

## Religion in Economic Sphere of India

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### Abstract

### Review Article

It is perhaps an old chestnut to talk about religion in economic sphere of India. Religious and economic activities have been closely linked throughout the Indian history. This research paper is an attempt to pinnacle the evolution of religious and economic forces at work in India's current environment. Religion in India is distinguished by diversity of religious optimism and practices. The subcontinent is the birth place of world major religion like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. The growth of India's economy and the progress of the country as a whole can both be traced back to the influence of the country's religious traditions. The religious monument is the best cited instance of this same. The public sphere reflected the co- existence of religion and the secularism for economic perseverance. The official policy of equivalent religions is emphasized for the uniform growth. In India the impact of secularization and marginalization of religion itself remains a powerful force in civil society. Thus, religion in Indian tradition has not divorced itself from the secular affairs of society such as political and economic interest. With this interpretation, that religious belief embraces the thought of social, political and economic as well as strictly religious affairs for the advancement of the country's growth in the economic sphere of life.

**Keywords:** Religion & Cast System as- Hinduism, Muslim, Christianity, Buddhism.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the context at hand, we delve into the role of religious influences, specifically within the framework of India's primary religions, namely Hinduism and Sikhism. These religions each prescribe their own distinct beliefs regarding the societal and economic activities that are either endorsed, tolerated, or deemed unacceptable due to religious tenets. Furthermore, our examination will encompass other interrelated facets of religion that have either bolstered or hindered the impact of religious elements on India's economic progress. India, as a vast nation housing a substantial population, features prominent religious communities, primarily the Muslim and Hindu communities. In contrast, the Sikh community, both in terms of numerical strength and geographical distribution, remains relatively smaller, with a predominant presence in the Punjab region. The socio-economic trajectory of India has been deeply molded by religious factors, acting as significant drivers influencing the conduct and labor patterns of its populace [1].

The influence of religious factors on India's economic development can be traced back approximately 4,500 to 5,000 years. Religion has, in essence, been interwoven with the social and economic

evolution of India since the emergence of the first civilization in the Indus Valley around 4,500 years ago. During this initial phase, Hinduism was not primarily preoccupied with stringent oversight of the social and economic dynamics within Indian society. The Indus Valley civilization prospered for nearly a millennium before being infiltrated by the victorious Aryan invasions. With the Aryans came the establishment of the caste system, which became an integral component of Hinduism. It is widely acknowledged that this caste system acted as a hindrance to the development of extensive urban centers and impeded the pace of technological advancements [2].

Certainly, the caste system stands out as a religious element that has wielded a profound impact on India's economic development. This system exerted significant influence on the economic, social, employment, and legal statuses of all Hindus in the nation. Remarkably, even with the existence of the Hindu caste system, India maintained extensive and profitable trade connections during the reign of the Mauryan Empire.

Another key reason behind the substantial impact of the caste system on India's economic

development was its role in determining land ownership, means of production, and the type of work individuals could engage in, primarily based on their birth-derived caste positions. This rigid adherence to the caste system led to the concentration of wealth and established a tightly regulated social and economic hierarchy. Consequently, it discouraged people from exerting additional effort or increasing production rates, as these actions wouldn't alter their predetermined social or economic standing. The economic consequences of the caste system were unintended outcomes of its social and religious objectives, rather than deliberate designs.

One noteworthy aspect of the Indian economy that both Muslim emperors and the British colonial rulers inherited from previous Hindu dynasties was a comprehensive taxation system. Over a span of approximately four centuries, Buddhism's social and economic influences failed to leave a lasting impact on India's economic development, and Hinduism regained its position. It was Islam that would arrive in India and introduce religious factors that influenced the country's economic trajectory, with Islamic influence gaining momentum around 700 AD. Although Muslims established an empire centered around Delhi, their control over all of India was intermittent. Consequently, India's economy continued to evolve over many centuries, remaining primarily agrarian until the twentieth century. The acceleration of India's economic

development during British colonial rule was primarily driven by profit-seeking motives rather than religious factors [3].

Religion in India is a vibrant tapestry woven with a multitude of beliefs and practices. The Indian subcontinent stands as the birthplace of four major religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. These faiths have left an indelible mark on the country's history and culture. India's religious landscape is characterized by diversity and tolerance, values deeply ingrained in both legal frameworks and cultural traditions. The Indian constitution, in recognition of the importance of religious freedom, has enshrined it as a fundamental right.

In terms of official recognition, six religions in India have been accorded the status of "National minority." These religions include Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, and Zoroastrians. This designation highlights the government's commitment to protecting the rights and interests of these religious communities, ensuring their participation in the country's social, economic, and cultural life. It underscores India's commitment to fostering religious harmony and respecting the rich tapestry of faiths that contribute to its diverse and pluralistic society.

**Population trends for major religious groups in India**

Religious group	Population % 1951	Population % 1961	Population % 1971	Population % 1981	Population % 1991	Population % 2001	Population % 2011
Hinduism	84.1%	83.45%	82.73%	82.30%	81.53%	80.46%	79.80%
Islam	9.8%	10.69%	11.21%	11.75%	12.61%	13.43%	14.23%
Christianity	2.3%	2.44%	2.60%	2.44%	2.32%	2.34%	2.30%
Sikhism	1.79%	1.79%	1.89%	1.92%	1.94%	1.87%	1.72%
Buddhism	0.74%	0.74%	0.70%	0.70%	0.77%	0.77%	0.70%
Jainsim	0.46%	0.46%	0.48%	0.47%	0.40%	0.41%	0.37%
Zoroastrianim	0.13%	0.09%	0.09%	0.09%	0.08%	0.06%	n/a
Others/Religion not specified	0.43%	0.43%	0.41%	0.42%	0.44%	0.72%	0.9%

The following is a breakdown of India's religious communities:-

**Haracteristics of religious groups:-**

Religious group	Population (2011) %	Growth (2001-2011)	Sex ratio (2011) total	Sex ratio total (2011) rural	Sex ratio (2011) urban	Sex ratio (child)	Literacy (2011) %	Work participation (2011) %
Hinduism	79.80%	16.8%	939	946	921	913	73.3%	41.0%
Islam	14.23%	24.6%	951	957	941	943	68.5%	32.6%
Christianity	2.30%	15.5%	1023	1008	1046	958	84.5%	41.9%
Sikhism	1.72%	8.4%	903	905	898	828	75.4%	36.3%
Buddhism	0.70%	6.1%	965	960	973	933	81.3%	43.1%
Jainism	0.37%	5.4%	954	935	959	889	94.9%	35.5%
Others/Religion not specified	0.90%	n/a	959	947	975	974	n/a	n/a

**Religions:**

The religious and philosophical traditions in India are as varied as the people who live there. Here is an overview of the major religions and their presence in India:

- **Hinduism:** Hinduism is the largest religion in India, with around 79.8% of the population adhering to it. Hinduism encompasses a wide range of beliefs, from monotheism to polytheism, and is deeply ingrained in Indian culture and traditions.
- **Buddhism:** Buddhism originated in India and is followed by approximately 0.07% to 0.1% of the population. It has a significant presence in the Himalayan regions and states like Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Ladakh, and parts of Himachal Pradesh and Maharashtra. Buddhism also gained popularity among the Dalit community following B.R. Ambedkar's conversion.
- **Jainism:** Jainism is followed by around 4.2 million people, constituting about 0.4% of India's population. Jain communities are primarily found in states such as Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan.
- **Sikhism:** Sikhism has approximately 19.2 million followers in India. It is predominantly practiced in Punjab, where Sikhs form a majority, but also has a significant presence in Delhi and Haryana.
- **Islam:** In India, Muslims make up the largest religious minority with around 14.23% of the population being Muslim. It has a substantial presence in states like Jammu and Kashmir, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Assam, and Kerala. India has the world's third-largest Muslim population.
- **Christianity:** Christianity is followed by around 2.3% of the population and has a significant presence in states like Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Kerala, and Goa. St. Thomas is believed to have introduced Christianity to India in the 1st century AD.
- **Parsi (Zoroastrianism):** The Parsi community, followers of Zoroastrianism, makes up about 0.006% of the total Indian population, with a higher concentration around Mumbai.
- **Tribal Religions:** India is also home to various tribal religions, including Donvi-Polo and Santhal, practiced by indigenous tribal communities.
- **Bahá'í Faith:** About 2.2 million people practice the Bahá'í Faith in India, making it the largest Bahá'í community in the world.
- **Judaism:** India has a small Jewish community, including historical Jewish groups like the Cochin Jews and Bene Israel, as well as newer communities like the Bnei Menashe and Bene

Ephraim. There are fewer than 20,000 Jews of Indian origin remaining in India.

It's important to note that India's religious diversity extends to various sects, denominations, and sub-groups within these major religions, making it a unique and culturally rich tapestry of faiths. Additionally, a small percentage of people may not state their religion in official census data.

**Religion in the public sphere**

The presence of religion in the public sphere has grown to a point where it could potentially interfere with the functioning of the state unless the original secular character of that sphere is restored.

On March 15, 2017, Jurgen Habermas delivered a lecture at the University of Tilburg in the Netherlands regarding Religion in the Public Sphere. An extended version of this lecture has been included as a chapter in his latest book, "Between Naturalism and Religion." During the subsequent discussion following the lecture, a significant issue emerged concerning the connection between modernization and secularization.

For a considerable period, there was a widely held belief that a strong correlation existed between the modernization of society and the secularization of its population. It was thus argued that as society modernized, the influence of religion would diminish in a post-Enlightenment world. Professor Habermas suggests that this assumption was rooted in three key factors. First, advancements in science and technology made causal explanations more feasible, and from a scientifically enlightened perspective, it became challenging to reconcile with theocentric and metaphysical worldviews. Secondly, religious institutions, including churches, gradually lost their grip on matters such as law, politics, public welfare, education, and science. Lastly, economic transformations resulted in increased levels of welfare and improved social security. The cumulative impact of these developments, it is contended, contributed to the diminishing relevance and influence of religion in modern society [4].

**Opposed to modernization**

The notion of "secularization paradox" suggests that rather than declining, the influence of religion in the public sphere has, in fact, increased. This perspective is held by many scholars who argue that the traditional modernization thesis, which posited a decline in religious influence as societies modernized, has lost its validity in the contemporary world. Several trends indicate a global resurgence of religion, including missionary expansion, fundamentalist radicalization, and the political instrumentalization of religious potential for violence [5].

Professor Habermas, while acknowledging that data collected globally still supports secularization to some extent, characterizes contemporary secular societies as "post-secular," where religion continues to exert public influence and relevance. He suggests that the previous certainty that religion would disappear worldwide as societies modernized is no longer tenable.

In India, despite the growth of wisdom and modernity, religiosity's influence has not waned; if anything, it has increased. The Indian public sphere reflects a coexistence of the secular and the religious [6]. While the media are primarily secular, they often exhibit an underlying religious awareness in their concerns. Similarly, many voluntary associations in India organize themselves along religious lines, evident in their denominational names and organizational structures.

However, there is a contradiction in the Indian state's approach to religion. While it considers religion a private matter, it has allowed religious activity to persist in the public sphere. This official policy of equal recognition for all religions has, paradoxically, expanded the space for religious activities in the public sphere. Consequently, what has become predominant in the public sphere is not secular reasoning but religious celebrations rooted in rituals and superstitions [7].

Furthermore, the instrumentalization of religion for political purposes has increased in recent decades, posing significant challenges to a secular state and society. The need to reclaim the secular character of the public sphere is evident; otherwise, the prevailing religious character may encroach upon the functions of the state.

In study, the secularization paradox reflects a complex interplay between secularism and religiosity in the public sphere, particularly in countries like India. Balancing the principles of secularism and religious freedom remains a challenge, and addressing this paradox is crucial to maintaining a harmonious and democratic society.

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