

Religion: Solution to Human Problems or Problem for Human Race?

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Abstract: It is believed that religion's birth started with flowering and blossoming of human civilizations. However, it is also said that even before the emergence of human civilizations, religion has played instrumental role in one form or another. Men and women in early stages were governed by their chiefs who used to decide what issues or matters were right or wrong, just or unjust, true or false, legitimate or illegitimate and so on. With the passing of time, more quests and explorations were made by individuals or groups of individuals. The chiefs or latter on the kings being burdened with their state affairs opened the doors for other people who were competent to explain the concepts of just and unjust that might have laid the foundation of *dharma*. In the present paper the author's aim is to analyse the concepts and practices of *dharma* both at macro and micro level, at individual and social level and above all at physical level. The paper is entitled with question mark, the purpose being to hammer the people's mind to think again and again if religion, in organised form, is solving the people's problems free from hatred, confrontations and rivalries.

Keywords: Buddhism, Christian, dharma, Hindu, incarnation, Islam, problems, search

INTRODUCTION

Most of us blindly believe that religion can solve all the problems of human beings. In religion lies salvation; even death as a result of sacrifice for the cause and survival of religion redeems human beings from all kinds of sins committed knowingly or unknowingly. At the outset it appears to be true also, as men and women by surrendering their identity feel that they have attained contentment by abiding the norms prescribed by religion. However, it cannot be denied that it is the religion that creates problems as well.

The first question that strikes human mind is that what religion is? How has it entered into human life? Why is it all necessary for human beings? Can human beings not live their life without religion? There are countless such other questions that persistently pierce human mind.

ANALYSIS

Religion is such an issue that has remained a subject of analysis and explanation by an individual or group of individuals for many thousand years. Religion literally means realisation that comes from within, and the within tells to follow what is good, noble and virtuous. There lies variation in explaining the concept and meaning of religion in religious scriptures and people's practices of religious beliefs the world over. The Hinduism or *sanatana* advocates to follow *dharma*,

and this alone will give one victory, if one wishes for victory; will shower one with rains of name, fame and wealth, if one craves for these; will make one get rid of all sorts of miseries, if one follows the directions of *dharma*; will reserve seat in heaven after death, if one abides by the rules and practices laid down by *dharma*; even *dharma* can redeem one from the cycle of birth and death and get one *moksha* i.e. salvation, if one has ever remained dutiful, fearless, honest, indifferent, kind, magnanimous, selfless, truthful and virtuous being. If we study the religious texts and scriptures, we find that the individuals become the bearer, the carrier and the saviour of religion. In *Gita*, Lord Krishna, stressing on noble goal by following the dutiful, truthful and virtuous life, tells Arjuna:

*Ahimsa satyam akrodhas tyagah antir
apaisunam*

*Daya bhutesvaloluptvam mardavam hrir
acapalm. [1].*

Non-violence in thought, word and deed, truthfulness an geniality of speech, absence of anger even on provocation, disclaiming doer ship in respect of actions, quietude or composure of mind, abstaining from slander, compassion towards all creatures, absence of attachment to the objects of senses even during contact with the senses, mildness, a sense of shame in transgressing the scriptures or social conventions, and abstaining from frivolous pursuits.

There is difference between *yudha* i.e. war and *dharma yudh* i.e. war for justice. The former is to grab authority, power and fulfil ambitions etc., without human cause, whereas, the latter is to save people from cruelty of the authority, restore justice and open the doors of freedom and fearlessness. Realising the significance of the power of *dharma yudha* i.e. the war based on restoring justice, love, compassion, freedom and equality in society, Sanjaya who was blessed with the power of seeing the events of war from Kurukshetra even at long distance of Hastinapur, tells the king Dhritrastra:

*Yatra yogesvarah krsno yatra partho
dhanurdharah
Tatra srir vijayo bhutir dhruva nitir matir
mama. [2]*

*Wherever is Krishna, the Lord of Yoga, and
wherever is Arjuna, the wielder of Gandiva
bow,
glory, victory, prosperity and unfailing
righteousness will surely be there.*

Krishna and Arjuna symbolise the likeminded people who possess strong commitment to come forward for safety and security of human race and restore justice, and also become deeply concerned to observe that human civilization is not crumbled down.

Christianity found its universal acceptance, recognition and shape with emergence of Jesus on this earth. His teachings emphasize on love, compassion, service, non-violence, fearlessness, forgiveness, realisation, truth and virtue etc. Christian teachings also warn man to beware of deadly sins like, Wrath, Envy, Gluttony, Avarice, Pride and Sloth. Bible is the source of the Western Philosophy, theology and thought. At one place, it is mentioned that God is the creator. God said, "Let there be light: and there was light." [3]. Man is the most beautiful creation by Him in His Own image, and therefore, He sent Jesus to tell men and women to do well, to think well, and thereby to come out of the darkness of ignorance and enter into the unfathomed light of knowledge for liberation.

Islam that believes in union of human beings across the world was manoeuvred by Mohammad, as he has been acknowledged as the messenger of God. There are five pillars of Islamic religion which are mandatory to be abided and practised by all Muslims. They are:

- (a) Shahadah: It declares there is no god except God, and Muhammad is God's Messenger
- (b) Salat: ritual prayer five times a day
- (c) Zakat: giving 2.5% of one's savings to the poor and needy
- (d) Sawm: fasting and self-control during the holy month of Ramadan

(h) Hajj: pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime if one is capable of managing it

Islam, in principle, appears to be ideal one and its teachings and practices open the door for personal purification free from hatred, rivalry, prejudice, fear and pressure on the other hand and solve the problems of poor and needy by sacrificing some part of income on the other hand.

Buddhism that was born as a result of search for knowledge and truth was taught by Lord Buddha. What he realised was limited to his self and soul. He wanted to share his experiences with his five disciples at Sarnath near Varanasi. Had he confined his realisation to his own self, the values he wanted to create would never have turned to reality. His followers started propagating his teachings and it took the shape of religion. His teachings became so impressive that number of his followers increased in India and many Asian Countries. Not only this happened but people acknowledged him as God also. In Indian scripture, there is his reference as 10th incarnation of God.

In Hinduism, the teachings of great individuals, like Lord Krishna in *Gita* talk about cloud of human doubts, and shows the way for light of knowledge; the mantras in four Vedas – *Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samveda, Atharveda*— not composed by human agency but created by Brhama, who is considered as the Creator of the universe, focus on wisdom and paves the way for liberation.

Violation of religious rules and practices by individuals result into punishment for them. One can find countless examples when a person is punished or excommunicated from a religion for not abiding its norms or speaking against it. Joan of Arc was burnt alive for she was not ready to recant her voices; Queen Elizabeth was ex-communicated by Roman Catholic Church for not subduing before it and hence she established the Church of England; Salmon Rushdie and Tashlima Nashrin are the living examples of religious *fatwas* issued against them. In Hinduism, there are different religious sects, each showing their supremacy over others. The recent religious debate in India today is whether Sai Baba is God? A good number of people give high regard with devotion to him. But, Sankaracharya of a *mattha* declared that Sai should not be worshipped as God and his idols should be taken away from Sai temples. Individuals have been declared as gods when they had shown their miracles and supernatural powers. In *sanatana dharma* men like Rama and Krishna had incarnated to punish the wrong doers and safeguard and establish the *dharma*. Buddha, who was against Hindu religious practices and was in quest of the truth, the knowledge and the Ultimate, was also believed to be laden with the supernatural powers.

Criticism of one religion by a person or group against another sect gives rise to violence. In a society where people of different religions live together, it is not necessary that religious harmony shall ever be maintained. Sometimes, communal violence takes place due to sheer religious criticism. In India, one can observe demonstrations of one group of people against an individual or a sect of people for sheer giving comments against other.

Secularists do not interfere into religion, rather they advocate for equal respect and importance for all religions, and ignore cruelty of religion. Religion becomes so much powerful that the state becomes helpless to control the religious anarchy; rather, the laws of the state give full freedom, and even sometimes accept the laws and practices of the religion justifying as legitimate.

Presence of God and fear of Him give birth to religion. Religion and its practices, as it is believed, are the means to develop and establish communion with the Almighty. All the religious teachings advocate for adopting and imbibing all that is truthful and virtuous as defined by them. They warn the people to be afraid of Him. God, ever since mankind came on this earth, has been the subject of discussion ---to be or not be, or whether God made man or man has made God. In fact, He is the greatest invention that man has ever made. Theists accept Him with devotion and regard; atheists disapprove of Him; even scientific discoveries rest on God particle. In both cases of acceptance or denial He has become the only destination.

Individual's holy or mesmerising personality put them to the position of angels of God or sometime equates them to Gods also. Sainthood is conferred on a person for having shown miracles for human cause. In India, Mother Teresa was conferred with the title of Saint only when it was accepted by the highest body, though she had already earned laurels, love and affection in India and abroad. Thus, an individual's religious powers also sometime require recognition by the established religion.

Giving hostile and unpleasing remarks and voicing against a sect or a religion, sometimes, glorify a person and scale him up to top position by like-minded people. Had there been no disagreement on religious concepts and its practices, several religions and their several practices would not have come out. Hero worship is common in human nature. As a common man, he worships the heroes including Him, but as a rebel he aspires for support from the people and even craves for being loved and worshipped. Sometimes the easiest means to become hero is to give hostile comments against the established and accepted heroes.

People's weaknesses, their fear and longing for peaceful and prosperous life tempt them to accept religious doctrines and its practices. They feel it is no harm to blindly accept the religion if it guarantees them live safe and secure life, for which they are even ready to be abided by the draconian rules of the religion. Even the governments extend and offer high degree of praise and regard for a religion for their own sustenance.

Religion's existence continues till human race is on this earth. People often give remark on the acts of an individual or group of individual as religious or irreligious, holy or unholy, judicious or injudicious and so on. The mighty individuals die but religion continues. Therefore, religion has ever remained the most talking subject by all human societies.

Religion and its rituals performed at individual level may provide self contentment self pleasure, and can redeem one from all anxieties, pains and sorrows. But when it is celebrated in organised and structured form laden with pomp and show, it always creates problems. In India, one can observe the problems people face during the course of religious ceremonies, being organised in the name of religious festivals. Roads are blocked; public transport system becomes ineffective; celebration is made hilariously toxicated by religion. Loudspeakers and musical instruments are used with high volume that can make one even deaf also. Even during worship hours the religious songs are sung by the use of loudspeakers in a very high volume. So called, religious *gurus i.e.* preachers or mentors offer their preaching's using these instruments and want to demonstrate their mastery and knowledge on this subject. There are countless such occasions that can be witnessed in most of the human societies the world over. In some societies, religious ceremonies are organised in peaceful and calm manner. Yet, they too demonstrate their acts in organised form. Is religion a subject to be celebrated and organised collectively? Will the Almighty be pleased and will bless the human beings only when such performances are done? Will He not be pleased when an individual engages himself by acting and performing the religious rituals without causing any troubles to other human beings? If religions' one of the aims is to purify men and women, the best way can be individual's purification by individual acts and deeds. It never requires any kind of force to be applied or any kind of temptation to be offered.

CONCLUSION

Religion is a personal affair that may pave the way for self contentment, peace, and prosperity; the tools for performance of the guidelines provided in religious scriptures may give directions for living life in calm manner; rituals performed, particularly during the hours of death and at burial or funeral places may turn man's heart and mind to be indifferent from the

mundane affairs, though temporarily; prayers to Almighty with total surrender may soothe one's heart and mind. But, when the religion becomes an affair to be organised in groups at social levels, instead of solving individuals' problems, it creates rivalries, confrontations, ego problem of one group against the other. History is the testimony to the disaster of human lives in the name of religion; it is religion in the name of which wars have taken place and the human races have paid heavy price.

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