships with human beings, rather, God is a concept that begins to make sense to human beings in the context of religious language and practice. Religion thus becomes a life pattern and a performance and it is made meaningful in the realm of human action, practice and performance. Expressive religious pluralism asserts that an individual's preferred religion has no logical set of values that make it infallibly logically appealing to the individual; rather, individuals are born into certain specific cultures and they, through linguistic, cultural, religious, and social upbringing, begin to imbibe the religion that they are born into. It has little to do with any absolute standard of measurement that makes any one religion more valuable or preferable than the other. It is also not based on any truth claims.

There also exists inter-religious pluralism, which is a condition of various distinct religions co-existing. These are the foundations of exclusivities and specific value systems on the one hand, as well as possibilities of harmonic co-existence on the other.

15.4.3 Religious Pluralism in the Indian Context

India is a land that has had a history of religious acceptance. If we go back through Indian history to the time of the early Hindu kings and emperors, we are faced with a history of a land that has welcomed some of the most persecuted religious groups as well as the more dominant religious groups. Minority religious groups in India continue to live in relatively peaceful and harmonious co-existence with the majority Hindu population. Among the minority religious groups are the Sikhs, the Buddhists, the Jains, the Zoroastrians, the Jewish people, the Christians, the members of tribal religious groups, and the Muslims. Their status as minority religious groups does not put them in any position of danger of obliteration of their faith; rather, people of these faiths are able to carry out both business affairs as well as religious affairs in peaceful circumstances. One of the known reasons for the creation of such a condition of acceptance, it has been said, is the nature of the *Sanatan Hindu Dharma*. While most religions have a church¹, a holy book and certain dogmatic dictates, Hinduism stems from a far more diverse base. It is not an organized religion but rather, a method. It is a way of conducting one's life but there is no one single holy book that dictates to have its methods followed. There are a myriad methods espoused by a myriad holy books that can be followed by the innumerable factions of the followers of the Hindu faith and no one practice could ideally claim to have a greater value, or promote a more fundamental truth than the other. The fragmentations within the larger community of Hindu religious practitioners would practically require its own theorizations of religious pluralism in order to be understood. It is indeed at least partly for this reason, of an inherent, pre-existing predisposition towards multiplicity that Hinduism is allowed to develop its tendencies towards acceptance of other religions.

However, there may exist (or may have existed) several conflicts among the different factions of the practitioners of the Hindu faith, for instance, there are practitioners of the Hindu *Dharma* who worship specific Gods based on their castes. In the realm of deities too, there are various origin myths which classify and segregate the worship of specific Gods and Goddesses. However, despite the conflicts or the potential for conflicts, the plurality is nonetheless deeply intrinsic within the Hindu faith itself which prevents it from crystallizing or solidifying into any one specific kind of hegemonic practice. The nature of Hinduism as a religion is in itself fluid and prone

1. The word 'church' is being used here not in the sense of the Christian church but rather, to denote an official religious institution that congregates its members.

to religious and cultural reform. This may also have been a contributing factor in the culture of religious pluralism in the context of India – since it is, most often, the majority religion which inadvertently decides on the type of culture that will be created in a particular nation. The inherently fluid, reformative and pluralistic nature of Hinduism thus creates a culture of religious pluralism in India.

15.5 The Relevance and Role of Globalization and the Internet in this context

The internet is one of the most powerful tools of globalization, and in it, cultural globalization, in the present day. Fundamentalist religious groups have been known to be against the propagation of information technology and the internet as it allows for a horizontal solidarity and possibly, a rise from among the lower rungs of the fundamentalist religious groups. The elite religious leaders of fundamentalist groups depend on a deep seated sense of hierarchy to consolidate their legitimacy and perpetuate their religious cause. However, despite strict censorships, the use of the internet is inevitable, particularly among the younger generations. The use of the internet helps individuals to realize that they could potentially occupy a position from which they could challenge the existing structure of hierarchy and patriarchy which creates the base of fundamentalist religious organizations.

Further, the influence of a culture of globalization also opens up hitherto unexplored avenues for women and younger generations in fundamentalist religious groups. Women realize the vast potential in the world that lies outside their limited, controlled existence in fundamentalist religious groups and thus begin to negotiate with the boundaries of their existence, struggling against the limits of their possibility, and redefining those limits in their own, conscious ways, through the use of their particular linguistic structures and socially given realities.

Younger generations find a significant degree of emancipation through the growing culture of globalization and the rise in the use of the internet. This is not to assume that interpretations of emancipatory forms of life don't already exist in religious groups but rather, to say that younger generations are able to better relate to their peer groups, and to the globalizing, international arena of popular culture and other related areas, through the internet.

The internet in the era of globalization is certainly a force of modernity, one that fundamentalist religious groups are perpetually threatened by and always attempt to subvert. However, interestingly, fundamentalist religious groups themselves have

realized that the internet offer them an enormous outreach which could help them to further their own cause as well. These fundamentalist religious groups are thus able to gain more followers and spread their teachings far and wide with the help of the tools of globalization and the internet; tools offered to them by the very modernity that they seek to resist. This is an interesting way in which fundamentalist religious groups have learnt to co-exist in the modern world, amid modern technology, within a culture of globalization. All the while they have been maintaining their core fundamentalist value systems, not allowing these value systems to be 'tainted' by the touch of secularizing forces of modernity.

This uneasy settlement of fundamentalist religious groups makes them develop a curious disposition towards globalization and the internet. On the one hand they impose cautious and strict censorship on the unrestricted and unregulated use of the internet and the fruits of globalization by its own followers. This is done in order to maintain the existing hierarchical and patriarchal structures in their groups – on the other hand, they realize the potential for unlimited expansion that these modern technologies have. They understand and the fruits of globalization that are given to them and thus, they attempt to make good use of these resources. Thus, religious leaders are seen using the internet to spread their messages far and wide, with the help of modern technology, while themselves advocating values that oppose certain secularizing forces of modernity.

As Michael B. Salzman has shown, in a world immersed within the forces of globalization, one is often left without an anchor, without deeper roots in which one can find a sense of personhood and socio-personal meaningfulness in their lives. The greatest need among human beings in such times is the need for meaning. This need for meaning includes a need for purpose, for value, and self worth. Culture, often through the conduit of religion, provides the rules, conducts, and customs that one could rely on to give them meaning in an increasingly globalizing and anchorless world (Salzman, 2008).

Now one of the fundamental features of globalization is integration and 'free market capitalism,' which believes that uninterrupted free markets which are free from government intervention, have the ability to correct their own flaws and evolve with time (Salzman, 2008). These conditions create a world that is deeply fragmented, and yet deeply interlinked at the same time, in relationships of domination and subjugation. These systems of domination and subjugation are often unfamiliar to certain cultures on which such historically specific hierarchical structures are imposed. The unfamiliar circumstances that such impositions create often lead to a heightened sense of anomie and lack of religious meaningfulness in life. Although these new

conditions under globalization do espouse their own kinds of norms, goals and even customs, people who are unfamiliar with these social norms and goals often find themselves looking for religious meaning in other spaces.

Given the conditions of modernity stated above, individuals are thus perpetually in search of religious meaning in their lives, which would give them a method, a way of conducting their lives towards a meaningful religious purpose. Fundamentalist religious groups offer precisely such a concrete method, a concrete purpose, and a way of life infused with meaningful values which help individuals make sense of their lives and the purpose of their lives in an increasingly alienating world (Salzman, 2008).

Thus, there exists a paradox in the relationship between modernity, globalization, and the rise and existence of fundamentalist religious groups. While modernity and globalization advocate a drive towards secularism, in the socio-economic realm, they also advocate a drive towards an increasingly alienating world with a deeply unfamiliar culture of modern Western value systems. Given these value systems, individuals find themselves being unable to find any religious meaning in the world they are suddenly situated in. They thus begin to look for meaningfulness in their lives, both through meaningful, religious-value-centric goals as well as meaningful methods with which to reach those goals. Fundamentalist religious groups are then in a position to offer this much needed sense of religious meaningfulness and coherence in the lives of individuals seeking to escape the unfamiliar world they find themselves in. Thus the rise and existence of religious fundamentalism depends to a large extent on modernity and globalization and at the same time, fundamentalist religious groups constantly attempt to resist the forces of modernity and globalization (Sagi, 1999).

On the other hand, while moderate religious pluralism may celebrate the forces of globalization and modernity, expressive religious pluralism would view modernity and globalization as contexts, as cultural, temporal and historical spaces within which individuals find themselves attempting to make sense of their realities.

15.6 Conclusion

This unit thus elaborates on the concepts of religious fundamentalism and religious pluralism. It discusses the essential features of fundamentalist religious groups, namely, hierarchy, patriarchy, discipline and seclusion within the groups themselves. These groups strictly adhere to the dictates of the religious text, following a deeply conservative reading of the text itself. Fundamentalist religious groups also include the participation of women and younger generations. Women negotiate their spaces within these groups, struggling against the hierarchies, often submitting to them, but at other times, pushing the limits of their conditioned

possibilities. The classical theorists such as Weber have also elaborated on concepts such as charismatic authority which forms a large part of the personalities of elite leaders in fundamentalist religious groups.

Religious pluralism refers to conditions wherein the various religious groups coexist in harmony. Religious pluralism can exist in various forms such as moderate, radical and expressive. While some forms of religious pluralism believe in the existence of a singular divinity, others believe in the existence of multiplicities in the context of the divine sphere. Expressive religious pluralism, deeply influenced by post modern thought, believes that individuals do not prefer any one religion over the other due to any logical reason, rather, individuals are born in pre existing religious and cultural conditions which then shape their habitus and create their dispositions to the religions that they appear to prefer.

15.7. Summary

Whereas Religious fundamentalism refers to conservative reading of religious texts, religious pluralism on the other hand refers to harmonious co-existences of religious groups. Durkheim, Max, and Weber have discussed religion to show its social implications. Women in fundamentalist groups offer both resistance and compliance to these groups. Religious pluralism is a part of Indian history for centuries. Colocalization and the internet offers a new condition to enable religious pluralism as well as fundamentalism.

15.8. Questions

Short Answer Type Questions

1. What is the concept of expressive religious pluralism
2. Elaborate on the concept of radical religious pluralism.
3. What is the role of patriarchy in fundamentalist religious groups?
4. Why does hierarchy form an important part of fundamentalist religious groups?
5. What is the role of seclusion in fundamentalist religious groups?
6. How does discipline play a role in the functioning of fundamentalist religious groups?

Broad Answer Type Questions

1. What is the significance of hierarchy and patriarchy in fundamentalist religious groups with respect to their behaviour towards women?
2. Could expressive religious pluralism lead to conditions of religious fundamentalism? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Elaborate on the impact of the internet on women in fundamentalist religious groups.
4. How does the internet impact younger generations in fundamentalist religious groups?
5. What are the types of moderate religious pluralism and radical religious pluralism?

Essay Answer Type Question

1. How is the relationship between religious fundamentalism, globalization and modernity, paradoxical?
2. What are the ways in which women in fundamentalist religious groups negotiate their boundaries of existence?
3. What are the conditions that help reproduce religious pluralism in the Indian context?

15.9 References

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Unit 16 □ Diversity in Religion and Identity: Class, Caste and Gender

Structure of the Unit

- 16.1 Learning Objectives**
- 16.2 Introduction**
- 16.3 Significance of the state in the management of diversity in religion and identity**
- 16.4 Diversity in religion and identity in the context of the Indian state**
- 16.5 Class as a factor in diversity of religion and identity**
- 16.6 Caste as a factor in diversity of religion and identity**
- 16.7 Gender as a factor in diversity of religion and identity**
- 16.8 Conclusion**
- 16.9 Summary**
- 16.10 Questions**
- 16.11 References**

16.1 Learning Objectives

- To develop conceptual clarity on the idea of diversity in religion and identity
- To highlight the significance of class, caste and gender in the context of religious diversity
- To develop the ability to critically analyse the role of class, caste and gender in recreating newer conditions of diversity
- To understand the importance of the state in the context of diversity in religion and identity.

16.2 Introduction

Diversity of religion and identity is now a social fact in most nations that espouse modern values. These modern values have a secularizing tendency which makes

them promote values of religious tolerance, religious pluralism and religious acceptance. Stemming from the history of the modern world, these values too have a connection with the modern economic and political structures. Under the present day conditions of globalization and modernity, one is increasingly confronted with the reality of condemnation of religious intolerance and the promotion of religious diversity. However, not all countries that have reaped the benefits of globalization and modernity have necessarily also espoused such modern values of religious diversity. For instance, countries that are currently being governed by theocratic governments, or countries which have had a history of discrimination against religious minorities, continue to oppose the values of religious diversity. In an effort to maintain 'racial purity,' and religious elitism, these countries produce cultures which are averse to the value of religious diversity.

Thus the state and the government play a deeply pivotal role in the construction of the culture of a nation. It also plays a significant role in determining the degree of religious diversity that would be allowed in the culture that it constructs.

Diversity of religion and identity are also deeply entangled with the social factors of caste, class and gender. These factors create fragments and hierarchies within society that have an underlying influence on the diversity of religion and identity.

16.3 Significance of the state in the management of diversity in religion and identity

International migration plays an important role in developing melting pot cultures of religious diversity. Globalization and the creation of the 'free' labour market encourages various forms of immigration, which then encourages cultural complexities that bring about a form of religious diversity (Turner, 2007).

While in the past the states of various nations were not directly involved with the management of religions, now, with the rise of religious extremism, resulting in terrorist activities, in certain groups, states and governments are being compelled to take an active role in managing the religious affairs of their nations (Turner, 2007).

Politically liberal governments believe that religious extremism can be controlled by the propagation of various government policies aimed at targeting the problem of religious extremism and terrorism. These policies, according to such governments, should focus on reforming the extremist religious groups so that they may be persuaded to forgo their radicalism and accept themselves as part of modern, liberal

societies. These policies include the spread of modern western education – and through such education, modern social values are encouraged. In such extremist religious groups, discouraging regressive practices such as patriarchal controls over women, opposing repressive forms of brutal punishment and so are taken as commendable efforts. (Turner, 2007).

Another way in which the state attempts to manage religion and religious diversity is also through the creation of exclusive enclaves in which to host the radicalized religious factions. This policy is followed so that the radicalized religious groups may not be able to launch terror attacks on civilians or other citizens of the country. Such forms of quarantining certain populations based on their religious and cultural identities tend to deny certain modern privileges to the enclaved religious groups. This also allows the enclaves to be objects of government surveillance which is considered to be a necessity in order to curb the possibilities of any terror attacks by the particular religious groups (Turner, 2007). This however, also creates a vicious cycle: marginalization/ exclusion begets a feeling of being labelled as an outsider, which then begets a deep seated sense of radicalism and hate against the host nation and its allies, which often gets manifested in the form of terrorist activities.

Liberal governments believe in the perpetuation and maintenance of rule of law, tolerance and mutual respect. Respect for diversity of religion and identity is interwoven with these values of mutual respect and tolerance, as well as rule of law. In order to perpetuate mutual respect, it is also important to have mutually interacting social worlds. It is majorly through naturalized cultural inter-mixing that it becomes possible to expect a harmonious existence of people belonging to diverse religions and identities.

Social exclusion, on the other hand, has an aura of penalty about itself which results in less harmonious relations among diverse religious groups. While socio-economic class is a mobile category, social exclusion is far more rigid, not allowing its members to experience any social mobility.

Thus while on the one hand the state helps to create cultures of specific kinds of religious diversity, on the other hand, due to globalization, there has been a rise in the rates of immigration, which then contributes to cultural diversity prior to the intervention of the state in management of religions. This creates a curious condition wherein multiple factors are at play in creating or posing hindrances to conditions of diversity in religion and identity. Moreover, even within conditions of diversity in religion and identity, there exists various types, extending over a range starting from liberal, restitutive to increasingly repressive. The state and the diversity in the culture

then come together in an interactive relationship to create and recreate specific kinds of (or lack of) diversity in religion and identity.

16.4 Diversity in religion and identity in the context of the Indian state

In the context of the Indian state, one is readily faced with a diversity of religions and identities as well as various fragmentations within each religion and each kind of ethnic, racial, religious, caste or any other kind of identity. The modern nation state of India is a secular democratic republic which thus advocates religious diversity rather than discouraging it or stopping it. However, it must be mentioned that even prior to the birth of the post colonial, secular Indian nation state, the society and culture in India has always been one that has valued the peaceful co-existence of other religions and displayed acceptance towards them. India has been home to several persecuted religious minorities throughout history, far before it even espoused the values of modern, post colonial secularism.

The Indian culture in itself has faced innumerable invasions throughout history; these invaders have often changed the very cultural, religious and linguistic-ethnic map of India to suit their own political purposes of conquest and expansion. However, India has also been known for its acceptance of other, foreign cultures and religions throughout history, despite the conflicting relations some of the Indian monarchs may have had with the invaders of particular times. The history of India thus reveals a culture of religious acceptance and the steady rise in the diversity of religion and identity. The secular aspect of the post colonial Indian state was of course a later addition in the already existing culture of religious diversity. It could be argued that the acceptance on the part of the majority religion in India has a significant role to play in creating such an environment of religious diversity for without the support of the majority it is virtually impossible to bring about such a distinct culture of religious acceptance and diversity.

16.5 Class as a factor in diversity in religion and identity

The concept of class has been sociologically analysed by classical sociological thinkers such as Emile Durkheim, Max Weber and Karl Marx. In order to understand the relation of class with diversity in religion and identity, it is thus important to delve further into the way in which class has been analysed by such classical thinkers.

Emile Durkheim was a functionalist thinker. He analysed society in terms of the functions of its various parts which contributed to the smooth progress of the whole. In order for society to function, work is divided among various groups which in other words, is 'division of labour.' According to Durkheim, this division of labour leads to increasing organic solidarity of society while also engendering the growth of various classes. In Durkheim's views therefore, one's class was based on one's location in society's framework of division of labour.

Max Weber's notion of class was related not only to economic class but also to social status and political power. According to Weber, these three things together contribute towards the formation of one's class. While one's position in the economic ladder determines one's economic capabilities, obligations and entitlements, that alone is not enough to qualify one's class. Social status is an important factor in determining one's class position. Pierre Bourdieu has also discussed the importance of various forms of capital besides economic capital in determining one's class position. Bourdieu has referred to forms of capital such as cultural capital, social capital, and political capital, which, according to him, play an important role in determining one's class. Weber's notion of social status as a determinant of class is important to note as it takes us one step beyond the rigid economic boundaries of class. One's social status is not determined by one's income alone. A person would enjoy a high social status despite a modest income based on his prestige in society. Thirdly Weber has also acknowledged the importance of 'party' and political power in determining one's class. Political power is often also the source of economic gains and together, they contribute to enhancing one's class position.

The Marxist notion of class is purely economic. He views society as divided between two classes: the haves and the have nots. According to Marx, there are owners of means of production on the one hand, and owners of bare labour power on the other. Marx believed that these two classes were constantly in a state of conflict and struggle against one another. He further believed that this struggle is further left to the dialectical progress of society. Marx also believed that the ultimate stage of society would be one where this struggle would reach its completion, and where the workers of the world would be able to take their rights and seize the means of production from the ownership of the bourgeoisie. Marx's notion of class is thus entangled with social conflict and dialectical progress.

In the context of religious diversity, it is important to understand these sociological notions of class in order to analyse how identity and religious diversity interact with the notion of class. All religious communities have within them members of

various social classes. While on the one hand people identify with their religious group, on the other hand, they also identify strongly with their class background. Even within a religious group, social interactions are often naturally bound by class positions. Thus, religious occasions necessitate people to grow out of their specific class positions and mingle with people from other classes as well. A number of religious rituals are a way for various classes of people to interact. For instance, the jajmani system in Indian villages, was a way for people of different social classes and caste groups to form bonds of services and favours over generations. Through this system, religious rituals were performed as well since a particular priest would perform the religious rites and worship at the residence of the particular patron who would take care of him and his family. This is a system that exemplifies the Durkheimian notion of class as division of labour leading to the growth of organic solidarity. This organic solidarity is thus responsible for building bonds of service and favours that last over several generations. Classes based on such organic solidarity thus also practice religious customs and rituals.

The Weberian notion of class and Bourdieu's notion of capitals as the determinants of class are also important in order to understand the role of diversity in religious identities. Religions have been historically enmeshed with social structures and structures of power and economy. Diversity of religion and identity have encased within them the variety in classes. Religious diversity often translates to class identities and identifications. Weber's notion of social status has a significant role to play in the analysis of religious diversity. Given one's spatio-temporal location, one's religion could play a role in creating one's social status. The diversity in religion helps to identify greater numbers of people from various social classes ascribed to several different faiths.

The thought of elevating one's social status through piety towards one's religion is also an important aspect of religious identity and class. Religious piety is often an important method in framing one's own social status and prestige. The construction of one's class status is thus not divorced from one's position in the context of diverse religions.

The Marxist concept of class as engaged in dialectical conflict and progress is also reflective of the relationships between people of diverse religious backgrounds. There exist class based relationships of conflict alongside conflict of religion and identity. From ancient times, such as in ancient Egypt, where people of the Jewish faith were oppressed as a class by the rulers who subscribed to a different faith, there

has been recorded history of class conflict being associated with a dimension of religious conflict as well.

In the modern world, class is intricately woven into religious diversities and diversities of identity. Class is a permeating factor that has found its way into every existing social system and made itself increasingly prominent. However, class is not necessarily determinant of one's position in religious hierarchies, for instance, priests in hindu society have traditionally belonged to a higher rung in the social ladder in terms of social status and prestige. However, their class status, in terms of economic class, has not always coincided with their heightened social status as they have often ritually engaged in renunciation of material pleasures. They were left out of worldly wealth which is the primary determinant of economic class.

16.6 Caste as a factor in diversity of religion and identity

The term 'caste' is derived from the Portugese word 'casta' meaning 'lineage' or 'race.' Thus, to begin with, it is not an organic term to understand Hindu society with. Caste nonetheless has been used to refer to a combined sense of the terms 'varna' and 'jati.' While varna refers to one's birth in the ritual hierarchy of the Hindu social system, 'jati' is primarily determined by one's occupation, which is hereditarily passed on through the family. While the varna system consists of *Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras*, the jati system has innumerable divisions based on various occupations and their subsets.

Srinivas has shown how while the varna system may have been upheld by Brahmins, they were nonetheless, a numerical minority and also not necessarily economically affluent. While they were indeed influential in certain quarters, their influence was also often disputed by other more dominant castes who may have been ritually lower. Thus, the varna system existed in theory and in texts but in practice, the power in Hindu society lay in the hands of the dominant caste. The dominant caste was not necessarily ritually high. In fact, in a number of cases that Srinivas has shown, the dominant castes belonged to the landowning farming group. Srinivas' works have explored how these groups would exert not only political influence but also social pressures on both economically backward and politically powerless Dalits as well as brahmins. In such scenarios, the brahmins and Dalits faced the same kinds of oppression from the dominant caste due to their similar location in the socio-economic field.

In the context of caste, Dipankar Gupta has explored a particular characteristic of caste which can be qualified by a term coined by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, namely, 'rhizomatic.' The term rhizomatic, as used by Deleuze and Guattari, refers to the quality of belonging like a rhizome in a horizontal field as opposed to a vertical hierarchy. Dipankar Gupta has explored how caste manifests itself in innumerable forms in various spatio-temporal locations in ways that give it a peculiarly characteristic quality. This rhizomatic quality of caste implies that caste cannot be understood in one form alone. Caste exists in innumerable forms and used to be a far more fluid category before it was concretized by the British colonizers for the purpose of making the census, and later, by the system of reservation. The fluidity of caste not only meant that people of various castes could (over two or three generations) sanskritize and thereby elevate their caste position, but also that even without Sanskritization, the very way in which caste manifests itself in various forms in different parts of India is such that it is impossible to qualify any one single caste as 'dominant' and others as 'oppressed.' Different regions have different dominant castes and they do not necessarily adhere to the vertical hierarchy given in the varna system. Thus, while the varna system certainly exists and may be important to some groups of people, to say that subjugation or oppression occurs purely based on a varna hierarchy would be grossly misleading.

In the context of religious diversity, caste acquires an important role. In the Hindu pantheon of gods and goddesses, there are deities who are worshipped by people of specific castes and who are viewed as their caste gods and goddesses. Diversity and pluralism is inherent in the Hindu religious system of worship and life. Caste is perhaps one of the most intricate ways to understand this religious diversity and pluralism.

In Hindu history there have been several anecdotes of interactions between different deities and their human worshippers. The Hindu system of worship follows from such histories and has thus developed into a system of worship wherein various castes and other ethnic groups have come to worship specific deities who have played a role in their regional histories. According to such historical anecdotes, human beings have also been in interaction with deities thereby making it a far less organized system of worship. Because of this pluralistic nature of Hindu forms of worship, Hinduism has never developed into an organized religion with a single governing body, a single church and a single holy book. Disputes, arguments and constant contestations lie at the core of the Hindu system of thought and life. In the pluralistic and diverse Hindu way of life, there is thus a perceived lack of one, single

holy person whose word is infallible or who cannot be countered by any other. The contested nature of the Hindu field of thought is what allows it to incorporate religious diversity and pluralism.

These contestations can be observed in the existence of caste as well. Religious diversity goes hand in hand with diversities in caste. As different castes derive their ancestries from various historical and religious sources, they thus observe the differences in their religious rituals accordingly. The diversity in religious rituals makes itself evident through caste based diversities in a number of instances: during religious festivals, during daily worship, during marriage rituals, during birth rituals, during death rituals and so on. While religious diversity has always existed in Hindu society through the medium of caste, it thus manifests itself and becomes more visibly, audibly, and often palpably perceptible during such religious occasions or other occasions that necessitate any kind of interaction with some aspect of divinity.

While diversity and pluralism is inherent in Hindu society, India has also been home to a diversity of other religious groups as well. India is home to various other religions such as Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism. India is also home to various tribal groups that practice animism and naturism. However, several such tribal groups have now been converted to Christianity or Islam due to the zeal to convert them out of their original faiths. Religious diversity in India thus not only exists through the channel of caste in Hinduism, but also in the nation through the course of its diverse and pluralistic history.

16.7 Gender as a factor in diversity of religion and identity

So far we have studied how the state, class, and caste are important factors in diversity of religion and identity. An important sociological factor which holds enormous importance in the context of diversity of religion and identity is gender. Gender has been defined as the social category which is generally associated with one's biological sex. However, unlike sex, gender is not said to be determined at birth but rather, identified with by the person. There have been various sociological studies on gender which have shown how one's gender is 'performed' rather than given or determined by birth. The performativity of gender lends it a degree of fluidity that is important to understand in order to grasp the concept of gender in a holistic manner.

In the context of religious diversity, gender has a significant role to play. It has been seen that men and women have been historically treated as the repositories of

culture. It is also important to understand that the need to protect women from foreign attacks and influences comes primarily from the realization that women are the carriers of culture which would seep into the next generation. As women play a major role in the rearing of children, it is important to note that the rearing is not merely biological but also social, cultural and religious. Thus, women play a major role in both holding a culture together, and allowing it to disintegrate.

In the context of religious diversity as well, women play a major role in helping to uphold such religious diversities and preserving the pluralism of existing civilizations and cultures. The pluralism of cultures and diversity of religious identities is best preserved when all cultures ritually and religiously maintain their practices and defend themselves in case of foreign attacks; it is best preserved when no one form of religious power is given special preference over the other, thereby leading all religious groups on an equal platform, without discriminating in favour of, or against, any particular group. The role of different genders lies in preserving these religious practices which give them their existence and their identities.

The creation of gender roles is also intricately linked to the maintenance of religious diversity. As both people of both genders are assigned specific roles in their respective religious communities, they become a part of a larger process of maintaining a community's religious systems, and therefore also a part of the larger religious diversity. Religious diversity is kept alive through the maintenance of myriad and specific religious traditions that are maintained by designated gender roles. Thus, the creation and maintenance of gender roles plays a significant part in perpetuating an already existing religious diversity.

Though the role of gender is generally not associated with religious diversity, it nonetheless plays a significant role in maintaining it. Performance of gender roles in religious rituals is a major aspect of religious performances which help to keep religious practices alive. As human beings of both genders behave as repositories of religious and cultural values and value systems, they are a natural component in the field of religious diversity as well. It is also up to the same people to help maintain such religious diversity rather than subjugating all religions under the dominion of any one. Such a condition would instead lead to the gradual diminishing of religious diversity. In the history of Indian civilization, religious diversity has always been present be it within Hinduism or outside of it. Thus, it becomes an important function of all stages of Indian society to help maintain such diversities of religion and identity. Given the inherently pluralistic nature, Hindu thought and Hindu forms of worship, diversity becomes a natural component of Hinduism, which, being the

religion of the majority of people in India, has thus helped to create a pluralistic culture of diversity of religion and identity in this country.

16.8 Conclusion

This unit has focused on the concept of diversity in religion and identity. In the context of diversity of religion and identity it has also explored the angles of class, caste and gender. This unit has discussed first of all, the role of the state, and in particular the role of the Indian state, in maintaining the diversities of religion and identity. Next it has gone on to discuss the relation of diversity of religion and identity to class, caste and gender. In the context of class, it has discussed the contributions of classical sociologists such as Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Karl Marx. It has also partially referred to the concepts on class and capital given by Pierre Bourdieu. This unit has then studied the way in which such sociological concepts of class come to play a role in the diversity of religion and identity. The sociological concepts of class are important in order to understand how religious diversity manifests itself in our present reality.

This unit has also discussed the role of caste in the context of religious diversity. Here it has discussed the works of M. N. Srinivas, and Dipankar Gupta on caste. In the context of caste, it has shown how diversity of castes has played a significant role in adding to the pluralism and diversity within the Hindu form of religiosity. Pluralism and diversity are inherent in Hinduism to a large extent owing to the prevalence of diverse castes, each of which have their deities. These deities are not only figures of worship but also have histories of interaction with their human worshippers in such as in the case of Sri Ramkrishna Paramhansa. The interactions of various deities (worshipped by various castes) with each other and with their human worshippers lends Hinduism a characteristic diversity and pluralism which has come to be inextricable from it. This section has also discussed how India as a nation also has religious diversity through the existence of various religions, such as Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam etc in harmonious coexistence for several years. Finally, this unit has discussed the role of gender roles and gender performances in maintaining diversity of religion and identity. As human beings are the repositories of culture, when a culture is inherently pluralistic and diverse in terms of religion and identity, it falls to the people, and the performance of their gender roles, to preserve such religious diversity by preserving their own forms of worship.

16.9 Summary

The state has a role to play in engendering diversity of religion and identity. The Indian State has encouraged the domain of religious diversities. The Indian civilization and culture has also traditionally encouraged diversity. Weber, Durkheim and Marx have discussed the significance of class in diversity. Srinivas, Dipankar Gupta and others have explained the role of caste in diversity. Gender is an important parameter for understanding diversity of religion & identity.

16.10 Questions

Short Answer Type Questions

1. What was Marx's notion of class and how is it related to diversity of religion and identity?
2. How was Weber's notion of class expressed in diversity of religion?
3. Explain the role of Durkheim's notion of class in the functioning of a religious system.
4. Explain how Bourdieu's notion of capital could be used to understand religious diversity
5. What was Srinivas' contribution in the understanding of caste?
6. What is the role of the Indian state in promoting religious diversity?

Broad Answer Type Questions

1. How did Srinivas' analysis of caste contribute to the study of diversity of religion and identity?
2. How does the structure of a state create conditions for diversity of religion and identity?
3. How does Dipankar Gupta analyse caste?
4. In what ways does Dipankar Gupta's analysis of caste help understand diversity of religion?

Essay Answer Type Question

1. What is the role of class in diversity of religion and identity?

2. How does caste help us understand diversity of religion and identity?
3. In what ways does gender play a role in the processes that produce diversity of religion and identity?

16.11 References

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Unit 17 □ Religion and State

Structure of the unit

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17.15 Reference

17.1 Learning Objectives

- To understand the relation between religion and state
- To understand the changing relation across epochs
- To understand the role of state in spreading the religious faiths.

17.2 Introduction

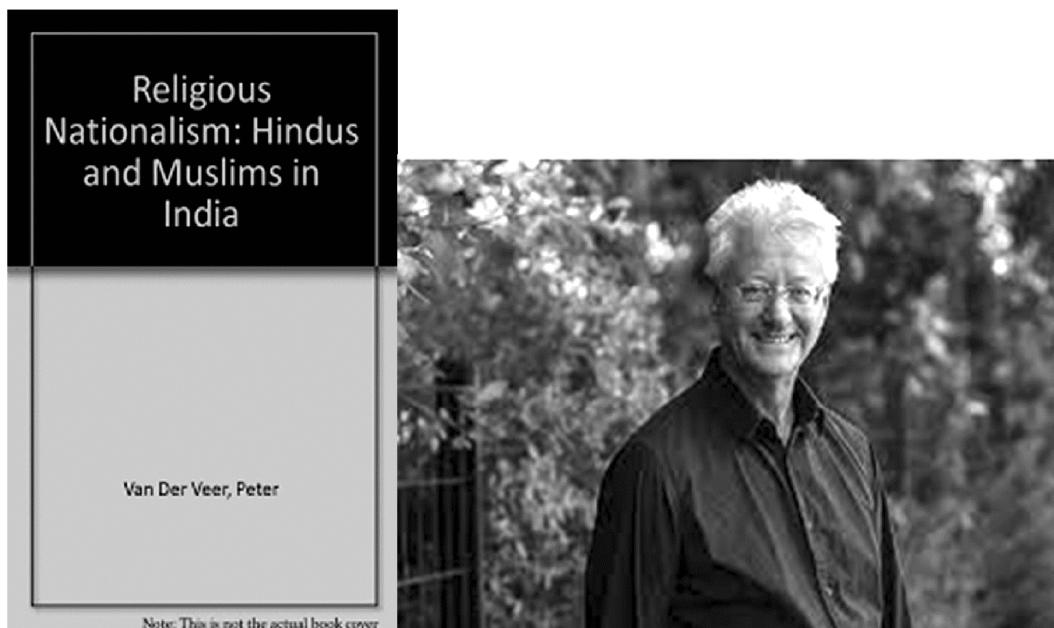
Over the years, the relation between religion and state had been at the center of constant debate and discourse. Not all the views were of course evident, for some were mere generalizations and sweeping oversimplifications that romanticized the relation between religion and state formations. It had been viewed that society was overwhelmed by religious perceptions and constantly motivated by other-worldly goals. It was presumed that the Hindu society is all caste-ridden and ruled by the Brahmins. It was widely believed that Hindu thought was accommodative and tolerant and this idea was coupled with economic interdependence among the common people. This made for the perfect ground of social harmony and concord in Indian society as if there was no ground for conflict or strife. It was Karl Marx who suggested that Indian rural society has always had an organic nature and in-ward looking culture that rarely had any exposure to the West. Therefore, it was assumed that political life was all elitist centering around the elites with negligible focus on the lives of the common mass. However, these generalizations were merely corroborated against hard facts. They were supported either by fleeting quotations from Hindu scriptures, or colonial reports or village case studies without its basis on any systematic inquiry. In sociological writings too, we find the basic features of religion, economy and polity in the pre-modern era were taken as straight and constant and often fixed in nature. That gave rise to many misconceptions about Indian polity and religion that boiled down the Indian reality into some rigid sets and bunches of categories, frames and patterns (Ian Copland, 2012).

Perhaps historians were aware of this a-historical approach and was even critiqued by historically oriented cultural anthropologists like Richard Fox and Peter Van der Veer (Veer, 1985). While writing this unit, I too like Ian Copland et al felt that religion and state is a difficult topic and must be studied in detail. This means we must go back to the basics of state formation in South Asia to make intense scrutiny on the interconnections between religion and state in the different phases of

history. Let us briefly touch history to see what religion and governance has promised for us. Let's check out.

Do you know?

The book, *Religious Nationalism : Hindus and Muslims in India* by Peter Van der Veer is a comprehensive account of the way religious identities like Hindus and Muslims are constructed. In this book, Veer argues that these identities are not ascribed or primordial attachments assigned by unchanging traditions. Instead, these are the specific products of the changing forms of religious organization and constant communication. Hindu and Muslim nationalism is said to have developed along similar lines of organization and therefore one desperately needs the other.



Note: This is not the actual book cover

Photo-1: Peter Van der Veer with his book, *Religious Nationalism : Hindus and Muslims in India*

Source: <https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/people/peter-van-der-veer>

<https://www.amazon.in/Religious-Nationalism-Hindus-Muslims-India/dp/0520082206>

17.3 The ancient India

The men in South Asia had discovered gods and religious rituals to pacify such gods and goddesses many centuries before they had built the nation states (Ian Copland, 2012). In the millennium following the Vedic period, there mushroomed an array of contesting kingdoms. The growing ideas of urbanisation, state formation and commerce have defeated the capacity of the orthodox Vedic Brahminism that was inherited with the Vedas. Now, new processes were gaining ground and new as well as divergent sects rose. We must not forget that the Brahmans were still powerful hereditary classes who were treated as indispensable intermediaries to approach the divine. The Brahmins remained worthy to serve the rulers and the royal classes who could not be served by others except the priestly Brahmins. Rulers during this Vedic regime continued to support the religion but of course, the nature of religious belief and practise was witnessing a slow change. There was a growing tendency to reject everything that has got to do with Brahmanism. For over the following centuries, the hegemonic Brahmin sponsored orthodoxy was severely challenged. The rising kingdoms and empires paid aplenty attention to rising new sects, and even extended elaborate state patronage to the anti-Brahminical ideas and organizations (Ian Copland, 2012).

Along with the religious changes, there were accompanying developments in the political and economic sphere of the state too. From the sixth century BC, the archaeological records display evidence for an increasing trend of urbanization in the north east of the Indian sub-continent, especially in the Ganga-Yamuna area. With the parallel shift of mode of production from pastoralism to agriculture, productivity was boosted which led to such a shift. New towns had come up such as Sravasti, Tripuri, Vesali and Pataliputra. The proliferation of towns also meant a centralized management of manpower which presumed an effective political authority. This development was noticed in the forms of the kingdoms at Ujjain, Rajghat etc. that grew on the lower course of the Ganges feeding on the agricultural surplus. Of all these kingdoms, immensely dominant was the Magadha which eventually went on to become the home territory of India's first great historical empire (Ian Copland, 2012). These developments led to the birth of the Mauryan kingdom by the first ruler, Chandragupta Maurya who set up a huge army and made large scale conquests especially after the withdrawal of Alexander the Great. At the flag end of Chandragupta's reign, we find a huge spread of power and wealth suggested by his magnificent capital of Pataliputra and the dynamic Mauryan polity. This elaborate

and fine system of administration and state formation was detailed in Arthashastra, the standard text on administration penned by none other than Chandragupta's minister, Kautilya. Yet another significant state formation in this period was led by Chandragupta's grandson, Ashoka.

Coming to the religious face of the kingdoms, we find that the Mauryan rulers supported the religious sects that had arbitrarily grown. This was in opposition of the Brahminical hegemony that deviant sects like Buddhism, Jainism and the Ajivikas grew in the kingdom of Magadha (Ian Copland, 2012).

17.3.1 The Mauryan Empire: The Era of Dhammavijaya and Decline

The Kalinga war had opened an altogether new chapter in the history of Magadha and that of India. During the very first thirteen years of his reign, Akbar could be termed a typical Magadhan sovereign. He inherited the politics of Bimbishara, Mahapadma and Chandragupta Maurya. He conquered people, suppressed their revolts and annexed their territories. After the great war of Kalinga, the political philosophy and the religious associations of ancient India underwent massive shifts. Religion in the days of Ashoka usually were divided into some sects (Ian Copland, 2012) such as:

1. The orthodox Deva-worshippers,
2. The Ajivikas or the followers of the Goshala Mankhaliputta
3. The Nirgranthas or the Jainas, i.e the followers of Nigantha Nataputta, who is also commonly called the Mahavira or the Vardhamana.
4. The followers of Gautama Buddha
5. Other sects

We get a clear account of the prevailing state of the social polity which says that for many hundred years, the sacrificial slaughter of living creatures has increased and alongside, the unseemly behaviors towards the relatives, Brahmanas and the ascetics have also become commonplace. Kings went out on pompous Vihara Yatras or amusement and hunting expeditions in which animals were killed for fun and royal display. People performed various rituals of life such as births, weddings and deaths. It might be presumed that Varna or the social gradation and Asrama or the stages of the socio-religious discipline were established institutions that had taken a sound shape in ancient India (Ian Copland, 2012).

The traditional devotion towards Hindu kings, the gods or the Devas and the Brahmanas. For instance, Ashoka's favorite deity was Shiva but he never had representation for the sacrifice of so many men and animals. Do you know that each day hundreds of living animals were slaughtered everyday to make delicious curry in his kitchens? However, the misery brought by the Kalinga war awakened his feelings of regret and he eventually came under the influence of Buddhist teachings. He went on to practice the Law of Piety or the Dharmasilana. However, it must be mentioned that though Ashoka became a pure Buddhist, he was not an enemy either of the Devas or of the Brahmanas. He loved calling himself a Devanampiya or the one who is the beloved of the Gods. He was hostile towards all who misbehaved with the Brahmanas. He inculcated tolerance and was particularly intolerant towards massacre and killing, slaughter of animals and the performance of vulgar, useless and offensive ceremonies (Ian Copland, 2012).

17.3.2 Foreign policy and religion

The change of religion very soon impacted the foreign policy of the state. In Kalinga Edict I, the Emperor Ashoka made it very clear that his subjects should not be afraid of him, instead they should learn to trust him. What they deserve from him is happiness and not sorrow. The most important conquest for Ashoka was the conquest by righteousness or Dhamma-vijaya. He even convinced his later generations to follow him. There was a complete withdrawal of the old foreign policy of seizure, annexure of power and military conquest or Digvijaya and instead one of Dharmavijaya. The full political impact of this change of policy was realized after the death of Ashoka. From the time of Bimbisara to the fateful Kalinga war, the history of India had been the story of expansion of the Magadha. From being a tiny state in South Bihar, Magadha was translated into a gigantic empire spanning all across the foot of the Hindukush to the borders of the Tamil country (Ian Copland, 2012). However, after the completion of the great Kalinga war, there was an extensive period of stagnation. The mighty empire lost its gravity and sank down from where it had all begun (Choudhuri 1953).

We can notice that for the next four centuries, the north of India was constantly reorganized by the frequent waves of the foreign rulers who continuously invaded us through the Karakoram passes of the far north west. We can of course mention the Yavanas, the Shakas, Kushanas and the others of this genre who made a series of unstable empires in the Gangesic plain. Interestingly, as you will find, like the Mauryans, many of the immigrant dynasties adopted Buddhism, for instance under

the Kushana ruler, Kanishka, this religion was glorified. Even the Satavahana empire extended patronage to Buddhism which lasted from say 200 BC to AD 200 over Southern India as far as Tamilnadu. The city of Amaravati on the banks of Krishna, grew as an eminent Buddhist center of learning. Buddhism stood its ground in India until the fourteenth century. Throughout ancient India, empires came and eroded, state formations changed shape but one cannot disagree over the fact that increasingly diverse religious sects and schools got deeper and still deeper. For instance, around the sixth century BC, a new type of religious movement became conspicuous, centered on the teachings of wandering monks who lived in poverty and survived on alms as they walked from place to place. Their teachings were diverse, but they all rejected both the sanctity of the Vedas and the Brahmins' hereditary claim that they were needed to mediate contact with the invisible world. This religious movement was trying to do away with the Brahmins and their claim that it is only through them that we can worship the Almighty (Ian Copland, 2012).

17.3.2.1 Sramanas, Karma and governance

Approximately at this time or only slightly later, the wandering monks, sramanas, began to flourish. Among these, the Jain and Buddhist monks both developed their own particular, and contrasting, theories of karma. To be sure, the founding fathers among the main sramaṇa schools were not primarily concerned with good and bad karma. For them, and for their most sincere disciples, the goal of the religious life, their pursuit of self-discipline and meditation, was not to cultivate good karma but to eradicate it altogether. They did this in order that they should not be reborn into the vicious round of limited, insecure, often painful and miserable existence in the finite world. Rather they wanted to be released into that nameless blissful state that is beyond all states. However, although the original teachings of the wandering monks were directed to this ultimate salvation, the doctrine of karma nevertheless grew deep roots in Indian learnings and philosophy. This was evident from the fact that the potential patrons of the monks such as ministers, merchants and, not least, kings were likely to be a receptive audience for sermons on this theme. It is, therefore, natural to ask: in what ways, given the widespread currency of belief in karma, did religious ideas influence the government and the state? (Ian Copland, 2012).

As is quite understandable, historians have often tried to emphasise the role of bad karma in propagating state action. For example, Romila Thapar says that the teaching of karma served to reconcile people to their lot in life. However hard may

the subaltern class have suffered under harsh governance, the teaching that it all came as a result of past bad karma had the effect of discouraging dissent and unrest among the subalterns. This encouraged the subaltern class to accept political authority without fuss. This interpretation may well identify a way in which people sometimes thought in ancient India. This gave an explanation of the readiness of any population to accept an oppressive regime without protest. Subjects would not accept oppressive rule simply as a result of being told, by the authorities, that their suffering was the result of bad karma. They might then be understandably angry. But they might be moved to resign themselves to an unhappy condition if they already believed that all their misfortunes arose from bad karma, and this depressing truth would have been easier to internalize if they would have realized that everything arose from the bad karma.(Thapar 1991).

As for rulers and officials, they, like their subjects, could regard karma either as a blanket of quietism, translating the peoples' will to action, or as a spur to initiative and motivation. Nonetheless, it appears that rulers of the late first millennium BC were more commonly inspired by the hope of good karma – pre-eminently such as would lead to rebirth in heaven. This was one reason the gave strong support to the *śramaṇas*, by providing them, for example, with lodging places for the rainy season, feasts for groups of visiting monks, ceremonial gifts of cloth for their robes each year and audiences at which their advice on matters of state would be solicited. Thereby the *śramaṇas* were turned into establishment figures. For those who took the theory of karma seriously, any meritorious action held the potential to sow the seeds of future blessings (Ian Copland, 2012).

17.4 Popular Buddhism and state governance

The karma doctrine is not the whole story, though. The monks did not become the recipients of royal favour just because their teachings included karma . But, before we pursue the question of why so many nascent Indian states embraced the *śramaṇas* and their karma teachings, we need to explain how and why the monks became important. We shall concentrate here on those who professed Buddhism – not because they were unique, as all the new sects had a monastic aspect, but because, as indicated above, Buddhism generated a large body of scripture that constitutes one of the best sources for this period (Ian Copland, 2012).

Views about the conditions in which Buddhism made its appeal generally favour one given argument. The first argument is that the monks' teachings happened to be

of just the sort that would appeal to the rulers and officials of the new centralised states of the Ganges Valley. The learned Brahmans, though still prized as advisers, were unpopular for they favoured the old particularistic culture, replete with its heavily ritualised and exclusive style of religion. The Brahmin scholars stood for values unsuited to the administrative needs of a state apparatus that was responsible for revenue collection and security across a large territory thronged with agricultural villages. Many in the rural populations inhabiting this territory were new to the experience of being dominated by an urban society with an 'Aryan' upper crust, and Brahman ways were totally foreign to them. Something like Buddhism, with its universal values, was likely to attract them (Ian Copland, 2012).

The thesis that Buddhism by its nature admirably served the interests of the rising monarchical state has been argued for in various ways (Mabbett 2003). As we saw earlier, Romila Thapar argued that Buddhism's endorsement of the doctrine of karma helped to reconcile people to their lot, and thus made them easier to control. Others have argued, rather similarly, that Buddhism, in contrast to Brahmanic values, was a more appropriate ideology for the administration of civil society because it offered scientific values and practical codes of behaviour or because its rejection of Vedic and Brahmanic authority made it a natural ally of the Kshatriya aristocracy, which had long been in competition with the Brahmans for socio-economic control over the countryside or because the nobility may have been willing to cooperate with the orders of monks in the management of relations with local populations in the larger interest of the state, or because the Buddhist sangha possibly saw its interest as lying in tactical cooperation with the state, and thereby gaining access to endowments from rulers and other powerful patrons. On the surface all these theories are quite convincing. They go to show that, from several perspectives, the Buddhists can be seen as natural allies of the emerging monarchical states of this period, many of them still fairly insecure. On the other hand, curiously, others find it just as natural to attribute Buddhism's appeal to its aptness as a voice of protest against the harsh and impersonal domination of the increasingly totalitarian Indian state (Ian Copland, 2012).

But, in the long run, it was not Buddhism that became the dominant preferred religion for governance. Time was on the side of the Brahmans. Thanks, ironically, to the teachings of the monks, outlying local communities gradually came to comprehend the culture of the urban state quite well. Meanwhile, as the urban centres projected their power and culture further into the hinterland, groups of Brahmans (agrahâras) were sent out to colonise rural areas under royal endowments, which

made Brahmanical culture more familiar and less threatening in the provinces. This process encapsulates the way Brahmanism, during the centuries of the first millennium, evolved into a new synthesis. Local gods were recognised as special forms of Brahmanical deities. Localised rituals and stories were reinterpreted as expressions of the Vedic world view, and added to the corpus of Brahmanical legend and myth. Some have seen these social developments as signposts of a 'Brahmanical Revival'. But, like so many widely used terms in Indian history, this is a myth, at least as applied to the early centuries of the first millennium, since, even during the heyday of the *ceramaGa* sects, Brahmanism was never totally eclipsed. It was still here and so the question of its complete revival does not arise (Ian Copland, 2012).

17.5 The renewal of the Brahmanical tradition in governance

By the time of the Guptas (fourth–sixth centuries), Sanskrit had come to be reestablished as the paramount orthodox literary language. During the previous centuries, while Buddhism and other sects were flourishing, Prakrit dialects had been favoured by the scribes of many rulers and many sects, but side by side with these languages, Sanskrit had continued to be employed, and many landmark works, contributing to the renewal of the Brahmanical tradition, came to be written in that medium. Most important of these in many ways was the *Mahābhārata*, a massive work containing 100,000 or so verses as well as long prose sections. Running through it is the story of the massive conflict between the Kaurava and Pandava clans, but the narrative thread is easy to lose amid the plethora of other elements. These are sacred teachings, myths and legends, cosmological explanations, and a profuse collection of didactic texts incorporating miscellaneous teachings collected from the Vedic period onwards. Among its contents, one section demands special notice (Ian Copland, 2012).

We may look at the *Bhagavadgītā* ('Song of the Blessed One') because it articulates more precisely than any other piece of scripture. It develops a distinctive new religious teaching encapsulating the main pathways to salvation, namely sacred knowledge (*jñāna*), good works (*karman*), ascetic meditation (*yoga*) and devotion (*bhakti*). Although traditionally attributed to the sage Vyasa, the text is recognisably a compilation. This text belongs to the early centuries of the first millennium. The *Mahābhārata* is one of India's two renowned religious epics. The other, the *Rāmāyana*, is a much shorter work, though scarcely less famous, and the source of innumerable themes and images pervasive in art, iconography and literature. Written

according to tradition by the sage-poet Valmiki, it tells of the righteous prince Rama, who eventually came to be regarded as a form of Vishnu. The core of the story tells of Rama's adventures as he seeks to rescue his wife Sita from the clutches of the demon Ravana. But, perhaps, the most enduring moral of the story is not simply that good must in the end triumph over evil, but that kings are vital agents in upholding morality and righteousness on earth. After the rescue, Rama is pictured inaugurating an era of glorious rule, Ramraj, which ever since has been quoted as a symbol, or ideal, of righteous government. Both epics, however, celebrate a vision of governance guided by dharma (Ian Copland, 2012).

So, at least by the time of the Guptas but probably centuries earlier, a revived Brahmanic orthodoxy was emerging as a new universal teaching, increasingly capable of replacing that of the monks. 'Purānic Hinduism' is a term often used to denote this development. The Puranas, composed over a long period, contain, like the epics, some ancient oral materials, but were not fixed in their known written form until the first half of the first millennium. In total they number scores. Nonetheless, conventionally, there are said to be eighteen major and eighteen minor ones; some of the better known of the major Puranas are (in alphabetical order) the Bhāgavata, Brahma, Brahmāna, Mārkaṇḍeya, Matsya, Padma, Skanda, Varāha and Vishnu. Most of these had been compiled by the Gupta period (Ian Copland, 2012).

17.6 The rise of devotional religion – that the polity of the imperial Guptas

Eventually, the notion that there was an underlying unity to the Hindu system was conceptualised in the idea of varnāśramadharmā. It was literally the dharma or divinely appointed duty of the four orders of society and the four ideal stages of life as lived by a Brahman such as the student of the Vedas, householder, resident of a religious hermitage, and wandering mendicant. By extension, the term came to apply to the settled order of things that a good king must protect, even, if necessary, by coercive means (Ian Copland, 2012).

What made sense of this ideal for people was that the varnāśramadharmā concept connoted the proper observance of religious duty. Whatever the actual origin of local practices, Brahmanical orthodoxy held a large umbrella over them all. While he ruled, Skanda Gupta boasted in an inscription, no subject would dare deviate from his religious duty. Kings were powerful agents of compliance. Moreover, this global

vision of orthodoxy was also underpinned by the cosmological principles of karma and transmigration. The smṛiti texts warned strictly that, if a ruler did not fully uphold the moral order, chaos would follow, and all classes would desert their duty. The evil consequences of a failure by the ruler to maintain social harmony were, therefore, considered as much an effect of cosmic forces as of bad administrative management; good or bad outcomes for the country were both products of karmic consequence. This is quite different from the modern concept of 'good government'. It is against the backdrop of the various developments such as the proliferation of cities, and of commerce, the revival of Brahmanism, and the rise of devotional religion – that the polity of the imperial Guptas – arguably the most extensive of the millennium – came to be considered (Ian Copland, 2012).

Within the various royal courts, the Guptas' and others', Vedic religion was still patronised. Some Gupta rulers, notably Samudra Gupta and Kumara Gupta, had the aśvamedha sacrifice performed in proclamation of their imperial achievement. But Vedic practices were increasingly overshadowed by the luxuriant new growth of cults, rituals, myths and iconography. The Gupta rulers, like the Gangas and Pallavas of the south, were patrons of Vishnu, and strongly influenced by the new devotional tendencies. For instance, an inscription on the Mehrauli Iron Pillar makes clear that the king Chandra, whose identity is not quite clear, caused the pillar to be erected chiefly as a testament to his love for the deity (Ian Copland, 2012).

Vaishnavism had its roots in the Vedic religion but as noticed above extended its domain over many post-Vedic developments. One Vaishnavite sect was that of the Bhagavatas, a sect that originated in perhaps Mauryan times in the north, which worshipped Vishnu as himself, and in the forms of Krishna and Hari. Vishnu's avatars (as above) were part of a vast variety of images and sectarian allegiances incorporated under the broad rubric of Vaishnavism, and many of these figure in Gupta statuary and inscriptions. However, Shiva, too, was becoming a prime object of devotion within the emerging Hindu synthesis; indeed, would become in later centuries the principal one across large parts of the subcontinent. Shaivism (the cult of Shiva) was directly patronised by dynasties such as the Vakatakas and Bharashivas. Inscriptions left by Gupta scribes record endowments by prominent individuals, including ministers, for the creation of Shiva temples, Shiva statues and Shiva lingas (Ian Copland, 2012).

Notwithstanding the prevailing royal preference for Vaishnavism, Buddhism still flourished. Its iconography is rich during the Gupta period. On every hand there are inscriptions recording grants by the great men of the land to Buddhist institutions, as

well as abundant evidence of buildings and statuary. More surprisingly, we learn that committed Buddhists could obtain high rank and rich rewards for their military services. At the start of the fifth century, a Chinese pilgrim, Faxian (Fa-hsien), wrote that ‘the Law of the Buddha is universally honoured’. Thus the so-called Brahmanical revival did not lead to the suppression of other religious persuasions. Older cults acquired an ever richer literature and history, hosts of local and regional cults evolved, and a huge variety of local practices were brought, piecemeal, under the umbrella of Brahmanical orthodoxy (Ian Copland, 2012).

17.7 The Divine kings and the mythical heroes

The identification is quite explicit in some early Dharmasūtra sources where kings had been equated with God. Manu says: ‘A king, even when he is a child, must not be despised as a [mere] mortal man, for this [individual] is a great deity taking the form of a human. This might be taken to suggest either that ancient Indians were pathetically gullible, easy prey for brainwashing by sinister kings, or that the Brahmanical eulogists lived in a dream world of their own. We might suggest that both these views are false. The relationship between kingship and divinity might be interpreted in several ways. Burton Stein asserts that it is only in their initial stages that the Dharmasūtras make a clear identification; the later texts, he believes, those belonging broadly to the period of the Guptas, stopped short of declaring kings to be gods in human form but, instead, treated kingship as a divine quality – not the same thing at all. Stein notes that texts show antipathy towards Brahmans, and some forbid the performance of the *aëvamedha* and *râjasûya* sacrifices. Although several of the early Gupta kings were still keen to revive the Vedic *aëvamedha* for the sake of their glory. Occasionally, the equivalence of a king to a god or gods is explicit, as in the Bilsad inscription of Kumara Gupta, which declares him to be the ‘equal’ (*samasya*) of the gods Dhanada, Varuna, Indra and Antaka – an invocation of the four guardian deities of the cardinal points of the compass, implying a dominion extending in all directions (Ian Copland, 2012).

17.8 The Evolution of Hinduism

The interval between the fall of the Guptas and the rise of the Mughals in the sixteenth century is often labelled the ‘medieval’ period of Indian history. The term is, of course, borrowed from European history and carries the weight of that tradition, not least the implication that the period was something of a ‘dark’ age. We use it here

to connote merely a 'middle phase' of the Indian story. Certainly, it features some new developments, for it was a time of Muslim invaders and dynasties proclaiming themselves as Islamic. Nevertheless, the pattern of cultural and political devolution that we have become familiar with continued. There were unstable warring states and sporadic local communities intensely dedicated to their defining religious and social customs. These were the basic features of medieval society. The prevailing trend was centrifugal, albeit with interruptions when the more successful Muslim dynasties unified large parts of India within their imperial domains; but in every case the dependence of rulers upon the fickle loyalty of ambitious nobles worked in the long run against the integrity of the state (Ian Copland, 2012).

To start with the political, the record of post-Gupta dynasties and invasions is one of a litany of competing regimes, most of them announcing their appearance upon the stage of history with wars of conquest, but each of them, over time, weakening and eventually succumbing to rivals. A native Indian regime achieved brief but extensive power under King Harsha (r. 606–47), but his empire did not survive him and left only a tiny legacy. Soon the memory of his reign had all but vanished. The major disruptive forces were the renewed invasions from the northwest; between the Guptas and the Muslim incursions, the most notable was that of the Huns (Hūnas), who established a short-lived empire in northern India. From the eighth to the tenth centuries the dominant powers in the north were the Palas of Bihar and Bengal, a dynasty that richly patronised Buddhism but was the last major regime to do so, and the Gurjara-Pratiharas, ruling from Kanauj. It was they who were encountered by the first incursion of Muslim power, the Arab invaders of Sind in 711. It was in the major kingdoms of the south, however, that many of the important religious developments of this period originated. It is often supposed that, with the coming of the Muslims, Hindu governance and society stagnated – not so. The medieval age saw, on the contrary, an efflorescence of new ideas and networks, many of them associated with the bhakti movement and some representing subtle responses to the Muslim courts, of Islam and Persian culture (Ian Copland, 2012).

One of them was tantra, not a distinct new sect, but a movement, originating largely in local practices found particularly in the hilly regions of the north and north-east, and operating inside the existing traditions. Hence there emerged a Hindu tantra and a Buddhist tantra with their own lines of teachers, myths and iconography, texts and practices. A tantra is a loom or frame; the texts that became known as tantras acquired the name because they provided frameworks for teaching and instruction; but like the practices of the devotees, they were transmitted secretly, and their

contents are often cryptic and obscure. In many cases, it appears that their prescriptions may have been intended as codes or symbols pointing to insights achieved through yogic meditation (Ian Copland, 2012).

The tantric movement was at its height between the eighth and the eleventh centuries; thereafter, it continued as a significant if sometimes shadowy component of Hinduism and Buddhism. To some extent the movement remained associated with the fringes of society, tribal and lower caste peoples, which in the long run damaged its reputation; but in certain phases – especially in eleventh-century Kashmir – it acquired considerable prestige. The Tantra claimed that through the use of their special techniques, they had attained insights that trumped the wisdom of the Vedas; some acknowledged the Vedas as sacred, some rejected them. Still, we can recognise in all of them a type of religious movement that shied away from the approved routes to enlightenment; contact with the sacred was not to be made through Vedic study, or sitting at the feet of a Brahman, or conducting sacrifices in the old tradition associated with the Vedas, or appropriate ritual at a sacred site or in a regular temple – rather, on the contrary, sacredness was to be discovered within one's own body, one's own self, and the ladder by which one climbed was supplied not by any Brahman but by a guru who might come from any caste (Ian Copland, 2012).

What is more, much the same sort of thing was happening to Hinduism and Buddhism; as centuries passed, popular devotion came to be more and more attached to the persons of famous teachers (gurus) and the often radically egalitarian messages contained in their poems and teachings. Many attributes of these men (and sometimes women) made them special, but perhaps the most important was their pedigree. Gurus inherited knowledge and power through a long process of apprenticeship at the feet of a master that culminated in a rite of initiation into a lineage of teachers (paramparâ). Each time a guru passed on, a worthy successor took his place, inheriting, not simply his predecessor's spiritual authority, but that of all the masters who had preceded him, a chain that stretched back endlessly into a legendary past. A guru's lineage afforded him legitimacy in much the same way that a royal lineage established the right to rule of a king. Saturated in charisma, gurus not surprisingly acquired, in many cases, wide renown, and built up mass followings, and sometimes set themselves up quite literally as the rulers of new sects (Ian Copland, 2012).

Like the tantric movement, the guru tradition did not fit easily within the old Brahmanical framework. Major religions are constantly seen to assume new forms that, on the surface, appear to flatly contradict their own heredity yet manage to display, across many lifetimes, a profound sense of authentic continuity. So it was

with the devotional form of Hindu religion that thrived during India's medieval age. Its early growth was inspired and guided by legendary figures such as the twelve Alvars, poet-saints of the Tamil country who lived between the sixth and ninth centuries, and wrote verses addressed to the cluster of deities associated with Vishnu.⁶⁸ Later, other much-revered teachers spread the message of bhakti to the west, north and Bengal: Ramanuja, whose devotional poems, written in the early twelfth century, inspired a tradition of teaching in temple schools, thereby helping to spread devotional Vaishnavism among the masses; Basava (1106–67), who joined devotional religion with tantric practices and temple ritual to create the stridently anti-Brahman Lingayat movement; the Maharashtrian saint Namadeva, founder of the Varakari or 'pilgrim' Panth, who promoted the idea that the highest state of spirituality could be attained by the mundane householder; Vallabhacharya, a fervent missionary for Krishna during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries; and Ramdas, who popularised the worship of Vishnu in his incarnation as Rama, and became the mentor of the Maratha king Shivaji, to name just a few (Ian Copland, 2012).

The bhakti movement, then, was a constantly evolving and multifaceted thing that resists easy summation and simple categorisation. Even the notion that it was, in essence, a Vaishnavite phenomenon is not correct, for there was also a Shaivite stream of devotion that ran parallel to the Vaishnavite one; again, it was particularly strong in the Tamil country, where the Alvars had their counterpoint in the Nayanars, whose oeuvre inspired generations of the devotees and attracted the extensive patronage of rulers, especially the Cholas between the ninth and the thirteenth centuries.⁶⁹ Some devotional movements were accepting of Brahmanical rituals and texts, while others were fierce in their rejection of them; some were passionately devoted to one god, others fervid in exalting the divine Absolute; some were loyal supporters of kings, others revolutionary in their insistence upon the primacy of inner illumination and in their calculated appeal to the deprived, and the weak. Some, as we shall see in the next chapter, even aspired to reach across the theoretical divide between Hinduism and Islam. What is certain, however, is that all these movements struck a chord with millions of ordinary people of low caste who could recognise in the path of bhakti a route that gave them hope of something better in the next life. Such a message may have implicitly undermined the legitimacy of temporal authority in the way that it bypassed the claims of kings and Brahmans in favour of a direct communion between the worshipper and God (Ian Copland, 2012).

The popularity of the Tantras make it clear that the rich diversity of religious

life in pre-modern India went hand in glove with political instability. Stable ethnic states with secure and centralised civil administrations did not and could not develop as a standard type. Instead, the political landscape was cluttered with competing and generally ramshackle empires depending upon shifting alliances and vassalage. These states could sometimes acquire dominion over substantial areas, but they did not possess durable institutions. Therefore, cultural pluralism became the norm – stifling the possibility of an alliance, as happened in the West, between the political authority and a dominant church. Political power and influence required, instead, at all levels, separate negotiations with a plethora of local communities and groups looking for protection and security (Ian Copland, 2012).

The Indian kings were not despots. Although their power was absolute in the sense that it was not formally limited by constitutions, they had to wage a relentless struggle against other powerful stakeholders in society for every bit of authority they exerted. Thus, religion and politics were intertwined; ritual claims and struggles for authority ran through the whole hierarchy from the village to the palace. However, this acknowledgement of a cosmological claim needs to be clearly understood for what it was. We are not entitled to treat it as evidence that kings were powerful; rather, in the light of the foregoing discussion, it may be closer to the mark to suggest that kingship was a religious office because political institutions were weak. Individual kings might have great (or little) power according to their success in negotiating with, or defeating, the many parties inhabiting the political domain. But, in a society where warfare was endemic, and technology rudimentary, institutions of governance did not, and perhaps could not, put down deep roots. As a result, people's prime political loyalties were commanded not by Indian states, such as they were, but by the persons and dynasties in whose name they functioned. This pattern would continue under the following centuries of Muslim power. It would not be broken, basically, until British colonial rule over the subcontinent was consolidated in the late nineteenth century (Ian Copland, 2012).

17.9 Dar-ul-Islam

Tradition has it that, in AD 610, an Arab merchant named Muhammad was visited, while meditating in a cave in the hills behind Mecca, by the Archangel Gabriel, who told the shocked and at first disbelieving man that he had been chosen to receive, and pass on, God's final message to humanity. There followed the first of a series of divine revelations vouchsafed to the Messenger over the next two

decades, initially in Mecca and then, after the emigration of 622, in Medina. Faithfully recorded by Muhammad's early followers, these insights were later gathered together and rendered into book form as the Qur'an, or 'recitation'. The world had a new creed. It spread quickly, indeed more quickly than any previous religion had done. By the beginning of the eighth century, it had reached the shores of the subcontinent. By 1600, perhaps one in every ten persons living in South Asia was a professing Musalman. Today, the region is home to the largest concentration of Muslims on the planet (Ian Copland, 2012).

Political power did play an important role in the process of Islamisation in India'. Political authority, backed by military force, was essential to the establishment of a proper Muslim society, a *dār-ul-Islām*. An 'abode of Islam' needed mosques, *dargāhs* (tombs) and *madrasas*; it needed jurists learned in the *sharīa*, the holy law; it needed, above all, to be safe and secure, free from any impediments to worship. States ruled over by Muslims, sultanates, provided these requisites. Muslim regimes in India spent lavishly on religious infrastructure and on stipends for Islamic scholars and teachers. Firuz Tughluq, the Sultan of Delhi (r. 1351–88) gifted land for Sufi *khânqāhs*, oversaw the building of four mosques, and a *madrasa*, and founded scores of new Muslim settlements, two of which, Hissar and Jaunpur, grew into large towns. Sultan Sikandar of Kashmir (r. 1389–1413), known as the 'idol-breaker', endowed land and houses to 'ulamā, and Sufis (such as Saiyyid Hamadani) built rest houses for pilgrims, and commissioned an architect from Persia to design a new *Jama Masjid* for his capital, Srinagar, which still stands. Bahmani Sultan Ahmad (r. 1422–36), had a vast *dargāh* erected over the grave at Gulbarga of Gesu Daraz, the Sufi *pīr* who had helped him win power (Ian Copland, 2012).

To analyse this process of Islamisation of Indian society, studies of India have chosen to emphasize the factor of conversion, on the ground that most South Asian Muslims, today, are considered to be descended from converts. Finally, although Indian rulers appear to have eschewed, almost universally, the way of *jihād*, the establishment of powerful Islamic states in northern India and the Deccan contributed materially to the work of conversion. On the one hand, these states provided financial and other support to the preaching of the Sufis. On the other hand, their reputation for kindness and donation had prompted some elite Indians to convert voluntarily. The Hindus converted themselves out of the knowledge that, as Muslims, they would pay less tax and be eligible for senior positions in the military and at court that would otherwise be out of reach. Sultan Firuz Shah of Delhi, for instance, persuaded a number of Brahmans and Rajputs to embrace Islam by rewarding them with 'presents

and honours. And, at the other end of the social scale, tens of thousands of lowborn Hindus became Muslims as a result of their employment as servants in royal and aristocratic households. Islam caught on among Indians partly because it 'was the religion of the politically dominant. It not only endowed it with glamor and the trappings of majesty, but may have suggested to some that the Qur'an spoke truly in claiming that Allah, the Merciful, watched out for the interests of the Faithful. The sultanates, then, played a crucial role in the Islamisation of Medieval India. Some law schools speculated that the accession of an Islamic king was not valid until it had been confirmed by a vote of prominent scholars. Ruling an Islamic state, any state, is not possible without at least the tacit backing of the dominant groups in society. For the rulers of medieval India, winning and holding the support of the religious elites was thus a major objective (Ian Copland, 2012).

17.9.1 The role of Islam to create political cohesion

The coming of Islam to South Asia used to be viewed as a major watershed in the region's past. The religion itself was seen as restless and uncompromising and the ensuing Muslim conquest as a political tidal wave that swept away Hindu rule. Even now, the first six or seven centuries of the second millennium are typically characterised, following the usage adopted by the Oxford History, as the Muslim Period. Certainly, medieval India was a very turbulent place, especially, perhaps, at the top. 'Ala'uddin Khalji ascended the throne of the previous incumbent, his uncle and then killed off everybody who conceivably posed a threat to him. The Tughluq Dynasty was brought down by a prolonged struggle between the royal family and jealous members of the nobility. Timur's invasion of 1398 'destroyed all semblance of government in upper India' for nearly a generation; and the 'principal political event' of the reign of Sikandar Lodi is said to have been the forced expulsion of his brother from the city of Jaunpur. Seizures, rebellions, civil wars, family betrayals – sultanate history reads a bit like a gothic saga. Yet all these rough events took place entirely within the bounded Islamic times. In each case, the antagonists and their subjects were fellow Muslims (Ian Copland, 2012).

Thus, they serve to remind us how divided the Muslim 'community' has been ever since the days of the first caliphs, initially between Arabs and non-Arabs, then between Sunnis and Shi'as and Shi'as and Sufis. In India, these fractures were reproduced, and others added: Turks versus Afghans; Saiyyids versus Persians; Habshis versus Deccanis. Perhaps the sharpest cleavage of all, though, in the subcontinent, was that between the members of the umma who traced their lineages

back to Central Asia or Arabia and those who counted Buddhists and Hindus among their forebears. As time went by, this latter distinction hardened into the almost caste-like separation of *ashrâf* and *ajlâf*, which continues to sabotage relations among Muslims even today. What does all this say about the role of Islam to create political cohesion? First, it says that, at best, any cohesion achieved under its banner was likely to be, in the words of Michael Pearson, so ‘nebulous as to be virtually meaningless’. Second, the chequered record of the Muslim regimes in India highlights the persistence of ethnic ties within the fellowship of the Faithful, and also, to a lesser extent, class-based attachments that had the potential to transcend the religious divide (Ian Copland, 2012).

17.10 Orthodoxy, heterodoxy and identity in the Mughal reign

In this unit we will focus, more specifically, on the religious attitudes and policies of the so-called ‘great’ Mughal emperors, especially the last four, namely Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar (r. 1556–1605), Nuruddin Jahangir (r. 1605–27), Shah Jahan (r. 1627–58) and Aurangzeb Alamgir (r. 1658–1707). We note that a major characteristic feature of the earlier historiography was its obsession with the personality of the Mughal emperors as drivers of the state, particularly with the apparently marked contrast, in this respect, between Akbar and Aurangzeb. The former was portrayed, often in glowing terms, for his ‘tolerance’ and ‘syncretic’ practices, while the latter was said to be a ‘puritan’. We must, also, recognise the fluid nature of identity on the subcontinent during the pre-modern period, which has been commented on by numerous scholars. People could identify themselves in many ways, often simultaneously: by language, ethnicity, dress, customs, faith and religious practices. All these elements could serve to separate groups into ‘them’ and ‘us’ or, to use a more current term, to determine ‘Otherness’. Religion at this time was rarely the primary signifier of a person’s identity (Ian Copland, 2012).

Abu’l Fazl, Akbar’s historian for instance, was quite comfortable with describing Hindu Rajputs as ‘*mujāhidīn*’, or ‘warriors for Islam’, when they fought for the emperor against other Rajputs. Similarly, rather than refer to Hemu – whom Akbar defeated at the great battle of Panipat in 1556 – as a ‘*kāfir*’, or ‘infidel’, he thoughtfully placed the Hindu general, in his gazetteer of the realm, in the lowest sub-caste of Hindustani grain merchants (Ian Copland, 2012).

Actually, the labelling of non-Muslims as infidels was quite common in Mughal

official writing; but in most cases it was used merely as a description, rather than a term of abuse. None of this is to say that religion or faith played no role in the lives of South Asians at this time – quite the opposite – but how people perceived religion during the Mughal period cannot be equated with how it is understood today in the modern world. Additionally, by the end of the fifteenth century, Muslims of various persuasions were firmly established on the subcontinent and included in the range of groups legitimately vying for power (Ian Copland, 2012).

Muslim empire nevertheless showcase a very fluid picture. In terms of religious allegiance, as well as Sunnis and Shi'as, who themselves were divided, the Muslim community of the Mughal Empire comprised a spectrum of Sufi orders of varying hues, and their followers, and a number of sects, including the millenarian Mahdawiyyas. The other main religious groups represented in the empire were the Hindu Vaishnavas, Shaivites and Shaktas, the Jains, the Sikhs and the Parsis (Zoroastrians). In addition, there was a tiny population of Jews living mostly along the western line in cities such as Cambay and Surat. Of course, if we were taking a wider approach, we would need to add the Syrian Christians, reputedly evangelised by Saint Thomas in the first century AD (Ian Copland, 2012).

Within Islam there is a conceptual distinction made between concern with the world (*jahândârî*) and concern with the faith (*dîndârî*). The pragmatic approach of the Mughal emperors falls naturally into the category of *jahândârî*, while *dîndârî* is the natural realm of the Sufis and the 'ulamâ. 72 Yet, as we saw in Chapter 5, throughout its history, tensions always existed in Islam between the temporal, as manifested by kingship, and the divine. How these tensions have been resolved has been dictated by both cultural environment and historical circumstances. The Mughal emperors, ruling over a multi-faith and multi-ethnic community, really had little option in the matter of religious policy. Sensible men, they chose to stand above religion and pursue a policy of universal harmony. Yet they would have firmly rejected any allegation that, in so doing, they were not ruling as good Muslims, 'Shadows of God'. At the heart of Perso-Islamic notions of kingship is the concept of justice: a 'just' sovereign is one who maintains social harmony and does not discriminate between sections of his subjects. And the emperors themselves certainly understood that, indeed, there is little discernible difference between the approach taken by Akbar, in this respect, and that of his great-grandson. Akbar opined that 'Divine worship in monarchs consists of their justice and good administration'.

It is important to re-emphasise here that, in the period under review, and despite the pragmatic attitudes of the emperors, religion did matter to people, something that

the emperors themselves knew only too well and, as we have seen, were prepared to utilise (Ian Copland, 2012).

17.11 Religion and Politics in Modern India

We have already seen that in India's social and political fields religion played an important role. The close connection between the two came to light even more prominently during the colonial period. It retained the intimacy even seven decades after independence though the country has constitutionally adopted secularism as one of its virtues.

Before the establishment of British colonial rule the two major religious communities in undivided India had no serious ill-feelings against each other. The occasional communal skirmishes did not usually lead to any long lasting ill-feeling and all religious communities could live together in complete harmony for ages. However, the situation started to change when the colonial government adopted the policy of 'divide and rule' by successfully creating an environment of intolerance, mistrust and sometimes hatred between the two large religious communities, namely Hindus and Muslims. In 1862, the then British Secretary of State, Wood, had confessed in a letter to Lord Elgin that the colonial government had continued to enjoy its power by putting one community against the other and it should also try its best not to allow the Indians to think alike. This letter has clearly revealed the cunning plan of the colonialists to create and maintain social and political disharmony in the subcontinent by employing religion as a sharp dividing tool for the success of their own mischievous plans and political gains.

The scheming rulers even labeled different phases of India's history as Hindu era and Muslim era and everything had been explained in politico-religious terms; even conflicts between the landlords and their tenants had been tainted in communal colours. They tried to divide the vast Indian population on communal lines by introducing a separate electorate system for different religious communities through the Morley- Minto Reform, 1909 and the number of separate electorates for Muslims was fairly disproportionate to the number of their population. This cunning reform measure not only disturbed the Hindu- Muslim unity, but also paved the path for the country's partition several years later. The British government had used religion as a political tool to dilute the ever rising demand for independence that could bind the people in an inseparable bond. In 1905 Lord Curzon decided to divide the Bengal Presidency into two separate provinces, earmarking one with the Hindu majority and

the other with the Muslim majority population. In 1906 the Muslim League, a political party to serve the Muslim interests was founded in 1906 by Salimullah Khan, the Nawab of Dacca and that very year the demand for a separate Muslim electorate was raised for the first time.

In 1916, in its Lucknow Conference, the League placed its demand for autonomy and to counter the activism of the League, Lala Lajpat Rai established Hindu Mahasabha, a political party to represent Hindu interests. In 1925, Justice Abdur Rahim proclaimed that Hindus and Muslims constituted two distinct nations and this came to be supported by many prominent Muslim leaders and scholars. In 1932, the then British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald announced the Communal Award to provide separate electorates to the numerical minorities like Muslims, Sikhs, Indian Christians, Anglo Indians, women and the 'depressed classes'. Finally, in 1940, Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the Muslim League officially voiced the demand for Pakistan, a state for the Muslims and in 1947 a truncated India gained her independence at the cost of partition based on religious identities.

Since the time of the seventh general election in 1980 the religious minorities had started to make an impression on India's political scenario. The Constitution of India had, from the very time of its inception adopted the spirit of secularism in all its aspects initially without any mention of the term anywhere within it; however, as per the 42nd amendment act of 1976, the Constitution has formally included the term 'secular' in its preamble. D.D.Basu, an expert on India's constitution has once remarked that with inclusion of the term in the Preamble to the constitution, its secular nature has further been highlighted.

17.12 Conclusion

However, politicians tend to follow the policy of appeasement for different religious communities even in post-independent India. Many religious organizations also back up communal groups and their politically secessionist motives. Places of worship like masjids, maths and akharas sometimes preach, subtly or sometimes more bluntly, the messages favouring communalism with distinct political purposes. Religious gurus, priests, imams and other preachers, too, voice their political opinions to support specific communities and incite one community against others and even against the local and/or national government. Political parties, too, rally behind them. The game of communal appeasement has earned favour from the political leaders unabashedly for their immediate political gains.

17.13 Summary

We gave a brief introduction to the relation between religion and its changing dynamics with the state. We begun with the ancient India and then went to the Mauryan Empire and elaborated on the transition from the policy of Digvijaya to that of Dharmavijaya and Decline. We touched on the impact of Foreign policy on religion and its changing contour. We went on to touch the concepts of Sramanas, Karma and governance. We explained the spread of popular Buddhism in influencing the state governance. We showed how the The renewal of the Brahminical tradition in governance impacted the state and polity. We explained the rise of devotional religion, especially the polity of the imperial Guptas. We have also analyzrd the role of the Divine kings and the mythical heroes especially in the Evolution of Hinduism. Next, we grazed through the Islam and its power to magnetize the political areana. We stoked the idea of Dar-ul-Islam and how important was the role of Islam to create political cohesion for the civilization in question. We also briefly navigated with the ideas of orthodoxy, heterodoxy and identity in the Mughal reign. Finally, we came to modern India and tried capturing the dynamics of the interrelationship especially in the colonial and thereafter in the post-independent times.

17.14 Questions

1. How will you explain the changing dynamics of state and religion in the ancient India?
2. How was the relation transformed in the Mughal reign?
3. How is Dharmavijaya important? How was it different from Digvijaya?
4. What are Sramanas?
5. What was the role of the Kalinga war in dictating the religion for the state?
6. What role did King Ashoka play in spreading Buddhism?
7. How will you explain the renewal of the Brahminical tradition in designing the new governance?
8. Explain the rise of devotional religion amidst the polity of the imperial Guptas?
9. what is the role of The Divine kings and the mythical heroes in the religious context?

10. How will you link the Evolution of Hinduism to the designing of the state governance?
11. Explain the role of Islam in creating political cohesion?
12. How will you analyse the changing character of religion and politics in modern India?

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Unit 18 □ Religion and Politics

Structure of the unit

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18.9 Summary

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18.1 Learning Objectives

To enable the learners to have an idea about

- The inter-play between religion and politics and its various dimensions
- The historical background of this interconnection
- The situation in India and especially Bengal
- The contemporary trends of this linkage

18.2 Introduction

This unit sets out to explore such a subject area that shall cut across conventional sub-disciplinary regimens in the study of comparative religion and politics. It is undoubtedly true that there is a good amount of relationship between religion and politics in several areas. It is of course in the domain of democratization, revolution, political change, nationalism, terrorism, the military, the media, human rights etc. that such connections can be established and the list seems unending. Philosophers and political historians have always remained somewhat conscious of the significance of religious ideas in political thought in several historical epochs. Especially from the 1970s onwards, we see the revival of some of the debates between the liberals and

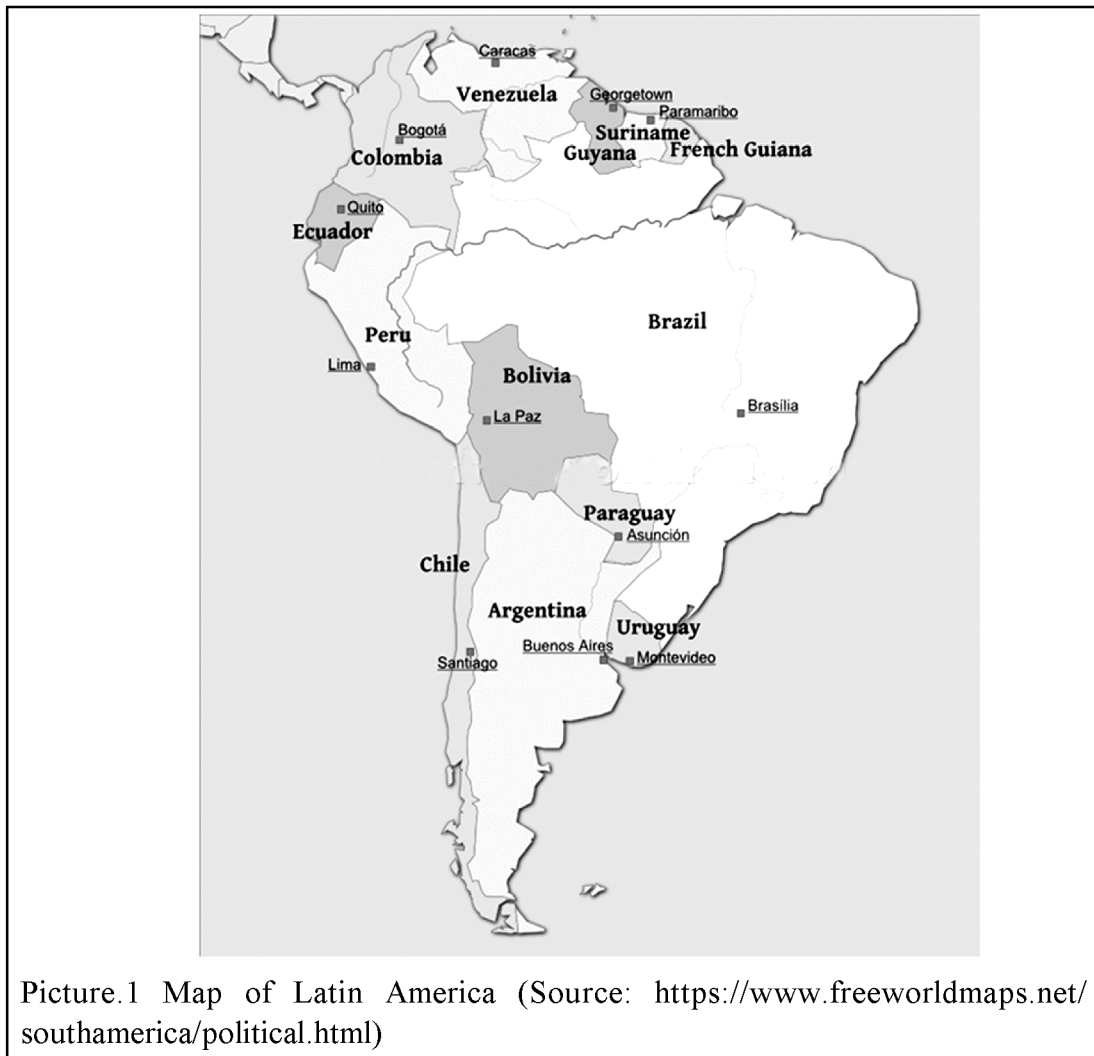
those bent on community and its ties with the individual. This has brought us back to the ethical concerns of the state in which the place of religion has once again become important. Many political and social scientists had in the last century claimed that owing to factors like modernization, secularization and the like, religion is facing a progressive decline and a gradual erosion as a socio-political force (Madeley 2003). However, the recent chronology of events has paradoxically shown a steady resurgence of religion as a gravitational force in politics.

It may be noted very carefully that since the 1960s and especially in the 1970s and 80s, basic religious ideas such as secularism was facing severe blows, unimagined before (Madeley 2003). It was in 1979 when in Jonestown, Guyana, almost a thousand people including children committed mass suicide. In this tragic incident, several people killed were the members of the California based religious cult called *Peoples Temple*. This religious cult was led by Jim Jones, a charismatic leader who started this congregation independently in the 1950s in Indianapolis. He wanted to build up a just and equal society to outdo the evils of racism and dire poverty. Jones was a White leader but he soon attracted the blacks. The African Americans were integrated within his cult with a comprehensive vision. Soon, the cult was affiliated with the Churches of Christ that emphasized strict obedience to the New Testament as the role model for Christian faith, belief and exercise. Despite various attempts by Jones for communal upliftment and religious rigor, he was charged for financial fraud, abuse of members, especially children in his custody. In 1979, Jones led hundreds of his members to Guyana where they all joined together in a mass-rite of murder suicide. They were either shot or had taken poison. The remaining members dispersed and the cult subsided (Elridge 2021).

We can also mention very quickly here about the Christian Rights Movement in the 1980s which had a huge potential for affecting the American political process. The people who had participated in the Christian Rights Movement were strict believers of their faith and were often termed the 'conservative evangelicals'. They believed that political activism and religion were compatible with one another and that the Church was to become the next and single most important factor to make America politically vocal and proactive. They emphasized the possibility of a civil religion that liked to believe that America is truly a Christian nation under the canopy of the divine providences of God (Johnson & Tamney: 1982).

This over emphasis on the civil religion of Christianity, many political scientists thought would definitely play a significant role in the defeat of Jimmy Carter in the hands of Ronald Reagan in the 1980 American Presidential election. Many felt that

a moralistic and a spiritual erosion was threatening the American nation and the conservative Christians were soon mobilized to elect Ronald Reagan. Though that was not to happen, Reagan came back to power only in the next round of presidential election in 1981. The chain of events clearly indicate some of the predominant characters of the changing political order that preordained likely tendencies. These were likely propensities for large scale political involvement in the religious sphere, growth and massive popularity of the civil religion. This may be presumed that the United States was to become God's tool to fight communism and that America is soon emerging as God's favorite nation today. Thus religion and politics were all getting enmeshed into one another.



This relation between religion and politics also resonates with yet another historical event such as the Pope John Paul II's visits to both the Puebla Conference of Latin American Bishops in Mexico which had mind boggling consequences in the decades to follow. The Conference of the Latin American Bishops (CELAM) emerged back in 1955 as the preliminary steps to modernize the structure and functioning of Latin American Catholicism. The conferences held at Medellin, Columbia (1968), and Puebla, Mexico (1979) were undoubtedly important landmarks in the contemporary history of Latin America (Please see, Pic.1 the Map of Latin America for reference). However, one must cite the prominent role of Pope John Paul II who worked for the development of the third world countries and more importantly sorted out the true meaning of development, which he thought should not be limited to the proliferation of goods and services. For him, fullness of a human being was more important and he called for the preferential option of the poor which meant Christians should look through the lenses of the marginalized and show solidarity with them. Pope John Paul II's visit to the Pueblo Conference went on to become one of the major developments in the domain of Catholic social teaching in the 20th century that included everyone, widows, children, the challenged and the victims of oppression.

The Pueblo Conference in 1979 proclaimed by *Karol Wojtyla* as *Pope John Paul II* was a milestone which opened the robust doors of the Church to the poor and those down with misery. What is interesting is that more burning issues of the day like human rights protection, immigrant issues, globalization and liberalization were discussed under the garb of religion in these conferences of Latin America with more force and vigor. This episcopal conference that was kicked off in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1955 had come a long way from Medellin, Columbia to Puebla, Mexico to re-defining the new functions of religion under the stern gazes of the polity. This significant more so for the three centuries of direct Spanish and Portuguese colonial rule had left devastating challenges for Latin America. The countries had been enveloped with poverty and under-development. This conference underlined the importance of the Church in addressing such modern socio-economic concerns plaguing the countries. It endorsed new ways of spiritual healing and practices and together formed a distinctive Latin American theory of liberation. This undoubtedly had a massive impact on its obsequious and overwhelming nature of religion and polity that was meant only for the elites. It reshuffled this predominant hierarchy of Catholic clergy that was designed to protect the interests of the elites and their status quo. The religion now gave more importance to the naïve Catholic masses and

encouraged their participation in religious-politico affairs. It truly changed the canons of the modern day Catholic teachings.



Do you know?

Karol Józef WojtyBa (18 May 1920 – 2 April 2005) went on to become the Pope John Paul II, the head of the Catholic Church and sovereign of the Vatican City State from 1978 until his death in 2005. He was later canonised as Pope Saint John Paul II. He was elected pope by the second papal conclave of 1978, which was called after John Paul I. John Paul II was the first non-Italian pope since Adrian VI in the 16th century and the second-longest-serving pope after Pius IX in modern history.

Picture credit: <https://th.bing.com/th/id/OIP.5v7-slpWb8K36tbRfKAPEwAAAA?w=186&h=104&c=7&r=0&o=5&pid=1.7>

Text: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_John_Paul_II

18.3 Religion, Community and Politics in India and beyond

The growing popularity of religion in the West, had led the democracies in the modern West to be dubbed as the post-secular societies. Now learners, do you know, what do we exactly mean by the term ‘post-secular’? Following Habermas (Habermas 2008), we may say that these societies might have been secular at one point of time. They might have been dictated by those terms and markers we may call secular. Those were characters of a secular state but with the changes wafting down the alleys, the characters are no longer the same. Especially, if you look at the world after

9/11, those so-called secular societies have been undergoing havoc upheaval in which religion is claiming an unimaginable role. Religion is once again coming back as a significant indicator of our identity and is learning to negotiate with the hitherto existing secular societies in its own way. The so-called secularized societies are learning to be in sync with this new craze about religion and surfacing of endless religious communities in public life (Mahajan 2010).

We had come to believe that modernization and technological advancement usually leads to the erosion of the religious nucleus of the society. Along with modernization, there is a corresponding tendency for rationalization and thorough reasoning for which religion is dying an immature death, especially the church. The church might still exist but its charisma may suffer a setback. Religion would be more so a private matter more confined to one's personal life.

This was the dominant idea about religion which persisted over modern Europe even though religion was still intact. However, religion was not lost for it had been the focal point over debates, fleeting ideologies and conflict of ideas over mundane issues of everyday life like marriage, divorce, abortion, contraception, homosexuality, suicide, euthanasia, education, work and living. Despite the burgeoning popularity of the religion in everyday life, the depiction of Europe and America as a secular site of politics remained unchallenged in the face of declining prestige of the religious institutions. Sociologists interestingly also diagnosed a steep fall in the religiosity of such societies.

Robert Putnam sent his research team to the local churches in American suburbs to find that people were gradually moving out from the associational forms of living (Putnam 2000). Americans though saw themselves as Christians but the impact of religion on their individual lives was not that strong. The Church was to become an association like any other voluntary association (Barber 1996) and in many cases decisions were more collective than being imposed by any assigned religious official or incumbent. However, one cannot deny at the same time, the flourishing of new religions across the world. Religion was everywhere but was readily taking up new forms and appearances such as the Church of Falwell, Art of Living etc. It would be difficult for you to ignore these new religious congregations and their strong presence in the public sphere. Now these religious congregations could not be compared with the Roman Catholic Church in their overall approaches and modes of operation.

These new groups were unique for they were institutionalized forms revolving around a charismatic leader and their following.



Do you know?

Jerry Falwell is an American religious leader who founded the Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, United States. This religious congregation rose from a petty thirty five members to a whopping number of twenty thousand members by the time Falwell breathed his last. Falwell began to air his preachings on a radio programme. It went further to be broadcasted on a local television

channel which soon became international from national with a spectacular increase in its viewership. It is hard to imagine that a religious programme was such popular that it was regularly watched by more than fifty million viewers across the world (source: [Jerry Falwell | Biography, Televangelist, Significance, & Facts | Britannica](#)).

Perhaps one significant fact is there are essential differences between such religious groups and the structured Roman Catholic Church in terms of their approaches, attitudes and modes of functioning. The religious groups that we are talking of are more like cults that are mostly individual centric that too have some influence on the polity. But let me remind you that religious sects and cults are not just a part of the American society, but they were very much a part of the Indian society from the very beginning and they had continued to leave its impact on the public sphere.

18.4 Religious cults, sects and the polity

Religious sects and cults began to influence the lives of the people since the tenth century. Till the coming of the nineteenth century, religion had a tremendous influence especially on the lives of women and men. This becomes clearer if we look at the Indo-Aryan literatures and their dependence on religion for their subject matter. This was more because men were merely toys in the hands of the religion in the old and medieval literature, especially the period roughly between the thirteenth and the

eighteenth century A.D. The period arrested the glorification of ordinary men and women because of the over-emphasis on divine power. The epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata that we read are more religious than human. In many cases, the laws, ethics and morality preached by these grand epics became the reference point for navigating the nation and polity. Similarly, the heroes and heroines of the Mangal-kavyas are merely puppets in the hands of the gods and goddesses. Human personalities were loose and docile and could not perform independent of the religious figures, as if the heroism which only mattered was one of the kind heavenly loaded with spirituality. Such narratives never gave much importance to the independent thought and autonomy of men.

It is usually through the social and political fabrics of a nation that man learns to face conflict and ridges in the society. He learns to struggle for his existence by fighting against the political evils and his adversities. His conflicts with the external agents of power make him more conscious of his real dignity and his self-worth. This will come out as he pens down the vernacular literatures and narratives. He no longer will talk of the divine heroes but of his own heroism and human saga. The literature dominating at this time is one of the deities and their supremacy, as we have already said. The narrative poems about Manasa and Chandi were known respectively as Manasa and Chandi-mangal kavya. Here mangal kavya had been used in medieval literature as a poem composed in honor of a deity (Clark 1955). This makes apparent the fact that God scored over men in deciding the content of the lyrics of a poem or a song.

Now this over indulgence to the religious flavor may in fact have many reasons and poor polity being one of such reasons behind this fascination for God. Unfortunately significant social and political events in the public sphere could not inspire Bengali literature and it digressed to take resort to divine worship. The history of Bengali literature especially in the old and medieval period is almost similar to the history of the various religious movements that were prevalent in the region for a long time. Now this was not just the case of Bengal or the Bengali literature. This course of the historical development also resonated with the development of the different literatures of the modern Indo-Aryan vernaculars (Dasgupta 1946).

18.5 Politics and Religious Reform Movements

It is through these literatures that alternative forms of minor religious sects and cults started growing outside the ambit of the elites and the powerful classes. This

epoch was characterized by a proliferation of protests against the current regimes of orthodoxy. These religious movements were led by people who could not claim any aristocracy and power and were primarily from the lower rungs of the society. They preached the masses in their own language and often produced such religious sects and cults which went on to defy and oppose the higher classes. We may mention here the Buddhist Sahajiya cult, Vaishnava cult, Nath cult, the Baul sect, Sikhism, the Dharma cult and the list goes on. Most of these popular cults are said to have been proliferating in the 17th and 18th centuries in Bengal as an outcome of severe socio-political circumstances.

It is surprising to find that there were as many as fifty six Vaishnavite or semi-Vaishnavite sects which dotted the Bengal province between 1870 and 1880. Most of these sects had been kickstarted by the members of the downtrodden castes among the Hindus and the Muslims. The Bengal polity being under the severe domination of the Brahmanical orthodoxy led to the opening up of such deviant orders. Assimilation between the Islamic and the non-Islamic ideas encouraged such dissenting sects like Auls, Bauls, Sahajiyas, Fakirs, Darbeshis and other wandering hermits and saints. Outstandingly popular religious cults took shape whenever a Brahma leader motivated people from the lower castes. For instance, the Kishori Bhajan sect which evolved in Sylhet in the second half of the eighteenth century was championed by a Brahma reformer. The same sect became popularized among the untouchable castes of the Namashudras and the Bhumali peasants as well as the Tili merchants elsewhere. In a similar circumstance, Harichand Thakur, another Brahmin established a semi-Vaishnava sect in Faridpur. He was severely ostracized when he married a namasudra girl and was bound to shift to Thakurnagar village in twenty four parganas where he spread his views against untouchability.

Yet another sect of considerable importance was the Kartabhajas which flourished at Ghoshpara in Nadia district under the influence of Aulchand or Aulechand who belonged to the Qadiri order of the Sufis and was severely attracted to the Sufi Fakirs. This sect, as we have already said, attracted Brahma reformers who came to accept the Kartabhaja 'gurus (Mukherjee 1996) .

One amongst them was of course Bijaykrishna Goswami, younger son of Anandakishore and Swarnamoyee Devi, who after completing studies in the traditional Sanskrit college lost his faith in the popular Hindu rituals and was increasingly taken to the non-conformist sects that were shaping in Bengal. Bijaykrishna was a non-conformist and a staunch rebel in the eyes of Orthodox Vaishnav. He wore a traditional tilak that combined the Hindu, Muslim and the Sikh symbols. He was

apathetic to the caste laced rituals of Hindu orthodoxy so much so that he asked his daughter not to perform the mortuary rituals of his wife (shradh) but to feed the poor and the needy (Sengupta 1399 B.S).

Kabir, Nanak, Dadu and Rajjab wanted to breathe free into a newly formed religion outside the dogmas of narrowness of both orthodox Brahminism and Islam. They would ridicule the Shradh or the obligatory funeral rites of the Hindus. They did not take God as an avatar but as omnipresent in the hearts of every man. To an extent these religious sects also developed as a response to the message of the Prophet that he was spreading throughout the country. There was an impending danger that the ancient Hindu religion, culture and the civilization would be swallowed by the gravity of the Islamic conquest.

The synthesis between religions and The coming of Islam in India had a profound effect on its politi-religious and socio-cultural life in particular. The history of medieval India is one instance of confrontation to cooperation followed by interaction and synthesis between the two forces of Hinduism and Islam. This interaction, synthesis and symbiosis is quite interesting for the Indian polity. With the egalitarian and social ideal of Islam, where all we all are equal in the eyes of God, the social rigidity and caste restrictions of the hindus were not relaxed and caste distinctions continued to exist. On the other hand, we may say that the lofty ideals of toleration and democracy of the various religious sects and creeds that were proliferating were well accepted by Islam. Therefore without undertaking any abrupt changes in their beliefs, ground work was done where the Bhakti movement could thrive.

If the political and economic domains were characterised by intense feudal oppression, the social front was characteristically marked by brahmmins' oppression. In order to maintain their position of status quo, complex rites and rituals were ordained by them. Those who did not fit into the traditional four varnas were often disparaged as the chandalas or the stigmatized outcastes. Alberuni, mentions eight castes which were even below the status of the sudras. They were the weaver, shoe maker, juggler, fishermen, sailer, blacksmith, hunter of wild animals and the basket maker. Living in such an unjust society and striving for its betterment, most of these saints of Bhakti were free from being attached to any particular sect or scriptures. They believed in the oneness and the primacy of God. To them the only means of relief and salvation was through Bhakti, which meant love or devotion. Bhakti, was therefore a succor for the downtrodden who were fighting against the politico-religious challenges in the caste ridden society.

This becomes clear if we study the life of Kabir. Kabir's early life is full of mystery. It was said that he was the son of a poor hindu widow who left him near a water tank in Benaras to hide her shame. He was luckily picked up by a muslim weaver named Neeru, who must have been passing from there. He eventually brought him up as his son. Kabir was probably a contemporary of Sikandar Lodi. Though illiterate, Kabir was well conversant with the religious literature of the hindus. To him the Hindu ideals of asceticism, fasting and almsgiving were of no value or worth unless coupled with worship or Bhajan. Religion without Bhakti was no religion for him. Kabir imparted religious instructions to both hindus and muslims and by criticizing the rituals and customs of both the hindus and the Muslims, he showed that the inter-religious differences were only at a very superficial level and that both preached to deprive the depressed.

Kabir had refused to acknowledge the caste distinctions or to even recognise the authority of the six schools of philosophy. He went on to say, God is neither in temple nor in the mosque, neither in the Kaba nor in the Kailash, He is neither in customs or ceremonies, nor in yoga or self-asceticism. If one is a true seeker of God, he can find Him with sincere devotion. He said both the Quran and Puranas comprised only words which were far from real.

Before Kabir came to the fore-front, Buddha had also similarly revolted against the domination of the brahmins but this was mainly a revolution of an upper class against another upper class. Kabir's revolt was an important milestone in the Indian polity for not just Hinduism but even Muslim rule in the medieval history of North India. The ruling classes' orthodoxy was challenged by the people, especially those from the lower rungs of the social order with equal zest and vigor (Pande 1985).

18.6 Religion and polity in colonial India

A searing critique charged against colonialism is that it is highly elitist and high-browed in nature without any regard for the common man and his struggles (Mukherjee 1996). Various socio-religious reform movements were initiated in India during the British rule which were markers of increasing national consciousness and liberal ideas from the west. These movements which we saw were not just being initiated in Bengal but across the world tried reconstructing the socio-political sphere through religion in particular. These movements questioned idolatry, polytheism and hereditary priesthood. These religious movements were inviting the Indian polity to go for a fresh drive of refurbishing along the lines of individual autonomy and social

equality in order to build a new nation. A fresh start was the need of the hour for the people who felt that a complete rejection of the dogmatic religious system and stifling social institutions was an emergent need. The legislations passed by the British rulers were testimony to the deep-seated changes that are to step in gradually in the orthodox society. The legislations relating to the abolition of slavery, sati, infanticide had strong religious reactions but that could not dampen the spirit of the Indian national leaders who boosted up the tempo of the religious reform movements with a fervour.

However, it was a slow process but undoubtedly religion was a pivotal factor in making Indian society and its polity more proactive and magnetic than ever before. The occupational basis of the social stratification system was badly damaged. Newly emerging parallel political, economic and cultural organizations were coming up which organized members from different castes but sharing identical interests together. These organizations teamed up with newly emerging forms of consciousness that were instrumental in diminishing religious orthodoxy and weakening caste organizations. This was furthered because of economic development, spread of education and literacy coupled with the growth of national and class movements towards political freedom and progress (Desai 1948).

There was an urge to democratize the socio-religious institutions that held back people and had crippled development for ages. Religion now became an agent to break the age old shackles of caste and gender. There was a felt need to break the iron frames of Hinduism that had divided the people into various castes, sub-castes and even some of them into untouchables. This social organization of the Hindus that had been inherited from the pre-British period showed many stigmatizing and unprogressive features. The segregation of a section of Hindus as the untouchables and denying them the basic rights like use of public ponds and tanks, entry into temples etc was baseless. There was a growing feeling of pollution by the touch of the untouchables which scared away the higher castes. It was the most inhuman form of religious oppression channelized through caste.

However there were political moves to neutralize such cunning tactics of the caste justified through religious ideology. Religious reform movements captained by Gautam Buddha, Ramanuja, Ramanand, Chaitanya, Kabir, Guru Nanak, Tukaram and still others could not change the situation much, but they tried. Safely secured by religion and justified by traditional authority, untouchability was here to stay. The organizational effort to dissolve the evil was no less severe. Several religio-political organizations like Brahma Samaj, the Arya Samaj, Social Reform Conference and

even out and out political organizations like the All India National Congress, the All India Harijan Sangh led by Gandhi and later on the All India Depressed Classes Association and All India Depressed Classes Federation led by B.R Ambedkar were big steps to heal the pestering sore of untouchability. The political claims of the untouchables were finally conceded in the Constitution of 1935 (Government of India Act) in the given form of special representation of these classes.

The same was instrumental in producing organized inequality and an extraordinary exclusion based on inheritance and ascription. Religion acted as a tool for politicizing the given social order and reform movements re-adjusted the contours of an existing Hindu orthodoxy. The Arya Samaj and the Brahmo Samaj felt the pressing need to restructure the society along the lines of newly found democracy of equality and the rights of the man.

It was in this direction that the religious movements resolved to remove the glaring social inequalities like untouchability and disabilities of the depressed classes. A movement to strengthen the depressed classes soon gathered momentum under the able leadership of Dr. B.R Ambedkar. He was a passionate fighter of human rights that had been crippled in the name of religion. He had tremendous organizational capacity to fight back the religious evils and democratize the political order that had till been monopolized by the Hindu elites. The All India Depressed Classes Association and the All India Depressed Classes Federation were the principal vehicles of such protest movements against the Hindu bigotry. Their aim was to reconstruct the Hindu social system on a rational basis. This was necessary because for so long the depressed Hindus were being exploited in the name of the Hindu Shastras and it was time to reinterpret these scriptures. For instance, the Mahad Satyagraha for the right of water led by Ambedkar was an outstanding struggle of the untouchables to claim back their equal rights.

18.7 Religion and Nation building in Modern India

The national democratic awakening of the Indian people had found expression in the religious sphere in modern India. The glaring gap between the orthodox religious outlook, their rituals and customs on the one hand and the newly emerging socio-economic reality on the other hand. These gave rise to various religious reform movements which we have already discussed in the previous sections. These movements of course were infused with the spirit of democracy and nationalism. These were the stepping stones for the development of the modern India.

The early nationalists like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Debendra Nath Tagore, Keshubchandra Sen, K.T Telang, Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade, Mahatma Jotirao Phooley and the founders of the Arya Samaj in various degrees took help from religion to bring the much desired social change. Modern society in India was based on the flourishing principles of individual liberty and equality. The old religious idea was based on the low level of economic and cultural development which now had to be re-modelled to meet challenges of the new society. Interestingly, national progress became the objective of these re-interpreted religions. When religion itself was on the verge of reform, it came to be reinterpreted by the principles of nationalism and nation building.

The images of old gods and goddesses came to embody a different meaning much in sync with the idea of the newly emerging nation. The religion of nationalism as espoused by Bipin Chandra Pal, Aurobindo Ghose and others are worth mentioning. The Jagat Dhatri, Kali or Durga puja came to be associated with nation and motherhood. The inspiring cry of “Bande Mataram” transfigured the religious symbols in the light and spirit of the new nationalist movements. The old gods and goddesses were enveloped with a message of a new form of nationalism that had a stunning appeal for the women and the masses. Thus the religious-revival movements were staged to boost the nationalist saga. The first national awakening of the Indian masses took predominantly the form of religion. This awakening was invigorated and deepened in the subsequent decades and found increasingly secular forms in modern India (Desai 1948).

Then probably we can come to the Partition of India which is remembered for its communal horror, forced migration and its ensuing independence. It created questions about what the character of the new nation state should be? Should it be secular and multi-religious, all claiming for equal rights or shall it be Socialist or Hindu? (Pandey 2011). Pakistan had emerged as an overwhelmingly Muslim nation and noting this, some sections of the Hindu nationalist press had asserted likewise the rise of Hindu nationalism. alongside, we find the exercise of an inclusive form of nationalism which went on to emphasize a more inclusive form of nationalism. It pressed for a more composite and accommodative character of Indian society. This form of nationalism was not too concerned about the Hindu elements in India's civilization and consciousness. This was later coined as the 'secular nationalism' which Nehru called the ideal form of Indian nationalism. This was also the form of secularism that was enshrined in the Indian constitution. This secularism stressed on the impartiality of the state in dealing with the different faiths and for this we use the concept of Sarva Dharma Sambhav (Mathur 2021).

Do you know what is right to freedom of religion?

(Part III.—Fundamental Rights)

Right to Freedom of Religion

Article 25

It talks of the Indian Constitution talks of the Right to Freedom of Religion. This is the freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion.—(1) Subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this Part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion. (2) Nothing in this article shall affect the operation of any existing law or prevent the State from making any law— (a) regulating or restricting any economic, financial, political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice; (b) providing for social welfare and reform or the throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus.

Explanation I.—The wearing and carrying of kirpans shall be deemed to be included in the profession of the Sikh religion.

Explanation II.—In sub-clause (b) of clause (2), the reference to Hindus shall be construed as including a reference to persons professing the Sikh, Jaina or Buddhist religion, and the reference to Hindu religious institutions shall be construed accordingly.

Article 26.

Freedom to manage religious affairs.—Subject to public order, morality and health, every religious denomination or any section thereof shall have the right—

- (a) to establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes;
- (b) to manage its own affairs in matters of religion;
- (c) to own and acquire movable and immovable property; and
- (d) to administer such property in accordance with law.

Article 27.

Freedom as to payment of taxes for promotion of any particular religion.—No person shall be compelled to pay any taxes, the proceeds of which are

specifically appropriated in payment of expenses for the promotion or maintenance of any particular religion or religious denomination.

Article 28.

Freedom as to attendance at religious instruction or religious worship in certain educational institutions.—

(1) No religious instruction shall be provided in any educational institution wholly maintained out of State funds.

(2) Nothing in clause (1) shall apply to an educational institution which is administered by the State but has been established under any endowment or trust which requires that religious instruction shall be imparted in such institution.

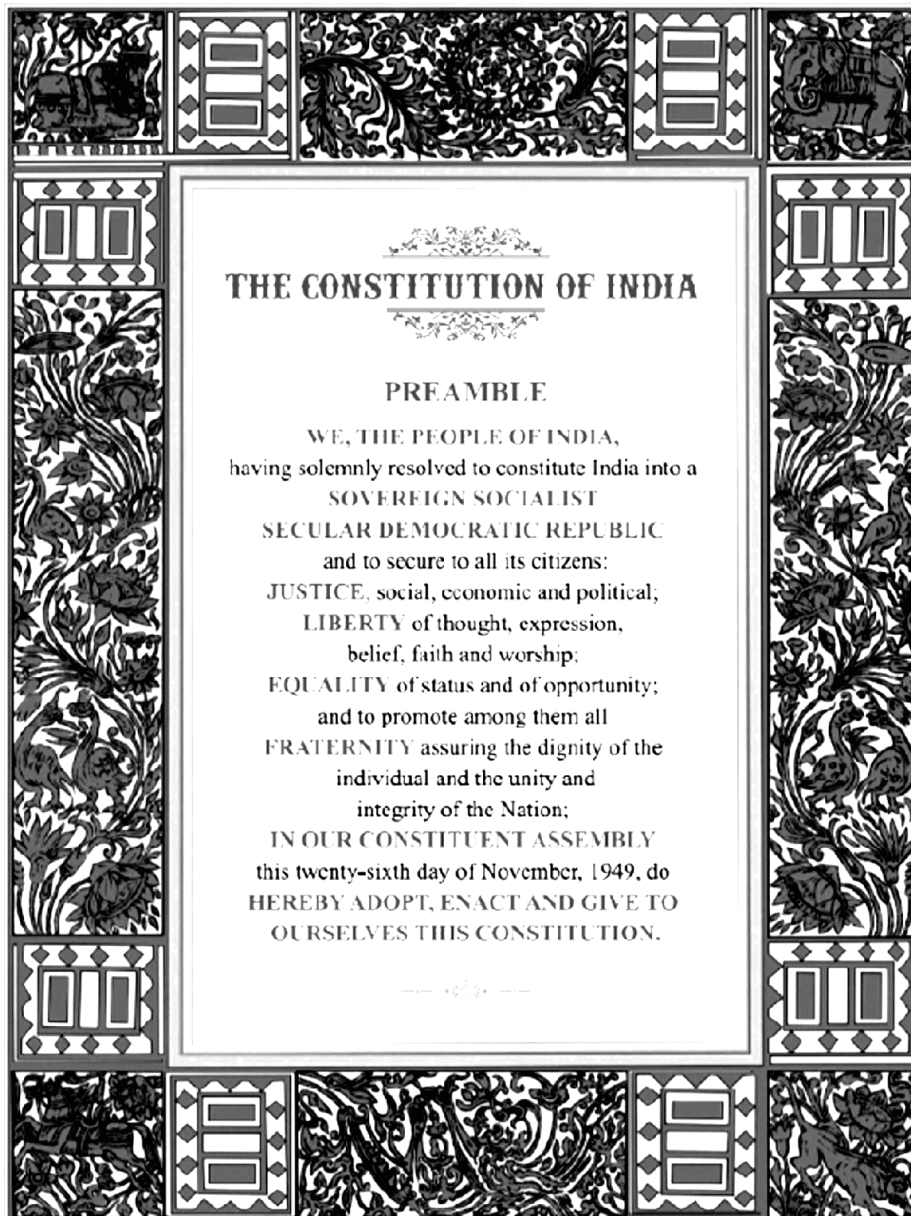
(3) No person attending any educational institution recognised by the State or receiving aid out of State funds shall be required to take part in any religious instruction that may be imparted in such institution or to attend any religious worship that may be conducted in such institution or in any premises attached thereto unless such person or, if such person is a minor, his guardian has given his consent thereto.

Source: https://legislative.gov.in/sites/default/files/COI_English.pdf

18.7 Conclusion

In spite of sporadic cases of religious fundamentalism, secular nationalism may be said to idealize India's cherished ideology. It has its roots in our National movement which implies that all religions must be treated equally and none should be given primacy over others in state functioning. The word 'secularism' was nowhere mentioned in the Indian constitution but this exclusion was not deliberate. The framers of the constitution had planned carefully not to include the word 'secular' here because of a very important reason. The constitution itself from the very beginning had presumed the importance of freedom in the domains of expressions, thought, belief, faith and practices. This itself spoke of equality in all the terrains of opportunities, dignity and advantages pertaining to different religions. Part III of the Indian Constitutions speaks of Fundamental Rights itself. Whereas articles 12 to 13 gives a general idea of the fundamental rights, articles 14-18 emphasizes the

rights to equality; articles 19-22 on rights to freedom and articles 25-28 talks exclusively of the rights to the freedom of religion. All these clearly spell out the secular character of the Indian constitution.



The Indian Constitution

Source: [1*BAlaBJoXwoc42xNo8_fHcA.png \(638×836\) \(medium.com\)](https://www.medium.com)

However, in the regime of Indira Gandhi, through the 42nd constitutional amendment in 1976, the word 'secularism' was added in the Preamble to further highlight the secular scope of our constitution (Mahapatra 2019). There are intermittent phases of tensions, agitations and partisan tendencies, but the Indian nation still vouches to uphold its secular and accommodative character and this should be our pledge as we go on to celebrate the seventy five years of Indian Indian independence.

18.9 Summary

We have discussed here the linkage between religion, community and politics in India and way beyond. We spoke of the religious cults, sects and the polity. We discussed the various religious reform movements and their impact on politics. We elaborated on the inter-connections between religion and polity in colonial India. We then progressed to the ideas of religion and nation Building as encapsulated in Modern India. We concluded with the concept of secularism and its brief background especially in the context of the Indian constitution.

18.10 Questions

1. What is secularism?
2. What is the 42nd amendment?
3. What are the religious reform movements?
4. What are religious sects? Mention some of the sects in Bengal?
5. What was the significance of The Conference of the Latin American Bishops (CELAM) ?
6. How does Indo-Aryan literature depict religion?

18.11 References

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Unit 19 □ Religion and Public Welfare

Structure of the unit

19.1 Learning Objectives

19.2 Introduction

19.2.1 The sources of social welfare in religion and their relationship

19.3 Religion and public welfare

19.3.1 Religion-public welfare alliances through Catholic activities in USA

19.3.2 Associations between religion and public welfare through the WaVE and WREP projects in Europe

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19.1 Learning Objectives

- To develop an understanding of the ties that public welfare has with religion through a view on the Catholic social welfare activities in USA.
- To know about the connection between religion and public welfare having an indepth look on the WaVE and WREP projects in Europe.
- To understand about the association between religion and public welfare within the domain of Hindu philosophy.

19.2 Introduction

Among the prime motivators for social welfare are the religious commandments concerning charity. Almost all religions enjoin their followers to practice charity. This may take place in individual behavior or through the institutionalization of charitable acts. Some religious institutions engage in charity; others establish groups of members who do so. An issue for many religiously inspired social welfare programs is the definition of its recipients (Macarov 1995).

19.2.1 The sources of social welfare in religion and their relationship

It is easy to forget that social work's roots were, at one time, grounded in religion. Canda and Furman (1999) concluded from their review of the connections between social work and religion that the relationship between the two had passed through three distinct phases in the United States (Loue 2017). During the first phase which extended from prior to US independence during the colonial period to the beginning of the twentieth century, the majority of social service agencies and charities that addressed spirituality were premised on Jewish and Christian sectarian beliefs and institutions (Canda 2002). For example, Protestant social welfare efforts were premised on a belief in the possibility of individual salvation (Meinert 2009). Protestant and Catholic social welfare organizations functioned under the organizational and financial control of their respective churches. Less frequently, social welfare advocates, such as Jane Addams, promoted a nonsectarian approach (Canda 2002). The second phase, which spanned the time period from the 1920s to the 1970s, was characterized by a transformation of social work into a profession, the separation of social work education from explicit religious connections and the expansion of the governmental social welfare system. The distancing of the social work profession from its original roots and its increasing emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge during this time appears to have resulted, at least in part, from the profession's reaction to Abraham Flexner's dismissal of social work as a profession due to the absence of a distinctive method and a scientific body of knowledge (Bisman 2004). The third phase of the social work-religion connection extended from the 1980s through the 1990s (Canda 2002). This era heralded calls to return to social work's roots that had been grounded in spirituality and for the respectful and knowledgeable inclusion of diverse religious and spiritual perspectives (Canda and Furman 1990). It was during this era that it was suggested that social work expand its perspective

from a biopsychosocial one to a biopsychosocial-spiritual model in order to better understand clients' strengths and issues (Cornett 1992).

19.3 Religion and public welfare

Public welfare or social welfare and in some other sense social work as yet another different connotation has certain ties with religion observed in a few countries across the globe as given in this section. Here we would learn about the different elements by which public welfare has a connection with religion.

19.3.1 Religion-public welfare alliances through Catholic activities in USA

The commandment to love god and thy neighbour has inspired Christian communities over the centuries to organise countless efforts to care for poor and vulnerable members of society. Since its inception, the Catholic Church has made caring for the poor one of its central activities as lay and religious men and women have organised charity through Catholic parishes throughout the world. As a global institution, the Catholic Church's charitable and social welfare functions have touched nearly every corner of the world, and in doing so, it has influenced and been influenced by many other faith-based and secular partners in addressing human need, including the profession of social work (Donaldson 2017).

The relationship between Catholic social welfare and the development of the social work profession varies by country and its individual historical and socio-political contexts (Donaldson 2017). In the United States, the Catholic Church, through the St. Vincent de Paul Society was influential in the development and professionalisation of Catholic social welfare in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. At that time, Catholic parishes continued to be important mechanisms for addressing the material, social and spiritual needs of the growing communities in the United States. Volunteers from Catholic parishes cared for women, men and children who were poor and frail and they welcomed and supported newly arriving immigrants (Joseph and Conrad 2010); the St. Vincent de Paul Society supported such efforts having been established in the US during 1845. However, the growing rates of immigration, particularly Catholic immigration strained the resources of parish communities and the Society. Between 1850 and 1906, the Catholic population grew from five per cent to fourteen per cent of the total population (Byrne 2000). Arriving to urban centres with few resources and skills in urban trades, many of the newly arriving immigrants, largely Catholic contributed to the worsening humanitarian conditions of the cities. For e.g. in 1852, 'the Association

for Improving the Condition of the Poor (AICP) in New York City reported that three-quarters of its assistance went to Catholics' (Brown and McKeown 1997) and ten years later, the AICP reported that Catholics comprised the majority of people in public almshouses and half of New York City's criminal population. The US bishops publicly acknowledged the extent of poverty experienced by Catholics in their 1866 pastoral letter, writing, 'it is a melancholy fact, and a very humiliating avowal for us to make that a very large portion of the vicious and idle youth of our principal cities are the children of Catholic parents' (Brown and McKeown 1997). The dire condition of families and communities in the early twentieth century created a need for Catholic social welfare to transition from a local 'parish-based ministry of charity to a more professionally organised diocesan-wide ministry' (Hehir 2010). Consequently, in 1910 members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and several Catholic clerics founded the National Conference of Catholic Charities (NCCC) now known as Catholic Charities USA or CCUSA to harness and coordinate knowledge and resources from the experiences of local agencies to improve and standardise their 'professional social work practices'. The founders also felt that a national organisation would facilitate the Church's effort to speak with a stronger voice on social legislation and some argued that a national association of Catholic charities agencies would situate Catholic relief efforts in the mainstream of social work and better position them for state and federal funding (Hehir 2010).

The early founders of the National Conference of Catholic Charities believed that the complex nature of poverty alleviation required professional training for social workers. Monsignor William Kerby, first executive Secretary of NCCC and a sociology professor at Catholic University of America (CUA), strongly endorsed the emerging models of social work practice referred to as 'scientific charity' (Kerby 1921) and helped establish the National Catholic Service School, founded in 1918 to train Catholic women to help with the war effort (Hartman-Ting 2008). When the war ended, the bishops recognised a continuing need for Catholic involvement in social welfare and professional education and so they, through the National Catholic Welfare Council made the training school for women a permanent institution and renamed it the National Catholic School of Social Service or NCSSS (Hartman-Ting 2008). It became a co-educational institution when it merged with the male-only CUA School of Social Work in 1947. Monsignor John O'Grady succeeded Kerby as Executive Secretary for NCCC and held that position from 1920 to 1961. He also served as Dean of the CUA School of Social Work from 1934 to 1938 and oversaw the growth, influence and professionalisation of Catholic social services during his tenure (Crisp 2010).

19.3.2 Associations between religion and public welfare through the WaVE and WREP projects in Europe

Welfare and Values in Europe: Transitions Related to Religion, Minorities and Gender (WaVE) and its predecessor Welfare and Religion in a European Perspective: A Comparative Study of the Role of the Churches as Agents of Welfare within the Social Economy (WREP), focused on two aspects of European society that have been interconnected throughout history. Social care, as an expression of social concern, has always been central to religion (Glock and Stark 1965; Smart 1993). Similarly, nation states through different forms of governance have always had responsibility for caring for the poor, sick, disabled and elderly. This responsibility has however shifted over time, moving between public institutions that is the state, the family and religious, non-profit or private actors. This 'interactive' relationship between the welfare state and religion was thought to have reached an end during the so-called golden decades of the welfare state in Europe following the Second World War. In the Nordic countries and particularly in Sweden, this development was expressed in the high value placed on democracy, equality and private freedoms alongside high levels of trust in societal institutions (Rothstein 2011). Moreover, the Swedish (Nordic) approach was considered a model for the world to follow (Inglehart 1997). The Swedes themselves perceived this way of working to be the culmination of civilisational development in the spirit of Fukuyama (1992), resulting in a feeling that their country was exceptional as far as social morality was concerned (Uvell 2016). At the same time, it has become increasingly clear that Sweden is subject to the same transformations that have characterised the western world since the 1980s. This is reflected in the increasing deregulation of welfare institutions like school, healthcare and social care which has both social and ideological foundations. The former reflect the increased costs brought about by a variety of factors, including migration, social exclusion and the demands of an ageing population. The latter are based on a market approach underpinned by a customer and efficiency-oriented perspective in which the users of social welfare are viewed as 'clients' served within a cost-benefit perspective. In this context, the notion of 'civil society' was introduced in the 1990s as a unifying concept among groups and networks outside the realm of the state, the market and the family (Harding 2012). The concept was launched as a response to increasing social costs and as an ideological answer to the decreasing role of the nation state and of the twentieth century folk movements (Jeppsson Grassman 2010). In the same way, migration and the appearance of new vulnerable groups have reinforced the role of religion as a social actor which is a partner in cooperation with the state and civil society organizations. Individual requirements for enhancing

existential security and happiness have also played a part. Therefore, the interaction between religion and the welfare state has once again become topical but under the specific conditions of advanced industrial societies and their focus on governance. The nation state is looking beyond traditional definitions and borders and has identified religion as one of several partners in a national conversation (Martikainen and Gauthier 2013).

A dilemma in researching the social welfare role of 'religion' is the lack of clarity surrounding the concept. As Zygmunt Bauman (1998) has so aptly expressed it, everyone knows what religion is until the concept has to be defined. In the Nordic countries, this ambiguity was already apparent in the nineteenth century with the pietist emphasis on individual conversion and the feeling of certainty with regard to salvation. This was an understanding that developed in contrast to a somewhat ossified state church and operated in parallel with movements or philosophies that criticised religion aiming to free the individual from religious superstition. This ambivalence continues. As David Thurfjell (2015) states, the way religion is understood in the twentieth century has been marked by opposition between two minorities: the highly religious and the highly anti-religious. The large in-between group that had a vague and largely immanent philosophy of life encompassing the values of modern society was defined as non-religious. For this in-between group, citizenship and membership in the national church have been closely linked; conversely a substantively defined belief in God has not been considered necessary (Martin 2009). Thus the majority of Swedes do not regard themselves as religious, even if they are members of the Church of Sweden, baptise their children and bury their relatives according to the rites of the Church (Backstrom 2017). The WaVE study shows that women have a dominant role as care providers throughout Europe. However, in the Nordic countries they are employed as civil servants in the state welfare sector while in southern Europe they are mainly responsible for care within the family. In contrast, men are more often found in policymaking positions. There are clear trends in the research material pointing to social care as a female role which is a tendency that includes the Scandinavian countries and churches. This is partly because women have a disproportionate role in both the religious and social sectors, a propensity identified in both the WREP and the WaVE enquiries (Backstrom et al 2011). The research also shows that the increasing employment of women is in tension with a growing need for informal care especially at home and such a situation known as the care deficit. This is especially evident in the southern Europe where welfare is dependent on support offered by the family. The same problem is however also seen in Germany and Britain and even in Sweden despite generous maternity leave. There

are different tensions in relation to migrant women who are caught between the obligation to respect and indeed to transmit traditional values while at the same time needing to integrate themselves into the host society. These case studies respond to an increasingly urgent need. As Ninna Edgardh (2011) argues, the gender dimension and the issue of social care are all too often overlooked when analysing the role of religion in contemporary societies. It follows that both factors should be included in our enquiries if our understanding of religion is to be complete. For e.g till recently, gender has been absent as a category both in debates about secularisation and in more recent discussions of the post-secular (Aune et al 2008).

The research programme from State Church to Free Folk Church¹ (1997-2003) was launched in the 1990s (Backstrom 1999). Two studies within this programme investigated the relationship between welfare and religion. The first focused on patterns of cooperation in social initiatives between the local church and the municipality in six towns and villages in Sweden (Backstrom 2001). The study highlighted different dimensions of cooperation. The second focused on all social and voluntary activities taking place within faith-based communities in one locality in Sweden (Jeppsson Grassman 2001). It underscored the difference between voluntary work in the Nordic countries and that in other welfare regimes. The first study confirmed the image of separate areas of competence in which the Church of Sweden along with other faith communities complements state welfare provision (Backstrom 2001). The findings indicate that the contributions of faith communities are primarily symbolic, moral or ethical and pedagogical with a focus on the fundamental value of the environment and individual integrity as well as on cultural belonging and feelings of security (Backstrom et al 2004). Further, the Church's contribution to social welfare was seen as somewhat ad hoc, reflecting the practical aspects of social care, its role as a critical voice and the innovative role of faith communities. The study also revealed that cooperation has at least two meanings. On the one hand, cooperation can take place through specific interactions between different professional institutions such as churches, schools, police, prisons and healthcare and emergency services. In this mode, it builds on different competences in a specialised society. On the other hand, cooperation may also refer to consensus building about the welfare and wellbeing of the individual in its broadest sense (Wijkstrom and Zimmer 2011). Sweden is a good e.g of the tension between the two models of cooperation both of which introduce religion as a cooperative partner but in different ways. The first model illustrates a cooperation based on the modern idea of differentiation which indicates the growing separation between state and church while the second illustrates growing cooperation as part of a new mode of conversation that suggests the growing

convergence between state and religion. Migration has brought this tension to the fore as local authorities are trying to find the best ways of cooperating with religious minorities, while at the same time trying to remain neutral (Backstrom 2017). The second study focused on the social work of faith-based communities in one municipality in Sweden (Jeppsson Grassman 2001). This study and others that followed shattered the notion that a strong welfare state results in an underdeveloped associational life as measured through membership and civic involvement. For e.g eighty-six percent of Swedish people are members of associations and organisations and forty-eight percent are active members of at least one association especially sports clubs, trade unions and cultural associations (Jeppsson Grassman and Svedberg 1999; von Essen and Svedberg 2010; Hollmer 2014). These figures are the highest in Europe regarding voluntary engagement (Jeppsson Grassman 2010). The 1990s stand as the decade when Swedish society shifted from the logic of an industrial society with citizenship at its core to the logic of a service society in which service relations between individuals moved centre-stage with a marked emphasis on the values of freedom and quality of life.

Eva Jeppsson Grassman (2014) argues, however that the 1990s which is a time of high expectations regarding the social role of the non-profit sector should be viewed simply as phase one of the development of civil society in Sweden. Phase two took place between 2005 and 2015 and marked a shift to lower and more realistic expectations and to a more critical view of the non-profit sector. The WaVE project was carried out during the shift from phase one to phase two. It was based on the idea that deregulation gives civil society more space (Backstrom 2003). Today, it has become clear that this deregulation is indeed about the increased role of the market but that it also concerns the state's growing interest in regulating both the market and civil society by means of quality control (Linde 2014). It is equally clear that there has been a change in public attitudes towards the non-profit sector as a provider of welfare. In 1992, only eight percent were in favour of this shift compared with forty-eight percent in 2012 (Jeppsson Grassman 2014). Behind this change of attitude lies a conscious effort by the conservative governments in Sweden (2006-14) to strengthen commercialisation and to invite civil society actors to participate, through both an Agreement of Collaboration in 2008 and through an explicit change in the law relating to civil society in 2009. This change of attitude reflects an ongoing transformation of society that Tommy Lundstrom and Filip Wijkstrom (1995) have captured in the phrase 'from voice to service'.

It summarises the development from a welfare society dominated by folk movements and an emphasis on the social community to a market-oriented service

society. In such a society, non-profit organisations have been steered towards a greater professionalisation in social service provision. This has resulted in an extensive and continuing debate on how non-profit organisations can maintain their ideological specificity if they are to become contract-driven providers of welfare. The countries included in the WaVE project have all been affected by increased costs. Most European governments are dealing with this through the privatization of welfare institutions seeking to make care more efficient by applying the rules of competition and the market. The Swedish and English systems show some similarities in this respect and in Germany the for-profit sector is also expanding at the expense of diaconal non-profit organizations (Leis-Peters 2014; Middlemiss Le Mon 2015). Since 2010, however, it has become increasingly clear that non-profit and faith based actors in Sweden do not always follow the expectations of the government. Social commitment is self-evident but to function as a welfare industry is a step too far. Welfare is still regarded as the responsibility of the state. Behind this reluctance, moreover, there is a visible ambivalence: between a market logic, on the one hand where religious and cultural specificity risks being eradicated on account of money being the main consideration and a social community or solidarity logic on the other where charitable care provides an added value that is difficult to measure in financial terms. This ambivalence illustrates a major dilemma: is religion to function primarily as an entrepreneurial activity or as an arena for voluntary and social work? The relationship between religion and welfare is not therefore a zero-sum game. A stronger state with a strong economy does not necessarily result in smaller associations and a deprived religious life; on the contrary, it gives people more freedom to create their own beliefs and social commitments. This is clearly illustrated by the fact that altruistic motives and charitable giving are top priorities in the Nordic countries to the extent that giving is considered essential as it strengthens one's self-esteem (Backstrom 2017).

19.3.3 Religion-public welfare ties in India in the philosophy of Hinduism

The Hindu philosophy propagates the values of self-less social service, compassion, mutual aid and interdependence, unconditional love for the vulnerable groups and concerns for the community which are considered important in social work education and practice. The reference can be made in the Hindu religious text, where Yudhisthira in Mahabharata said, "I do not long for kingdom, heaven or rebirth but wish to alleviate the sufferings of the unfortunate". Even the Upanishad mentions, "let all be happy and healthy". Hinduism believes in the philosophy "Sarve Bhavantu sukhina, sarve santu niramayaah, sarve bhadrani pashyantu, maa kaschit

dukhmaapnuyatt” which means “let all be happy, let all be free from illness, let all find security, may no one face sorrow”. The Bhagwad Gita also prescribes selflessness, duty, devotion and meditation (Dash 2017). The Mahabharata also describes the essence of eternal religion, non-violence, truth and conquest of anger. Hinduism propagates for Bhakti (Devotion), Dharma (Righteousness) and Yoga (discipline) for the service of humanity. The law of karma in the Hinduism refers to a moral law which calls for social responsibility. The practice of dharma denotes a life of truth, non-violence, compassion, welfare for others and offering self-less service to society. Rig-Veda (Chapter 1, XIII, 2) mentions “May the one who gives shines most” highlights the importance of charity. The Upanishads like Brihadaranyaka, Chandogya and Taittiriya also encourage charity. Social workers should maintain benevolent purpose towards their clients for the solution of their problems in a responsible and sacred manner. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu preached for “Para-Upakar” welfare of others irrespective of castes and creeds. Serving and helping the needy have been greatly embedded and valued in the Indian religious texts and cultures. Daan or charity was considered as the most potent way of earning ‘Punya’ or blessings from the God. Padmapuranam mentions ‘ those who always feed the crippled, the blind, the children, the old, the ill and those help the helpless will enjoy bliss in heaven after death’. According to Chhandogya Upanishad, ‘life is a succession of ‘yagna’ which means regular services for others. Charity is not merely a social duty but it is like a prayer. The concept of charity motivated the philanthropists not only in India but across the globe to undertake charitable activities for the welfare of the vulnerable and disadvantaged sections of the population viz, the aged, widow, orphans, differently abled and the destitutes. Charity in social work is considered as the primitive paradigm in social work practice (Dash 2017).

The love and respect for human beings is always being valued in the Hindu philosophy. Social work education requires the study of Vedic philosophy, Vedic ontology and Vedic epistemology which is extremely relevant for social workers as a potent guiding force to effectively deliver social work services. The principle of client’s right to self-determination, dignity and worth of the person and the principle of acceptance which are fundamental and central to the social work profession are enshrined in Vedic Ontology. In the words of Swami Vivekananda, ‘have faith in man, whether he appears to you to be a very learned one or a most ignorant one. Have faith in man, whether he appears to be an angel or the very devil himself’. The concept of ‘self’ pioneered by American social work educator Mary Richmond is not a new concept, but it is almost similar to the Hindu concept of ‘Greater self’, evident from ‘ Janardan seva’ which means service to man is to service to God which leads

to enlargement of the self. Hindu Philosophy also speaks of 'Ahimsa' (non-violence) which is considered as the highest kind of dharma (ahimsa paramo dharma). It means not only refraining from intentional harm to others, not even mere tolerance but also includes compassion, forgiveness, selflessness, peace and harmony. The Hindu scriptures talks of various important values and ethics like sam yam, tolerance, hospitality, protection, wisdom, austerity, honesty which are considered as important values for professional social workers. The 'Manusmriti' also emphasized the welfare and development of the people and also ensures fairness, equality and justice. The 'Arthashastra' emphasized on good governance and effective administration for the welfare and development of the common people (Dash 2017).

The concept of Sattva², Rajas³, Tamas⁴ and Vedic guna are relevant for understanding human behaviour and problems. The psychological problems of the individuals can be solved by using the Vedic guna theory. "Consistent with the social work maxim, start where the client is at' Vedic social workers assess and empathize with clients situation and begin the helping process by seeing the world from the clients perspective. Vedic philosophy describes different states of consciousness of life's basic needs such as food and shelter, vijnana-maya⁵, philosophical realization and anand-maya⁶, realization of the blissful nature of the self and the supreme. Though a client may ultimately benefit from attaining stages such as vijnana-maya and anand-maya, the Vedic social workers meets the client where the client is situated which may be a platform of the prana-maya⁷. In this way, the social worker establishes a trusting connection that serves as a strong foundation for problem solving and self-exploration (Dash 2017). Research studies also say that the practice of yoga is extremely useful to solve the various psychological problems of the individuals. Even the research studies reports that the practice of 'Japa' is proved to be an effective therapeutic technique to treat the case of smoking. A number of such interventions and therapies are listed in Vedic Texts which are neither documented in Indian social work literature nor practiced in social work. The meditation, yoga and japa are effective therapies in the treatment of various psycho social problems like drug addiction, psychological stress, depression etc. Yoga is considered as a form of physical exercise and it is through yoga that the body, mind and soul also unify. (Dash 2017).

19.4 Conclusion

Religion's connection with public welfare emphasises on the activities of the Catholic Church, through the St. Vincent de Paul Society in the US who were

influential in the development and professionalisation of Catholic social welfare in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The St. Vincent de Paul Society supported the efforts established by the Catholic parishes earlier in the US during 1845. As a continuing important mechanism, Catholic parishes addressed the material, social and rising communities in the United States. Volunteers belonging to Catholic parishes cared for the poor and frail men, women and children and the newly arriving immigrants were welcomed and supported by them. In Europe religion and public welfare ties has been understood through the WaVE and WREP projects. These projects focused on two aspects that have been interconnected throughout history in Europe. As an expression of social concern, social care has always been central to religion. In a similar way, nation states through different forms of governance were responsible for the poor, sick, disabled and elderly care. Religion-public welfare interrelations in India has been surmised through the Hindu philosophy that promoted the values of self-less social service, compassion, mutual aid and interdependence, unconditional love for the vulnerable groups and community concerns. In social work education and practice importance is given to such values.

19.5 Summary

In the US, religion's connection with public welfare emphasises on the activities of the Catholic Church, through the St. Vincent de Paul Society who were influential in the development and professionalisation of Catholic social welfare in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In Europe, religion and public welfare ties has been understood through the WaVE and WREP projects that focused on two aspects that have been interconnected throughout history in Europe. Through the Hindu philosophy, religion-public welfare interrelations in India has been surmised that promoted the values of self-less social service, compassion, mutual aid and interdependence, unconditional love for the vulnerable groups and community concerns.

19.6 Questions

Short Answer Type Questions

- A. What is parish?
- B. What does AICP stand for?

- C. Who founded the National Conference of Catholic Charities (NCCC) now known as Catholic Charities USA or CCUSA to harness and coordinate knowledge and resources from the experiences of local agencies to improve and standardise their 'professional social work practices'?
- D. What does WaVE stand for?
- E. What does Hinduism propagates for the service of humanity?
- F. What is Upanishad?
- G. Who is a philanthropist?
- H. Who is a cleric?

Broad Answer Type Questions

- A. Explain the ways by which the Catholic social welfare and the development of the social work profession lead towards creating a connection between religion and public welfare in USA?
- B. Briefly analyse the ways by which the WaVE and the WREP projects builds an interrelation between religion and public welfare in Europe?
- C. Elucidate how the Hindu philosophy helps us to understand the association between religion and social welfare in India?

Essay Answer Type Question

- A. 'The commandment to love god and thy neighbour has inspired Christian communities over the centuries to organise countless efforts to care for poor and vulnerable members of society'. Discuss in this light on the allegiance developed between religion and public welfare in America?
- B. Explain how the agents of welfare within the social economy helped to build a correlation between religion and public welfare in Europe?
- C. Analyse an overview of the connection between social work and religion emphasised in the Indian context.

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19.9 End Notes

1. Ion Taranger, a professor of the history of law, advocated the idea of a fri folkekirke or free folk church, implying that the church should have no ties to the state at all.
2. Sattva is one of the three gunas or “modes of existence” which is a philosophical and psychological concept developed by the Samkhya school of Hindu philosophy. Sattva is the quality of goodness, positivity, truth, serenity, balance, peacefulness and virtuousness that is drawn towards Dharma and Jnana or knowledge.
3. Rajas is one of the three gunas or “modes of existence” which is a philosophical and psychological concept developed by the Samkhya school of Hindu philosophy. Rajas is innate tendency or quality that drives motion, energy and activity. Rajas is sometimes translated as passion, where it is used in the sense of activity qua activity, without any particular value and it can contextually be either good or bad.

4. Tamas is one of the three gunas or “modes of existence” which is a philosophical and psychological concept developed by the Samkhya school of Hindu philosophy. Tamas is the quality of inertia, inactivity, dullness, or lethargy.
5. Vijnanamaya means composed of vijnana, or intellect, the faculty which discriminates, determines or wills.
6. Anandmaya means composed of anand or bliss. In Upanishads, the sheath is also known as the “casual body”. In deep sleep, where the mind and senses cease functioning, it still stands between the finite world and the self. Anandmaya or that which is composed of Supreme bliss, is regarded as the innermost of all.
7. Pranamaya means composed of prana, the vital principle, the force that vitalizes and holds together the body and the mind. It pervades the whole organism, its one physical manifestation is the breath. As long as this vital principle exists in the organisms, life continues. Coupled with the five organs of action it forms the vital sheath.

19.10 Glossary

In the Roman Catholic Church, a **parish** is a stable community of the faithful within a particular church, whose pastoral care has been entrusted to a parish priest, under the authority of the diocesan bishop.

Diocesan means belonging or relating to a diocese. In church governance, a diocese is the ecclesiastical district under the jurisdiction of a bishop.

In Catholic parlance, a **cleric** is someone who has been admitted to the sacrament of Holy Orders.

The **Upanishads** are ancient Sanskrit texts of spiritual teaching and ideas of Hinduism, some of which are shared with religious traditions like Buddhism and Jainism.

The **Brihadaranyaka** Upanishad is one of the principal Upanishads and one of the first Upanishadic scriptures of Hinduism. A key scripture to various schools of Hinduism, the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is tenth in the **Muktika** or canon of 108 Upanishads”.

The **Chandogya** Upanishad is a Sanskrit text embedded in the Chandogya Brahmana of the Sama Veda of Hinduism. It is one of the oldest Upanishads. It lists as number 9 in the Muktika canon of 108 Upanishads. The Upanishad belongs to the Tandyā school of the Samaveda.

The **Taittiriya** Upanishad is a Vedic era Sanskrit text, embedded as three chapters of the Yajurveda. It is a mukhya Upanishad and likely composed about 6th century BC. The Taittiriya Upanishad is associated with the Taittiriya school of the Yajurveda, attributed to the pupils of sage Tittiri.

A **philanthropist** is a person who gives money or gifts to charities, or helps needy people in other ways.

Unit 20 □ Religion and Market

Structure of the unit

- 20.1 Learning Objectives**
- 20.2 Introduction**
- 20.3 What is religion?**
- 20.4 The Secularization Model**
- 20.5 The De-secularization theory**
- 20.6 The Global religious scene**
- 20.7 Religious commodification and market**
- 20.8 Roman Catholicism and the place of market**
- 20.9 Religion as a consumer item**
- 20.10 Conclusion**
- 20.11 Summary**
- 20.12 Questions**
- 20.13 References**

20.1 Learning Objectives

- To see how religion and market penetrate into each other.
- To understand the stand points of the secularization and the de-secularization theory
- To understand the changing character of religion

20.2 Introduction

The dual forces of neo-liberalism and consumerism are impacting and changing the very structure of the religion worldwide. Though this happens in contextual forms in localized ways but the process is an unending one. You must understand that consumerism is definitely the most prominent and global process that determines the cultural and the social ethos. The relation between religion and economy is in itself a very penetrating, single yet multifaceted interface which must be understood with

due insight and concern. Economy to a large extent comprises of the forces of consumption and market, the twin pillars of the economic institution, that go on to influence religion and its undercurrents. We shall be able to identify with these undercurrents more closely because we ourselves are the byproducts of consumerism and conspicuous consumption. We are somehow more convinced about the fact that consumption in religion is necessarily not good and therefore distasteful. This is unworthy of consideration when religion should be ideally one of sacrifice, asceticism and solitude. The idea of market, consumption and especially conspicuous consumption therefore does not gel with the aesthetics and composure of religion and should be critiqued strongly. Moreover, market and religion has a complex and a bitter relation. The bitterness comes from the very fact that consumption is duly embedded in capitalism and therefore carves out a very ugly and exploitative face. Such vulgar forms of consumption is not good for sustainable development either.

However, this goes without saying that all cultural phenomenon that have been shaped by consumer cultures are bad and must be devalued. Consumerism played a predominant role in producing consumer culture in the neoliberal regime and this surely cannot be denied. Alongside, this may also be argued that religion too grew under the massive impact of consumerism. We are definitely not saying consumerism is good or bad but only proposing the fact that it is one of the most important components of economy and displays a strong relation with religion. Market and its consumerist ethos are like hot selling cakes and more so they provide us the essential color glasses through which we can see the changing character of religion. These tinged glasses give us many interesting cues to understand the interaction between religion and market and to look at those essential forces that usher the large scale religious change both locally and globally. Looking at religion from the lenses of a commodity market is important. This will help us understand the prominence of religion in the everyday life of the people. Before we move any further, let us try to develop the concept of religion.

20.3 What is religion?

Religion according to Durkheim is the bipartite divide of the world into sacred and the profane. For Durkheim, religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them. (Durkheim 1995). Durkheim's idea suggests that the idea of religion is inseparable from the idea of a church and it expresses the idea that religion is essentially a collective thing Religious beliefs are by their nature essentially obligatory in character. Beliefs belong to a group that imposes them on its members. This

compulsory or the imperative character is essentially a distinctive nature of the religious beliefs. The religious system has a hierarchy or a scale of gradation embedded within it which is sometimes invisible from outside. This nevertheless imposes a force or a pressure on its members which is difficult to resist.

Peter L Berger said religion provides a moral order and a spiritual sanctuary to the human beings and their society. This shelter is termed as the 'sacred canopy' (P. L. Berger 1967). The canopy is an over-arching shelter over the people where they feel safe and secured and do not dare to step out. For Berger, one does not step out for he feels outside the canopy is all dark, disorderly, gloomy and scary. Possibly one might end up stepping into sheer madness and nothing else. Religion, whatever be its form and content is compelling and overwhelming in the sense that it forms communal strongholds. They impose moral sanctions on their members at almost all levels of everyday life.

Berger borrows his idea of sacred from Durkheim which means something extraordinary and therefore must be distinguished from the everyday or the mundane life. For Berger, sacred is gifted with some extraordinary and awesome power that resides not in men but in objects men use. Anything and everything such as an activity, experience or a thing can become sacred when they are packed with that special power. Thus we understand, whatever the content of the religion be, the basic form is unchanged. Therefore, the binary division of the sacred and profane constitutes the crux of the religion as proclaimed by different religions. This bifurcation of the religious world into the sacred and the profane or the special and the banal or the regular constitutes the building block of whatever is religious. I think this section is clear to you all.

These religions of course impose a huge influence on our lives both the private and the public life. However, the bigger question that we are facing is, what happens when such dynamic religions encounter the sharpest forces of economy such as commodification, market and globalization. Do they yield to such superordinate forces or remain unruffled and unchanged? The even bigger question we are asking is do the dynamic religions withstand the brutal onslaught of the global economic forces or do they surrender themselves in the face of such global turmoil? You must understand, learners, what I mean here. I am trying to understand that how do religions react when challenged by the big forces of economy. How do religions interact with the powerful dynamics of economy, market and consumption? Does religion remain static or become outdated by the global forces of commodification or are the religious forces are resilient enough to face the tremors of globalization. These are some of the basic questions we shall be dealing in this unit and I hope you all will enjoy the course of this journey. However, we must acknowledge that these questions are not just asked today but they have been debated since the mid-nineteenth century by a whole

generation of outstanding scholars like Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Georg Simmel, R.H. Tawney, Max Weber down to Peter Berger himself and his contemporaries.

20.4 The Secularization Model

All these thinkers were actually indicating to a trend which may be described as the secularization paradigm which became quite visible in the 1950s and the 1960s. 19th century German philosopher Karl Marx was one of them who viewed religion as the “opium of the people” (Marx 1970). For Marx, religion is nothing but an acute expression of distress that results from the exploitation of the mankind. Religion serves the purpose of indicating the gross oppression that men face in the hands of the brutal capitalists. Marx saw religion essentially as a form of protest invoked by the working classes against their miserable economic conditions and the alienation that they are subjected to. As soon as a class-less society will emerge, people will soon face no fear of exploitation and will readily give up their faith. Religion will then be on the verge of extinction. Therefore, Marx definitely proposed a theory of religion which will lead people to become emancipated and free with less dependence on blind faiths and doctrines. You can well understand how we were moving towards new models of secularization which ought to dissolve the power of religion over the lives of the people.

Learners, next we shall come to yet another theory of secularization proposed by the famous sociologist Max Weber. He spoke of the rationalization of action, a specific form of social change that led to the surfacing of the modern world. Weber was increasingly talking about disenchantment which simply did not mean that people had lost their faith in the old mysteries of religion (Mills 1958) but the sense that the very idea of the mysterious has become less impactful. This double edged process of rationalization and disenchantment process in religion was termed secularization for it indicated an overall decline on the hold of faith and beliefs on the public and the personal lives.

We can add on the same note that even Simmel likewise believed that with the coming of the modernity, religion will gradually lose its gravity and will instead become bleak and feeble. Simmel believed that all the major contents of religion will presumably collapse under the rigorous scrutiny of criticism and reasoning. This will weaken our confidence on the strength of classical religions and instead what survived was our purely subjective attitude or belief. Simmel termed this absolutely subjective attitude as nothing else but religiosity, which he thought will survive the turbulence of time. For Simmel, religious attitude was no illusion or mere contemplation for its foundation was entrenched in social interaction. This was how he sketched his religion of modernity in his *Sociology of Religion* (1898) and the second edition of his

Religion (1912). He said modernity cannot take away the subjective idea of religion which for him was immanent and ever present in all forms of social interactions. It is only in certain conditions that it becomes consolidate and crystallized to take a shape that becomes visible to all. For instance, at times of intense patriotism or altruism, latent religious senses in individuals become more prominent and claim visibility in social relationships, of course such religious attitude remains dormant most of the times and does not crave public attention. Nevertheless, it becomes a fixture in the lives of the individuals especially when they grow on to develop an interpersonal relationships. Of course such religiosity survive on reciprocal relationship and does not exist in its own right. To cultivate a continuous relation with someone, whatever be its intensity, one must have belief in the other. It is not just that they exist for one another but also the ratification of the fact that they are dependent on one another and that they are always there for each other. For Simmel, you know what? This inter-personal faith is almost similar to religious faith (McCole n.d.). Does not that sound interesting? He believed this mutual faith was necessary without which society would not just sustain. This is one of the major cause behind the stable bond that holds our society and us together.

It is interesting to note that Simmel too could not assure us that with the emergence of modernity, religion will exist in its own right but instead suggested a new subjective form of religiosity that shall replace the more objective kind, if not otherwise. Simmel like Marx and Weber was not sure whether religion will withstand the test of time but instead thought they may either dilute with time or assume new forms in the fast changing timeline. This very well boils down to the fact that this condition is appropriate for religious commodification in this regard. This becomes more relevant in the context of the secularization model that we have already discussed. This new condition gradually drives us to the commodification of religion into marketable goods, goods that are made fit for market transaction. This becomes even more relevant when modernization claims that along with secularization and rationalization, there shall be a decline of public dependence on God, super-natural entities and religious congregations. Therefore, we can presume that with the passage of time, religion will lose its hold on society and the minds of the people. As against this secularization theory, Peter Berger talks of the 'de-secularization of the world'. It takes the stand that de-secularization religion is very much alive and has refused to die down with the tide of time. Now, of course this is an absolutely new concept which we must engage with.

20.5 The De-secularization theory

Peter Berger had claimed that the idea that we live in a secular world is a wrong conception for the world is as furiously religious as it always was and may be in some

places it had become even more dreadfully religious than we ever thought it was. He said the fact that modernization leads to secularization that in turn makes religion hazy and blurred may be true, but of course it is not completely true. This is because it has prompted many influential movements of counter-secularization that has revived the power of the religion. Those who had predicted the decline of religion in the pretext of modernization were proved severely wrong. Religion has faced these sharp and deterring agencies of modernization with a very brave face. This has been observed that more the forces of modernization, globalization and westernization had modified our religion, more the religion had attracted people like a piece of magnet with its magnifying system of faiths, doctrines and beliefs. Instead of being disenchanted from the sphere of religion, the latter has re-enchanted the lives of the people with an extraordinary force and commitment, may be stronger than before. Peter Berger strongly refutes the secularization theory proposed by Marx, Weber, Simmel and the like and proposes his own theory of De-secularization theory. In his very famous work, *De-secularization of the World* (1999), Berger brings out the errors of the secularization theory when he points out to the mass resurgence of the religion worldwide towards the end of the very last century. Berger had asked us to look into the global scenario and probably this will help understand the contemporary religious picture (P. L. Berger 1999).

20.6 The Global religious scene

The global religious setting indicates that conservative, or orthodox movements were becoming increasingly more powerful. On the contrary, those religious institutions which were trying to shake hands with modernity were slowly disappearing. In the United States too there was a downfall of Protestantism and a corresponding popularity of Roman Catholicism and rise of the Evangelism or the spread of Christianity. The non-Western countries saw the renewed interest among converts and native Catholics. Especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union, there took place a newly found interest on Orthodox Church in Russia. Not just in Christianity, such revivalism was seen across the religious spectrums for instance, the Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and even among smaller communities like the Shinto in Japan and Sikhism in India (P. L. Berger 1999). These religions have showed how modernization and secularization do not go together, instead there is always a scope for counter-secularization. The recent developments indicate that the recent global space share a great religious passion and a traditional source of religious authority. Such propensities are quite common across religious boundaries and they do indicate a sharp presence of the rational forces.

These rational paths often drove the Asian religions to weave very close relationship

between modernization process and the market economy. For instance, the Tokugawa religion have immensely contributed to the stunning rise of the modern Japanese economy. Religion had justly helped in its process of political and economic mobilization. Robert. N. Bellah have beautifully categorized the four types of religious response to the modernization process in Asia such as the conversion to Christianity, traditionalism, reformism and neo-traditionalism (Bellah 1991). Interestingly, we find that Bellah's work does not contain any mention of the "market culture", which is one of the fundamental basis of the Asian capitalism. Perhaps at that time, secularization theory, as we saw above was extremely dominant and yet another important fact was that, Asia's religious markets did not emerge in the post-war decades, that is briefly in the 1950s and afterwards. That probably may be the reason why market did not find any place in the ongoing discussions on religion. However, certain very prominent developments across Asia give us an inkling that the religious character was gradually changing its character in these post war years. For instance, Japan's new religious movements and the endemic religion, Korea's revival of Shamanism, our India's prosperity cults, Taiwan's amoral cults, Thailand's commercialization of Buddhism and of course Vietnam's cult of Goddesses were giving a new commercial character to the religion worldwide, which we shall discuss at length later. In the period leading to secularization, religious commodification was not that visible, it goes without saying that the strains of market economy and modern living was not that prominent then, as it is now (Kitiarsa 2008). Probably, it may be said that the process resulting in commodification of religion was at its rudimentary stage then and therefore the relation between religion and market could not be captured at its fullest into the social panorama.

20.7 Religious commodification and market

The powerful impact of globalization had facilitated the religious commodification process in Asia. The very process of commodification had re-written the definition of religion as an emerging market space for commodities and services that was unthinkable before. This is further strengthened by the consolidation of trans-national ties between religious organizations and market networks. However, before going any further, let us try to understand, what we mean by the very process of commodification.

We may start with the Oxford English Dictionary's definition of commodification as the starting point of our discussion. Commodification is the process of turning or treating something into a commodity; commercialization of an activity, etc. We must remember this is not by nature commercial (S.Strasser 2003). There is a strong admission of the fact that it is very much possible to set out a category of acts and things that are not at all commercial by nature and therefore to tag those into

commodities become difficult and complex. Strasser warns us that religion is one such area where commercialisation might land the culture in trouble (ibid.3). However, this is not an absolutely new trend but has a history of its own. Theorists have long debated on the repeated use of the religious items as commodities in the market and how such commodities have bypassed into the religious terrain and led to widespread commercial exploitation. We have started with the basic idea of the religion and how it was based on the bipartite division between sacred and profane. However, now we see that with the advent of the trends of market economy, separation between the sacred and the profane has gradually come down because the core sacred areas of religion could not escape the onslaught of the commercial forces. There is a barrage of criticism against the association between religion and commerce, especially by those who feel this unholy nexus actually leads to tarnishing or muddling of religion. However, the association refused to stop on the face burgeoning prospects of commodification and instead increased many folds. This of course was not unique to any distinctive religion but was found across religions (Sinha 2011).

Such a connection between religion and commerce had been established in classical religions like the Roman Catholicism, Islam, Buddhism and even to the New Age religion. The trend has continued unchallenged and unfettered.

The objects produced and consumed within the religious sphere were constituting a booming industry through which they were circulated, distributed and exchanged in a seamless process. We must understand a very important thing here, by navigating with the commercial world, religious items do not sacrifice their piety and auspiciousness rather such qualities are increased many fold. This is to say, the sacred quality of such religions is not contaminated or compromised but rather it increases by leaps and bounds. Moreover, the spirituality of these objects get pronounced as they learn to face the everyday life of market transactions. For instance, the offerings made to Gods and Goddesses during festivals such as *narkeler naroo* and *tiler naroo* (A Bengali sweet made with grated coconut, milk and sugar, the same may be made of sesame also) were often home-made but not always now. They are usually bought as ready-made items and offered to god before distributing those as *prasadam*, food-items offered to god and then consumed by devotees. This entry of market transactions into *puja* offerings do not degrade its purity but rather makes it more dynamic than before. With an increased participation of female labourer in market sites, it is increasingly recognized that they can no longer devote that extra time on rituals and customary cooking that they did before. This however has sunk in the minds of the people and they have accepted the intersection of religion with the external market without much ado. This mind-set had helped making this passage even easier and hassle-free. Since the passage was so smooth and sound, religion outlived the risk of being died down under the chorus of secular models drawn in the 1960s and 70s when rationalization

and modernization was at its fullest. The commercial world could not suppress the religious domain which only became more powerful with days however strong the propaganda might be that science would defeat religion. It was not to be and never is to be. Religion had continued enchanting us with its new found charisma in its evolving form and content. The religion has learnt to respond to the new era instead of being defeated by it. The media and technology had helped religion become more dynamic and persuasive for its devotees. Men and women are hooked to this wedding between religion and market and there are evidences abound to testify such claims (Sinha 2011).

With the newly emergent character of the religion, there is a whole lot of people who are devotees and consumers of religious sects at the same time. It is interesting to note how the two identities have merged into one individual. This is only possible when the distinctions between sacred and profane are not cut short by the reckless process of commodification driven by the market process. All I mean to say is that even in the reckless drive for commodification, the power of religion has not changed but have only changed its character. Learners, after such a round of serious discussion, let's have a cup of coffee before we finally settle down for our next round of deliberation. This time we shall be discussing about the assumptions held by other religions regarding market and its drive for commodification. You may join me after a break.

20.8 Roman Catholicism and the place of market

Roman Catholicism is fast gearing up to acquaint itself with the mandates of the market economy. Some scholars have rued that an ignorance about the functioning of the market had been very unfortunate side of Roman Catholic knowledge. The religion had at one point of time cursed industrialization and modernization leading to the proliferation of market forces. The French politician and parliamentary leader, Jean-Paul-Alban Villeneuve-Barcement was doubtful of the role of industrialization and market even when the per head income of France was growing at a whopping rate of 1.4 percent per year as it was experienced from 1800 to 1900. Villeneuve critiqued industrialization and marketing of goods because he felt that the accumulation and hoarding of capital and machinery will no doubt facilitate industrial capitalism but in exchange of impoverishment and misery. Thousands will lose jobs as machines come to replace manual work such as those labourers who had carried freight or goods on their back. It is often complained that there had been a missing analytical framework for which Catholic circles could not give an economic rationalization. It is very surprising to note that the advocates of the Catholicism intended to practically out do the very existence of the economic law.

However, the situation had changed drastically especially in the twentieth century when scholars of Catholicism specifically from Spain voiced their opinions. Slowly they learnt to appreciate the functioning of the market forces and not just that they have been admiring the role of the entrepreneurs, the justified determination of prices and wages as brought out by the forces of demand, supply and free market (Jr. 2015). Catholic Church had always reinforced the sharp ability of the men to identify the systematic and orderly constitution of God's creation and to silently follow it. The recent proponents of Catholic religion now demand man might deploy his desires and sentiments to carve out his judgements in economic matters. Instead of searching for regularity and orderliness which Church prioritizes, the time has come to look for what Man wants for himself instead of just looking for the orderliness of God. So, I think you can understand the shifting paradigm in Catholicism where we were gradually shifting from the abstract idea of God to meatier areas like market and the economics forces.

The earlier thinkers were more concerned with the moral dimensions of the economics and neglected more practical issues like the full-fledged functioning mechanisms of the economic institutions. Catholic religion had come to realize how a market economy plays a positive role in encouraging sharing and cooperation during crises. It helps not just through central planning but by floating a price system that is quite free to fluctuate in response to the changing conditions. The free market was defended and not at all abandoned because the popes certainly did not advocate socialism. This was more pronounced with the beginning of labor agitations and unrest throughout the West. Pope Leo XIII tendered a pronouncement which was then referred as the social question which justified the holding of private property. He blatantly rejected socialism as a legitimate economic system which was definitely a very bold step for Catholicism towards market collaborations.

The pope had explained that socialism that discourages the rights of private property must not be honoured because it only creates conditions of misery and degradation. This religion believed that socialism may be rejected since it is contradictory to the natural rights of mankind. It only creates confusion and disorder into the gamut of common will and public welfare. In order to uplift the condition of the common masses, the right to private property must be upheld. It will be very interesting to add the role of *Rerum Novarum* in this regard.

Do you know what is *Rerum Novarum*?

Rerum Novarum is an encyclical or a letter issued by the Pope Leo XIII in 1891. It was an open letter that had been passed to all the Catholic Bishops that had addressed the conditions of the working classes. There Pope Leo had categorically taught that the Church holds the rights of property and ownership. This is an innate

right of men that originates in nature itself and stands inviolable, something which can't be violated. Leo very strongly advocated the evils of socialism and prescribed ways of uprooting the evil growth of socialism. On a similar chord, Pope Pius XI declared in 1931 that no one at the same time can be called a good Catholic and a true socialist (Jr. 2015).

Leo was of course not supported by the Catholic priests and bishops at the very beginning of the twentieth century. The socialist bishops perhaps were happy giving the example of Christ and the men of early Christian communities did not possess private assets. However, Catholic commentators quickly intercepted to say that the Christ had nowhere justified the misery and poverty of his followers as a universally moral binding. The Church had categorically spelled out that the young men may sell his goods and properties according to the teachings of the Gospel. Socialism was not made compulsory by the religious congregation but was reserved only for those whom Christ had given special grace. On the other hand, if socialism if imposed on the entire community, it would just be an misinterpretation of the gospel and instead bring disorder and confusion in the state. So by the turn of the century, the Catholic Church was taking a bold stand that rejected socialism and on the contrary supported the entry of the free market and other economic forces (Re. George M. Searle 1913).

Socialists often claim that there is some sort of a divine law that does not recognize private ownership of property, but Catholics deny the existence of any such law. Catholic Church repeatedly said, private property is not a forbidden stuff in their doctrine. The Church however adds that a man may deliberately and lawfully forego his right to private property but he cannot be made to abandon his rights to own and sell his assets in the market forcefully (Re. George M. Searle 1913). A man is free then to explore the dynamics of the market. Thus Christianity paves the ground for an easy and hassle-free connection between religion, commodity and market. You can surely understand that those who follow the gospel were potential enough to be turned into willing consumers.

20.9 Religion as a consumer item

Religion in the contemporary world was gradually setting its feet into the public sphere of worldly activities. It was slowly but steadily coming out of the temples and monasteries into the everyday world of daily affairs and shedding off its inhibitions of being too homely and docile. Now did you understand, what I tried saying? Religion had long been labelled as timid and calm and therefore less outgoing. However, as modernity developed, religion too kept moving instead of sitting back idle. Religions abound everywhere, the consumer market place, the shopping malls, the TV Screens and the website and even you know what? In the Disneyland too (Lyon 2013).

Religion has come to be more visually prominent such that they are omnipresent and omnipotent. Modernity presupposes that men are entirely free to choose their life even to the extent of deciding their own Gods and Goddesses.

Interesting it is to discover that modernity with its very process of rationalization, commodification, secularization and disenchantment does not lead to the disappearance of the religious sentiments. On the contrary, symbolic embodiments and classifications and ritual exercises still rely on sacred –profane division in the secular social process. This continues even if the formal religion may have died an untimely death. Durkheim had rightly pointed out that any and every sacred item have the capacity to become profane goods of capitalism. Now, the distinction between sacred and profane must have become clear to you by now. Any item that has been entrusted with an extraordinary quality is taken as a sacred thing while those items of the everyday usage becomes mundane or profane. So in that sense, a Tulsi plant or a leaf is a sacred thing whereas a banyan or a eucalyptus tree without any loaded symbolic meaning or an extra-ordinary quality is presumed to be profane.

But the same banyan tree or the eucalyptus leaf may be turned into a sacred item in certain religion, tribe or region. For instance, the Mahabodhi tree at the Mahabodhi temple of Bodh Gaya, Bihar is one of the important pilgrim sites. It is here that Durkheim argues that if a particular leaf becomes sacred, then why not any profane capital good can become sacred? If we try to concentrate on the actual usage of the good or the obsession about that good, we can observe an interesting thing. We shall see that an item becomes de-commodified and receive a symbolic meaning over and above that intended by the corporate giants and marketing experts. It is this x-factor or the charisma which soon turns a simple and an ordinary profane good into a sacred item to its users as if by a magical spell. There is all possibility that very profane consumer durables may become sacred goods or say cherished possessions in no time. Provided that symbolic interaction happens.

Take for instance, the new age mania for the mobile phone which has almost become the one most indispensable belonging for all irrespective of the generation they belong to. Interestingly, mobile phones and internet connections have taken the same path to become the new age sacred thing to oneself and society. It is interesting to note that however rigorous the rituals of everyday life one may undertake, from birthdays to burial grounds, mobile phones are carried everywhere with pride and glory and it is not forbidden anywhere. As men step into the holy precincts of their life course and their material world, be it the rice-ceremony, weddings, baby showers, house warming or any related rites, pujas and rituals, mobile phones travel everywhere. There is no prohibitions imposed on it. There is a strange thing that even after travelling such impure sites like crematoriums and burial grounds, consumer items like head phones, mobile phones, portable lap tops and tabs, retain their sacredness and ritual purity. Once

men return from polluting sites like those underlining morbidity since it is death and disease which makes men polluting, men have to purify themselves but not mobile phones. It is such a paradox that such consumer items travel everywhere despite losing their ritual status and without religion coming in between. It is as if these consumer items are immune from all religious strictures and sanctions. Nothing can touch them, be it death, disease, morbidity, impurity nothing. It is above and beyond religious prowess. That is why we say, religion has become redefined by the rules of the consumer society. It has changed the very meaning of sacred and profane, which was supposed to be the kernel of any type of religion. That probably is the reason why Durkheim had clearly pointed out, if any and everything can become sacred, then why not profane goods of capitalist consumer market? (Featherstone 2007).

20.10 Conclusion

The process through which religion was turned into a market fed commodity is rather intriguing and complex. It is quite bizarre to find out that the very classic Jewish tradition had suddenly become a religious item worth for sale. The Kaballah suddenly became a popular culture instead of being a very serious and dedicated religious practise. It was quite a riddle for us to find out how religion far from being a phenomenon of enlightenment and solitude was outrightly turned into an object of enterprise, entertainment and business. Religious items were getting branded in the same way other consumer items were endorsed as global brands. Religious institutions were getting popular names, mascots, emblems and slogans and were huddled together under the scanners of the severely competitive and ferociously ambitious market places.

20.11 Summary

Throughout the unit, we tried discussing about the concept of religion and the massive changes that it had undergone. We tried following the foot falls of the global world to gauge the rampant changes that religion was subjected to in the modern times.

20.12 Questions

1. What is religion?
2. What is the modern trend of religion?
3. What is secularization theory?
4. What is the de-secularization stand point?
5. Is religion marketable?

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