

CHAPTER-V

ROLE OF RELIGION IN SOCIETY

Religion being an element of culture is inherent in many aspects of society. Religious beliefs inevitably affect areas such as politics, economic, and cultural values. Though many people believe that religion occurs only in church, temple, or other spiritual gathering, a closer look at religion and society reveals that the two are not separate at all, but intricately interconnected and inter-dependent.

Since the pre-historic time, faith and beliefs have always been part of the texture of human society. It is not possible to find a society in which religious issues have not been raised. It may even be claimed that human endeavour in the realm of religion and beliefs has been more strenuous and long-lasting than his effort in the areas of knowledge and art. In many historical events, religion can be seen to have dominated all kind of human relationships.

Religion is one of the most powerful, deeply felt, and influential forces in human society. It has shaped people's relationship with one another influencing family, community, economic and political life. Religious values motivated human action and religious groups organise their collective religious expression. Thus, religion is a significant aspect of social life and the social dimension is an important aspect of religion.

Recent developments and contemporary social, cultural and political transformations clearly show that religion is an important force today. There is an

increasing tendency towards religion in U.S.A. the middle east, east Asia, south America, the eastern Europe and numerous other places. Transnational religious networks are being formed and communication revolution enables religion to become a global reality in world's politics. Scholars and thinkers spend tremendous effort to analyze the nature and transformation of religion both in its traditional and modern forms.

Political scientist, anthropologist, psychologist and sociologist have been concerned with various aspects of religion. In last two decades sociologists and psychologists of religion spent considerable time and energy to the conceptualization and measurement of religious commitment.¹Hill and Hood² argue that religion deals with people's ultimate concern and provide both personal and social identity within the cosmic or metaphysical background. It is evident that religion is a multifaceted social reality and psychological experience. Clayton and Gladden³ argued that religiosity is primarily a commitment to an ideology and other so called dimensions are merely expression of the strength of that core commitment. In the history of sociological study of religion it is deliberately believed that religion has a social dimension or basis. Sociology of religion is a way of looking at religion that focused on the human (especially social) aspect of religious belief and practice.

Generally Sociologists are interested in studying religion for two reasons. First religion is very important aspect of human life. Religious practices are important part of many individual's life; religious values influence many people's action, and religious meaning helps them to interpret their experiences. Sociologists seek to understand the meaning of religion to believers themselves. Secondly, religion is an important object of sociological study because of its influence on

society and society's influence on it. From the earliest foundation of the discipline sociologists have sought to understand the larger society through examining religion and its influence on society.

Two issues have been central to the development of sociological theory since the classical foundation of the discipline. First there is the matter of social order; which is often passed as a question: how is society possible? The social order which is also referred as the Hobbesian problem of order is concerned with the social foundation of social stability and social cohesion; it involves an analysis of the complex relationship between consensus and constraint in social life. Sociologist has posited the existence of a common moral order, or system of values which bind people together into a community as an explanation of social integration. This harmonious system, rituals and communal practices are treated as the central fabric of social relations. They are thus an existential feature of all communal activity. Hence religion has been universally regarded as a central component of this value system. Religion is a social cement binding individual and social group into communal order.

Secondly, sociology examines the social meaning of collective life, the significance of social action and the form of knowledge and understanding, which are necessary feature of all social relations. Social meaning is an attempt to differentiate between the notion of 'action' and 'behaviour'. Social action involves knowledge and reflexivity on the part of the social actors, a process in which the social agent constantly reflects upon the nature of action and its meaningful quality. Human action is purposeful, involving reflexion upon the condition of action; it involves the choice of alternative means for achieving alternative ends. In this sense,

human action and interaction are open ended, contingent events, the outcomes of which can never be fully predicted or known. This uncertainty in human life is at least one sociological source of religious phenomena, because religious practices can be conceptualized as a means for structuring human relationships. Religion constructs, in the words of Peter Berger (1969) 'a sacred canopy' which by providing stable meaning organises and structures reality.

Religion is both individual and social. Even the most intensively subjective mystical experience is given meaning through socially available symbols and has value partly because of culturally established interpretation of such experiences. A personal religious experience such as conversion is voluntary and subjective, yet is situated in social circumstances and given meaning by social connection. When the individual communicates that experience, the symbol used to interpret it is socially determined.

Recently religion is increasingly recognised as having positive derivative social functions,⁴ for instance some denominations provide effective sponsored alternatives to welfare and other to health and service. According to Clifford Geertz (1973) the force of religion supporting social values rests, then, on the ability of its symbol to formulate a world in which those values, as well as opposing their realization, are fundamental ingredient.⁵ Thus, in this way sociologists of religion tried to interpret religion in terms its reflection on society.

5.1 Western View :

The works of three classical foundational scholars in this field (Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Max Weber) influence the study of religion from social perspective. According to them science could be applied to social issue in the same way scientist

had already applied it to the natural world. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, social science in general was a fledging field. Sociologists viewed their works in decisively moral terms, that truthful insight is a moral obligation. For all these three theorists, as we see, one of the first and most significant causalities of modernity was religion.

Emile Durkheim (1859-1917) a French sociologist had a very good emphasis on social dimension of religion. He argues that religion must provide a “collective effervescence” that celebrates the ideal social order. Whatever people believe is the correct and proper way to live; the established religion of that society will portray this order in the idealized form, as a divine order. Durkheim’s view of religion consist in making a distinction between the sacred and the profane. He says “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 a single moral community called a church are all those who adhere to them”⁶

According to Durkheim faith in Divine is really a faith in human society, that in order to attain meaning and salvation, one must attain social integration. Durkheim insisted on the idea that the universal sentiment of religious belief could not be mere illusion, but must have its roots in some real force in reality. Religious rituals gestate experiences of a reality beyond individual and enhance their sense of dependence on a higher power and Authority existing above them. In Durkheim’s view, the power is none other than society itself. Society provides the object to which our experience of Divinity corresponds. He suggests that any particular religion must be able to create a meaningful social order and instil this order within the individual.

Durkheim contends that Sacred is a feature of all religious phenomena. Furthermore he maintains that it is society that helps to define sacred and every society has sacred object and cultural, social forces are at work in defining sacred. Sacred is a socially influenced perception of either some sense of ultimate reality or truth or some divine being. The sacred is a person, an object, a principle, or a concept that transcends the self. Perception of the sacred invokes feelings of respect, reverence, devotion and may ideally serve an integrative function in human personality. Such respect or reverence may, but may not, involve the personal commitment to live a life that is congruent with principle or characteristic of that which is considered as sacred. In the context of religion, this sacred content is often defined through institutional mechanism such as ecclesiastical authority, sacred writing, and tradition. Such institutionalized sources of knowledge work together to provide religious adherents with a picture of what reality is like (e.g. whether god exist or not , the meaning of life, the essential nature of human life and the world) and recommend action that people should strive to undertake a life style that people should seek to embody to respond appropriately to this reality. Thus, religion is understood as a way of living or behaving.

Another criterion unique to religion is that both the means and methods in the search for the sacred are prescribed and supported by an identifiable group that is formed on the basis of the search itself. That is, religious group provides a socially established explanation that can justify a course of action; such legitimating support encourages the religious group to interpret the meaning of its existence and to make sense of its social order⁷. In Durkheim's opinion the function of religious rituals is to affirm the moral superiority of the community over the individual member so as to

maintain the community's solidarity as he defined religion as a unified system of beliefs and practices which unite the individual into one moral community. Hence it reflects that Durkheim treats religion as a cohesive force in society than in mystical or spiritual experience. Thus, he gave a functionalist account of religion which has direct reflection on society.

Durkheim says "it is not human nature which can assign the limits to our needs"⁸. As social animal we suffer no inherent regulation of our desires and thus they are inherently unlimited. Those things of social nature, such as money, fame, and power are inherently unlimited. Only society can set a limit on socially created desires which have been done historically through religion. Religion has provided a meaningful limit on what a person could or could not do. In other words religion rationalizes the human desires with a view to maintain social solidarity.

Durkheim saw religion as a vast symbolic system which made social life possible by expressing and maintaining the sentiments of values of the society. He specially analyzed the role of ceremonial and ritualistic institutions, and concluded that they are disciplinary, integrating, vitalizing, and euphoric forces.⁹

However natural is the involvement of sociology with religion. It was for a very different reason that the contours of religion come to be closely analyzed by classical sociologist and anthropologists. It was Karl Marx whose sharp observations on religiosity of human beings in society provoked intense and prolonged discussion on the role of religion in society. Karl Marx, who never considered himself a sociologist, conceived of religion as an epi- phenomenon which could disappear ultimately with the disappearance of 'false consciousness'. In his opinion it is "the heart of the heartless, the sigh of the oppressed". It works as the opiate for the

masses. What Marx wrote about the disappearance of religion from society found support from anthropologist J.G.Frazer (*The Golden bough*, 1944), who conceived of the intellectual progress of mankind as a passage from the age of magic to the age of religion and then to the age of science. But apart from this assumption of superstructure or epiphenomenon, religion in social life has not been so bitterly castigated by any other thinker as by Karl Marx, who felt that criticism of religion is the beginning of all criticism.

Marx's thought on religion appear throughout his work, but especially in his earlier work. For Marx economic occupied a central place, but never separately from existential concern. Human needs more than just material satisfaction; they also need spiritual sustenance, something to make life worth living. In the "*Economic and philosophic manuscript of 1844*", Marx sees a direct connection between the issue of philosophy and the issue of economic. Marx draws the existential concern about the essence of existence and the meaning of life, which determined our emotional and spiritual satisfaction. From economic Marx draws the issue of production and material satisfaction. Marx finds existential and material concern interconnected and both equally vital for human life. As Marx writes "with the increasing value of the world of things, commodities, proceed in direct proportion to the devaluation of the world of man"¹⁰. This basic observation arguably underlines all of Marx theory including his view on religion.

Marx sees religion as both specific and general theory of the world. That maintains the social order through morals, custom rituals, and belief about how the world ought to be. It connects the individual to establish social order; further more justified the established order as sacred and therefore inviolate. To rebel against

society is to rebel against the divine. Very similar to Durkheim, Marx accepts that established religion legitimates the established order of the society. However this is a type of religion for Marx is an oppressive type. The other is revolutionary. According to Marx, in oppressive type, religion not only legitimates the established order of the society, but in doing so, legitimates the domination and exploitation of one class over the others. In this context religion legitimates the class order. It teaches people not only to accept, but also celebrate their subordination and exploitation. In contrast revolutionary religion legitimates challenging, changing or replacing the established social order when it no longer serves the interest of the people. Hence it is observed that Marx tends to place the role of religion on society in legitimating the order of the society.

Rather than a general broadside and universal condemnation Marxian attack on religion seems particularly focused on that he criticizes the role of religion within particular social context, with particular social ramification. He does not condemn all religions simply for being religious. For Marx religion becomes oppressive to the extent that it presents a universal and eternal truth over which an omnipotent and implacable divinity presides. In this context the human can only submit to such formidable power and in turn, people can only submit to the authority of the real world. In this way idealism dominates social life, such that real lives of real people become irrelevant. Thus Marx advocates a materialist religion based on condition of real world as opposed to ideal religion based on the prerogatives of nonexistent deities.

Another great thinker in this field was Max Weber (1864-1920) who entirely agrees with Marx on the assertion that the view that economic is the basis of

material fulfilment and religion as the basis of spiritual fulfilment are inextricably connected and fundamentally social. Regarding his book 'Protestant Ethics', some sociologists see Weber as an idealist compared to materialist. For Marx since he argues that values and ideas lead to the social change. Regarding the power of ideas, Weber (1905\ 2002) states that all values and ideas are associated with modern society.

Weber developed a type of applied sociology, which looks at religion both as an institution of social order and as one of social change. In his great two works on religion: *The Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism* (1905\2002) and *Ancient Judaism* (1919\1967), Weber studies the conflict between forces of order and forces of change. In the protestant ethics, Weber argued that, forces of rationalization transform the old traditional forms of religion into a strict code of conduct for daily life in the form of asceticism (Puritanism), on the other hand in *Ancient Judaism* Weber examines the impact of Charismatic authority on social change which almost always appears in a religious form.

Max Weber (1905\2002) argued that the work ethics that was inspired by the protestant reformation helps to explain the rise of capitalism in western Europe and America, while it did not happen in some other places of the world. He believed that 'this worldly asceticism' associated with Calvinists doctrine of predestination stressed on diligence, austerity, thrift, punctuality, fulfilment of promise and fidelity to group interest which laid the foundation of modern capitalism. Thus, such a transformation is potential for religion leading to radical changes in values and behaviour implying a favourable outcome which is implicit in Weber's argument.

5.2 Indian view:

In India religion is understood as “Dharma”. First mentioned in the *Rig-Veda* and later elaborated in Gautama’s Dharmasastra (about 600 BC). Dharma is vaguely translated in English as ‘proper action’, ‘moral duty’, ‘and law of human nature’. Shared by most Indians and enduring with remarkable continuity, Dharma has greatly influenced ways of thinking, perception and categorizing experiences. As Kakar (1979) stated¹¹ “ in its social implication, dharma is an inherent force in human being which holds the individual and society together, or going one step further, the force which makes individual and society hold each other together”. The dharma of a person is believed to be contingent on four factors: a) desh (country, region) b) kala (period of history) c) Shrama (work, occupation) and d) guna (biomental attribute) .¹² It is both a process and mechanism of social integration to maintain harmonious relationship with the society and most social institutions seek their legitimacy in dharma rather than in conceptual agreement and obligation, as in the west. Transgression of dharma is presumed to be the root cause of all social unrest and conflict.

Another important aspect of Indian tradition is the indivisibility of cosmic and material self, of person and nature, and of person and society. In this scheme of thought, self is considered to be integral to the all-pervasive cosmic reality. Man, animal, plant, all are believed to share the same cosmic energy and are bound by the same cosmic principles. There is one universal law according to which all living and non living things function in harmony and natural rhythm. Establishing a perfect balance with nature and society is considered to be the ultimate goal of life. It is

contended that only an organismic and holistic approach can capture the order of the society.

According to Indian world view, as a social being, a person has no existence outside his network of relationship. Each one is related to the other in terms of innumerable relationships (based on cast, class, family, community even God) which define one's existence and shape one's ego-identity. The interrelationship between man and society is presumed to be complex and hierarchical, transcending the boundaries of the material world. The ego identity in this sense is considered to be a social construction, something which is contingent on one's life experiences and social background. Thus one's social self exist only in the mind of the person, not in reality. Self development lies in realizing this unreal existence and in promoting one's Dharma without an attachment.¹³ Thus, this view of Dharma provides 'ideal image' of life in Plato's sense and deals with prescriptive social behaviour for the sustenance of society. Hence it reflects that in Indian tradition role of religion in social life is tremendous.

5.3 Radhakrishnan's view:

S. Radhakrishnan, an eminent contemporary Indian philosopher, had a very significant emphasis on the role of religion in society. Almost all of his books contain a very clear description of role of religion on society.

Dharma, according to Radhakrishnan is a word of protean significance. It is derived from the root 'dhr' (to uphold, to sustain, to nourish). It is the norms which sustain the universe, the principle of a thing in virtue of which it is what it is. ¹⁴. Radhakrishnan defined Dharma as the whole duty of man in relation to the fourfold

purposes of life (dharma, artha, kama and moksa) by members of the four groups (caturvarna) and the four stages (caturasrama)¹⁵. By means of this threefold discipline the Hindu strives to reach his destiny, which is to change body into soul, to discover the world's potentiality for virtue and desire happiness from it. The four ends of life point to the different sides of human nature, the instinctive and the emotional, the economic, the intellectual and the ethical, and the spiritual.¹⁶ There is implanted in man's fundamental being a spiritual capacity. He becomes completely human only when his sensibility to spirit is awakened. The basic principle of Dharma is the realization of the dignity of the human spirit, which is the dwelling place of the supreme. As Radhakrishnan says "The knowledge that the supreme spirit dwells in the heart of every living creature is the abiding root of all dharma." He also says "Know this to be the essence of Dharma and then practise it; refrain from doing unto others what you will not have done unto yourself"¹⁷. We must look upon others as ourselves. According to Radhakrishnan virtues incumbent on all are the non- hatred to all beings in thought, word, and deed, good will and charity. Our social life must be directed so as to recognise effectively the right of each of its members to live work and grow in his life as a person. It is consecrated activity. The core of the individual life transcends the social forms, though he has need of them. Social life is a movement in our destiny, not the terminus; its state is always one of tension and movement. Radhakrishnan observed "the Hindu Dharma gives us a programme of the rules and regulations and permit their constant change. The rule of Dharma is the mortal flesh of immortal ideas, and so is mutable."¹⁸

S. Radhakrishnan emphasised greatly on the role of religion in society throughout his work. Though he was appreciating western culture of material

development , at the same time he emphasised the importance of spirituality as the guiding principle of civilization. Radhakrishnan believed that the true religion, however, agrees with the social idealist in affirming eternity of human life on this earth life as well as society. Love of man is basic to religion as worship of God. According to Radhakrishnan we must seek our evolution through life itself, by transforming it, by changing our self. To him religion is based on the discovery of the essential worth and dignity of the individual and his relation to higher world of reality as a result of which man cannot be satisfied by worldly success or triumph of materialistic science. As he exemplified “That he is capable of martyrdom for the ideals shows that he lives in and for a world of eternal realities”.¹⁹ Thus it reflects that according to Radhakrishnan religion is the discipline which touches the conscience and helps us to struggle with evils and sordidness, save us from greed, lust and hatred, release moral power, and impart courage in the enterprise of saving the world²⁰. As a discipline of mind, he holds that religion contains the key and essential means of coping with evils which threaten the existence of the civilized world. He pointed out that growth cannot be measured in terms of only material and technical advance but by creative changes of the mind and spirit of the people. Spiritual values like Love for truth and beauty, righteousness, justice and mercy, sympathy with the oppressed and belief in the brotherhood of man are the qualities which can save the world. Thus in this context religion is very relevant in social relation.

According to Radhakrishnan the purpose of religion is to restore the lost relationship between the individual and the eternal. Religion, in its etymological interpretation suggests that religion should be the binding force of society which

deepens the solidarity of human society in spite of the obvious shortcoming of historical forms. He says “it is not theology, but practice and discipline”²¹. Radhakrishnan observed the present crisis of society and felt the need of religion in society. As he observed “we are living in a world in which tragedy is the universal. There is a startling relaxing of traditions, of restraints and of established law and order. Ideas which until yesterday were regarded as inseparable from social decency and justice, which were able to direct and discipline conduct for centuries are swept away. The world is rent by misunderstanding, bitterness, and strife.”²². Present age is revolutionary because the rate of change is very rapid. Everywhere according to Radhakrishnan we hear the sound of breaking, changes of social, political, and economic institution, and changes in the dominance of belief and ideas, changes of fundamental categories of human mind. He says “it is a vast convulsion of society as a whole. It is not mere war, but a world revolution of which the war is a phase, a major alternation in the entire thought and structure of civilization, a crisis that goes to the very roots of our civilization.”²³ we live in a period of agonising strain, of grave anxiety, of manifold disillusionment. The world is in a trance. He says “Men of intelligence, sensitiveness and enterprise are convinced that there is something radically wrong with the present arrangements and institutions in regard to politics, economics and industry, and that we must get rid of them if we are to save humanity.”²⁴It is an age, incoherent in thought and indecisive in action. Our values are blurred, our thought is confused, our aims are wavering, and our future is uncertain. According to Radhakrishnan if we are to overcome the danger that threatens us, we must confront them fearlessly and take the necessary measure. The issue of religion in current situation is not in regard to doctrinal differences or ritual

disagreement, but it concerns the very existence of religion. The mind of the world requires to be pulled together and the present aimless stare of dementia should be replaced by collective rational purpose. As Radhakrishnan observed we need a philosophy, a direction and a hope, if the present state of indecision is not to lead us to despair. Belief may be difficult, but need for believing is inescapable. We are in search of a spiritual religion that is universally valid, vital, clear cut, one that has an understanding of the fresh sense of truth and the awakened social passion which are the prominent characteristics of the religious situation today. According to Radhakrishnan the severe intellectual honesty and the burning passion for social justice are the expression of spiritual sincerity. Our religion must give us energy of thought which does not try to use evasion with itself, an energy of will which gives us the strength to say that we believe and do what we say.

For Radhakrishnan exclusion of religion from society is the primary cause of anarchism. Religion operates as a fulcrum of social norms ideals. Our social life will change if there will be any disruption in religion because social organisation is the outer expression of the human will and desires. Social changes occur only for the establishment of harmony among men. Society is an interrelationship of the individuals and all individuals are guided by the moral law in which religion expresses itself. The endeavour of social organisation is to allow to men mundane things so natural to him within the framework of religion. True religion should not be confused with an organised church. It has no single teacher or book. It is something which has to grow from within the anvil of experience. This kind of religion is rather to be lived than believed.

The economic factor is not the sole reality of society. The will power of man can change the direction of the economic condition. The ideal of value which we cherish in one mind is the main factor for the change of any existing order. Wealth is for the sake of man but man is not only for the sake of wealth. As Radhakrishnan says, “The present economic order is unjust not because it makes man unhappy but because it makes them inhuman. Happiness is not the end of the man but dignity.²⁵”

According to Radhakrishnan the absence of true religion is the cause of the all round unrest and crisis in the present world. Radhakrishnan draws attention to this again and again in almost all his works and advocates a spiritual renewal, a true religious revival, which alone can save the world from the imminent disaster. He observed that the west inherited the emphasis on intellectual culture from the Greeks. The development of science and technology, and their ability to invent machines and control nature for the advantage of man have added to prestige of the intellect. The culture of the spirit has suffered set-back. Life has become aimless, a sport to passions, racial prejudice, national antagonisms. The neglected and suppressed spirit of man has been the cause of perpetual unrest, individual, social and national. This unrest is the sign of an unbalanced civilization which lays stress on one aspect of man and ignores the rest. Hence religion (Dharma) is the obligation to become a universal self; it is also the realization of the Brahman-Atman unity in a cultural as well as in an individual context. In this sense, Dharma comes to mean the ideal of the summum bonum of human life. In Radhakrishnan’s view, the ideals of civilization are generated and prescribed by Dharma.

Radhakrishnan was of the opinion that suppressed by the scientific intellectualism and starved by traditional religion, the spirit of modern man has

always been seeking some other means of satisfying its hunger as a result of which they are devising several ways to escape from the present confusion what Radhakrishnan calls “substitutes for Religion”. He says “The philosophical fashion of naturalism, Atheism, agnotism, scepticism, humanism and authoritarianism are obvious and easy, but they do not show an adequate appreciation of the natural profundity of the human soul.”²⁶ In spite of our ethical culture and rationalistic criticism according to Radhakrishnan we feel that our lives have lost the sense of direction, it is because we have secularized ourselves. He says “Human nature is measured in terms of intellection. We have not found our true selves, and we know that we have not. It is a self conscious age in which we live.”²⁷ He also says “our division is profound and no organised religion is able to restore the lost unity. We are waiting for a vital religion, a live philosophy, which will reconstruct the bases of conviction and devise a scheme of life which man can follow with self-respect and joy.”²⁸

A living society must have both the power of continuity and the power of change. In a civilized society progress and change are the life –blood of its activity. As Radhakrishnan says “nothing is so subversive to society as a blind adherence to outworn forms and obsolete habits which survive by mere inertia”²⁹. According to Radhakrishnan the Hindu view of religion makes room for essential change. We cannot identify Dharma with any specific set of institutions. It endures because it has root in human nature, and it will outlive any of its historical embodiments. Thus it reflects that the method of dharma is that of experimental change. We cannot transfer the beliefs and usage of one age to another. Moral ideas about social relation are not absolute, but relative to the needs and condition of different type of society.

Radhakrishnan observed “though Dharma is absolute, it has no absolute and timeless content. The only thing eternal about morality is man’s desire for the better. But time and circumstances determine what the ‘better’ is in each situation”³⁰. He maintains that undying timeless truths manifest themselves in ever-returning newness of life. The principle of dharma, the scale of value, is to be maintained in and through the new experiences. Only then it will possible to attain balanced and integral social progress. So it is clear that according to Radhakrishnan religion should have the power to cope with the situation as they come and he was liberal regarding the permeation of new forces in our society. He observed that if religion is to become an effective force in human affairs, it is to serve as the basis for the new world order, it must become inward and more universal, a flame which cleanses our inner being and so cleanses the world. Thus Radhakrishnan was very clear in his thought about the dynamic role of religion which can contribute towards the progress of society.

Radhakrishnan observed that world stands at the crossroad, faced by the two alternatives: organisation of world as one whole or periodic war. We make the society in which we live. We are the masters of the institution which has wrong turn and we must discover the necessary remedies for this sick society. According to Radhakrishnan the world will pass through a phase of growing pains before it reaches a new equilibrium. Even though there may be set backs and relapses, the human race is bound to move towards a saner world. But the pace is set by our courage and wisdom. Aim of religion according to Radhakrishnan is identification with the current of life and participation in its creative advance for the progress of society. Religion (Dharma) is a dynamic process, a renewed effort to the creative

impulse working through exceptional individual and seeking to uplift mankind to a new level. Meditation and worship are the means by which the mind, temper and attitude to life are refined.

Radhakrishnan observed that the serious distemper of our social life is due to the imbalance of relationship between social institution and world purpose. He says “nature has made many races with different languages, religions and social traditions, and has set man the task of creating order in the human world and discovering a way of life by which different groups can live peacefully together without resorting to force to settle their differences.”³¹. According to him the goal of world process is not intended to be a battle ground of warring nations, but a commonwealth of different groups co-operating in a constructive effort to achieve dignity, noble living and prosperity of all. He also observed that necessary condition for world union is available; only the will of man is lacking. According to him through the facilities of transport and communication the world has become neighbourhood. Science recognises no political and social boundaries and speaks a language which is understood by all. The impact of machine on man has shattered the pre-machine world of entirely independent state. The industrial revolution revolutionized the economic structure that we have in society with world economy which calls for a world order. He contends that Science reveals identifiable cosmic element as the basis of human life, Philosophy visualized a universal consciousness at the back of nature and humanity and Religion refers to our common spiritual struggle and aspiration. He observed that though we have increased production, combated disease, organised commerce and made man master of his environment; and yet the lord of the earth cannot live in safe. This war haunted, machine driven

civilization cannot be the last word of human striving. We will know that scientific organisation cannot be the fulfilment of the spirit of man. He says "The defeat of human by the material is the central weakness of our civilization"³² According to Radhakrishnan the fear which is the expression of man's rationality cannot be removed only by any change in outer circumstances. As he observed "we may abolish the horror of the industrial age, clean up the slums and diminish drunkenness; yet the spirit of man cannot by these measure alone gain anything in security."³³ There are sufferings which can be overcome by changes in the social order, and it is our duty to achieve a social revolution and remove these social wrongs of hunger, cold, illiteracy, sickness, unemployment. But we have to recognise that there are certain evils which are organic to the spiritual condition of man and so cannot be removed by social changes. Thus it is observed that according to Radhakrishnan crisis of present society lies on lack of spirituality of man. To him so long as man's life is limited to science and art, technical invention and social programmes, he is incomplete and not truly human, if we are insolent and base, unfair and unkind to one another, unhappy in personal relationship, and lacking in mutual understanding. He observed that the everlasting vagrancy of thought, the contemporary muddle of conflicting philosophies, the rival's ideologies which cut through national frontier and geographical divisions, are signs of spiritual homelessness³⁴. According to Radhakrishnan the unrest is in a sense sacred, for it is the confession of the failure to have a self sufficient humanism with no outlook beyond the world. We cannot find peace only through economic planning or good political arrangement. But only the pure in heart, by fostering the mystical accord of mind can establish peace, justice and life in society. He says "we suffer from

sickness of spirit. We must discover our roots in the eternal and regain faith in the transcendent truth which will order life, discipline discordant elements, and bring unity and purpose in to it”³⁵. Hence it reveals that only the material development cannot be regarded as totality of human development unless it ignores the spirituality of man which is associated with values for the sustaining of society.

Radhakrishnan was against the nationalism based on fanatical patriotism, blind will for power and unscrupulous opportunities. It is a case of one’s country against the rest in a never ending contest. The states become a monstrous slave driver and our inner lives are deadened. The more dead we are in our inner being, the more efficient are we for nationalist ends. According to Radhakrishnan our preference for the present order need not be confused with an inescapable law of the universe. The impulse for truth and compassion which is ingrained in human nature requires us to live as free individual in a friendly world. He observed that “if we are true patriots, our attachment will not be local, racial or national, but human. it will be a love of liberty for all, of independence, of peace and social happiness. We will fight not for our country but for civilization.”³⁶. Civilization is a way of life, movement of the human spirit. Basis of civilization lies not in any biological unity of race, or in political and economic arrangements, but in the values that create and sustain them. According to him politico-economic structure is the frame work which gives expression to the passionate loyalty and allegiance of the people to the vision and values of life which they accept. Radhakrishnan says “every civilization is the expression of a religion, for religion signifies faith in absolute values and a way of life to realize them.”³⁷ Thus Religious faith gives us the passion to preserve the values in life and in society.

Nothing is perhaps the greater need of the hour than a sense of real understanding amongst the various religions of the world. True to the tradition of Indian philosopher and saints, Radhakrishnan has always struck a note of an inner harmony and unity existing among religions. According to him, differences between religions are only outward. In their essence they are all one, because all of them are the relative expressions of the same basic truth. As Radhakrishnan observes, “The different creeds are the historical formulations of the formless truth. While the treasure is one and inviolable, the earthen vessel that contains it takes the shape and colour of its time and environment.”³⁸ Religion is a transforming experience. True religion stands for the fellowship of all faiths. A man may subscribe to all the tenets of his theology and perform the elaborate rituals ordained, yet if he is consistently dishonest, completely selfish and wholly unrepentant, his religion is a fraud. True religion expresses itself in harmony, balance and perfect agreement between body and soul. It furthers the evolution of man into his divine stature, develops increased awareness and integrity of understanding. Thus it brings about a better, deeper and more enduring adjustment in life. In this sense religion is the binding force of humanity

According to Radhakrishnan the aim of religion is to take the natural life of man and subject it to control without unduly interfering with its largess. It has two sides: the social and the individual, the *Varna dharma*, which deals with the duties assigned to men’s position in society as decided by their character (*guna*) and function (*karma*); the *asrama dharma*, which deals with the duties relevant to the stages of life, youth, manhood, or old age.³⁹ Man is not only himself, but is in solidarity with all of his kind. According to Radhakrishnan two principles which

must govern all group life are the free and unfettered development of the individual and the healthy growth of society. To him individual and society are interdependent, as he says “the sound development of the individual is the best condition for the growth of the society and a healthy condition of the society is the best condition for the growth of the individual”.⁴⁰

According to Radhakrishnan religious life is a rhythm of withdrawal and return: withdrawal into individual solitariness, which expresses the need for thought and contemplation, and return to the life of society. Both these aspects, the individual and the social, are essential. The individual must never submit to that total annexation by society or by any of the numerous intermediate groups. He observed that “the strength of the society is derived from that of forceful individual. If individuality is lost, all is lost. Modern man, without losing their social consciousness, must discover within himself a source of individual initiative sufficiently strong to cope with social despotisms”.⁴¹

Thus according to Radhakrishnan true religion is a simple one, that is free from the shackles of creeds, dogmatic sentiment or supernatural elements. It affirms the reality of the spirit that broods over the time and space. He says “He that does good is of God. To do justly, to love beauty, and to walk humbly with the spirit of truth is the highest religion”.⁴² It is the universal religion which is not confined to any race or climate. He also says that “whenever the soul comes to itself, in any land or any racial boundaries, whenever it centres down in its inward deeps, whenever it sensitively responds to the currents of deeper life that surround it, it finds its true nature and lives joyously, thrillingly, in the life of spirit. Through the birth of one whose consciousness is absorbed in the supreme spirit, the infinite ocean of wisdom

and bliss, the family become pure, the mother is of fulfilled desire and the earth gets sanctified”⁴³. Hence religion is an understanding of the inner self and the power of self can restore the order of the society as a whole.

Radhakrishnan emphasised greatly on the spiritual unity of mankind. According to him all the spiritual data of the world of mankind, have their foundation in the recognition of the real, spiritual unity of mankind, a unity to which the individual belongs in a stratum of his nature lying more deeply than that in which he belongs to any empirical community. To him if we are centred in the spiritual reality, we shall be free from the greed and fear which are the bases of our society which is anarchic and competitive. Furthermore he also emphasised that to change it to a human community in which every one’s physical and psychological advance is possible, we have to enlarge our consciousness, increase our awareness, recognise life’s purpose and accept it in our works which require the purgation of the self. He says “we must free the consciousness from the distortion of greed and fear, from the illusion of egotism; and when we possess purity and single – heartedness, we get changed. We become what we see, are re-natured, understand the character and purpose of the world, and are able to live in this world as God wishes us to live.”⁴⁴ Thus Radhakrishnan in his interpretation of religion emphasised that purpose of religion is the evolution of human life, the re-making of man. As he says “we cannot hope to change human life and society without a change of human nature.”⁴⁵

Hence Radhakrishnan affirms that we need today a profound change in man’s way of life which can secure the future of this civilization. It is the change of response to the meaningful pattern we discern in history. It is the submission of the

self to reality. It is the practice of religion which affirms that things spiritual are personal, and that we have to reflect them in our lives, which require us to withdraw from the world's concern to find the real, and return to the world of history with renewed energy and certitude. He says "we suffer from sickness of spirit. We must discover our roots in the eternal and regain faith in the transcendent truth which will order life, discipline discordant elements, and bring unity and purpose into it."⁴⁶

According to Radhakrishnan all religions proclaim as their goal the unification of humanity. Globally we are united in terms of physical and geographical perspective but our mind and heart are yet to be prepared for the acceptance of this oneness of humanity. As he says "A new orientation is required to build a unity out of the division of races and peoples out of the rivalries of nations and conflicts of religions. This requires a courageous effort and a radical change in our outlook"⁴⁷ Radhakrishnan observes that man cannot live and work without the hope that humanity is really capable of rising to a higher plane. He emphasises that there exist bonds as well as barriers between individuals and nations. But mankind's highest destiny is to become more human, more spiritual, and more capable of human sympathetic understanding which rises strong gradually in the hearts of mankind. Human societies like the human beings live by faith and die when faith disappears. He says "if our society is to recover its health, it must regain its faith. Our society is not sick beyond saving for it suffers from divided loyalties, from conflicting urges, from alternating moods of exaltation and despair. This condition of anguish is our reason for hope. We need a faith which will assert the power of spirit over things and find significance in a world in which science and organization seems to have lost their relationship to traditional values"⁴⁸

Radhakrishnan points out that presently religions are inadequate in moulding the social relations due to disparity between outward allegiance and inward betrayal among the people. Religion is confused with the mechanical participation in the rites or passive acquiescence in the dogmas. Many people observed the forms of religion, the gesture of faith, the conventions of piety, but they do not model their lives on the precepts they profess. He says “we keep up the forms of religion, which seem to be of the nature of play-acting”⁴⁹. According to Radhakrishnan religion insists on behavior more than on belief. We must live religion in truth and deed and not merely profess it in words. He observed “we believe that our faith is widespread and its adherence are conforming their acts to the ideals they profess, then the conclusion is inevitable that religion is invaluable as a means for the improvement of the individual and society.”⁵⁰ Hence for religion, in order to be an effective force in social relation, there should be no difference between our belief and our behavior. Belief and behavior must go together.

Radhakrishnan was against the assumption that spiritual life is different from the ordinary social life. We cannot draw a sharp line of distinction between religion and social life. Social organisation rests ultimately on a series of decisions taken by human beings as to the manner in which they and their followers shall live. These decisions are the matter of spiritual discernment which can be implemented by improving the technical knowledge and social sense. Under the concept of Dharma, Radhakrishnan brings the forms and activities which shape and sustain human life. We have diverse interests, various desires, conflicting needs, which grow and change in the growing. To round them off into a whole is the purpose of religion. He says “A stable social order is the ground work of civilised life. Religion is social

cement, a way in which men express their aspiration and find solace for their frustration.”⁵¹ According to Radhakrishnan we seek religion as a defence of the established order. All religion is conformist in spirit and tries to appease those who hold power in the world. Religion insists on compassion to the suffering. Referring to Christianity which asks us to do good to them that hate us and despitefully use us, Radhakrishnan says “there is nothing special in loving those who love us or who are themselves lovable. Jesus asks to love our enemies in the hope of reawakening their humanness, their potential capacity for love”⁵²

Radhakrishnan observed that religion is generally condemned as imposture kept alive by its alliance with vested interest. Religions have certitude to the promotion of culture, art, and spiritual life; but they have also been vitiated by dogmatism and fanaticism, by cruelty and intolerance and by intellectual dishonesty of their adherents. Those who revolt against these practices are the truly religious people as Radhakrishnan believed. We deem ourselves religious even when we plan deliberately the destruction of innocent millions. No religion has a claim to our allegiance if it does not produce a tradition of humanity and social responsibility. Thus, it is evident that Radhakrishnan emphasised more on social aspect of religion which can be a cementing factor of society and foster social unity.

Hence on the basis of above discussion it may be said that religion plays a pivotal role in society as well as in social relations. Both from Indian and western perspectives religion is treated as a part of human society. It an integral part of society. In west social aspect of religion is treated from materialistic perspective of human life, on the other hand in India social aspect is look at from wholly idealistic

perspective of life. Religion primarily is concerned with enhancing and fostering values among the individuals of the society which bind society together.

Though religion is a highly personal thing, yet it has a social aspect and social role to play. It has been a powerful agency in society and performed many important social functions. Arnold. W. Green⁵³ mentioned three universal functions of religion.

1. It rationalizes and makes bearable individual sufferings in the known world.
2. It enhances self- importance
3. It helps to knit the social values of a society into a cohesive whole.

Religion explains individual sufferings. Man does not live by knowledge alone. He is an emotional creature as well. Religion serves to sooth the emotions of man in times of his sufferings and disappointment and contributes to the integration of his personality. In this world man often suffers disappointment and frustration even in the midst of all hopes and achievements. When human hopes are blighted, when all that was planned and striven for has been swept away, man naturally wants something to console and compensate. The fortitude and equanimity with which religious people are known to endure the most colossal misfortune and sufferings constitute one of the principal exhibits of the power of religious beliefs and practices. Faith in God compensates man and sustains his interests in life and makes it bearable. In this way religion gives release from sorrow and fear.

Religion enhances self- importance and expands one's self to infinite proportions. Man unites himself with the infinite and feels ennobled. Through unity

with infinite the self is made majestic and triumphant. Man considers himself the noblest work of God with whom he shall be united and his self thus becomes grand and luminous. Religion assures man a grater reward in the afterlife as a compensation for worldly failures. Such kind of assurance drains off much discontent and members are encouraged to continue to play their part in society.

Religion is a source of social cohesion. The primary requirement of the society is the common possession of social values by which individuals control the action of self and others through which society is perpetuated. These social values are never scientifically demonstrated but emanate from religious faith. Religion is the foundation upon which these values rest. It is religion that asks man to renounce unsocial activities and requires him to accept limitations upon his want and desires. Love and service are two great teachings of religion. All religions have preached them. Religion has always generated a sense of belongingness in society. The great socializing value of religion is that it is used as a means of control in society and maintains discipline in society. Religion is the central element in the life of civilization. The impulse that makes civilization is a kind of spiritual restlessness seeking to fashion the structure of life that will satisfy the craving of human beings.

Religion perform as an agency of social control. Religions support the folkways and custom by placing the powerful sanctions of the supernatural behind them. They make certain acts not only offences against society but against God as well. Disobedience brings condemnation from the spiritual forces. In its positive forms religion provides a model for living. It upholds certain ideals and values. The believer imbibes these ideals and values in his life.

Though religion is the supremely integrating force in human society, but at the same time it has also proved as a catastrophic force in society. It has also negative effect on society. Marx called religion 'the opiate of the masses' which has kept them in degrading subjection. It is observed that history of religion is mostly the history of persecution. Wars have fought in the name of religion. Often progress has been stopped in the name of religion. It has degenerated in dogmatism and bigotry denying freedom of thought. In the history of human civilization it is observed that religion plays a very important role in diminishing the integration of society. Religious fanaticism leads to many riots and ethnic violence which have been experienced by the world.

In spite of the many dysfunction of religion, its persistence throughout the ages is a proof of its value. It has been the propagator of basic values and ethical codes which provide cohesion to society and integration to personality. Sumner and Keller summarized their verdict on religion in the following words "if one looks dispassionately into the charges against religion and admits all of them, either wholly or in some degree, and then surveys and acknowledges the costs in capital, effort, and pain that religious systems have imposed cold-bloodedly and offensively upon mankind, he is yet, in the end, constrained to believe that the article was worth the cost. Exceedingly expensive, it has also been incomparably effective.

In modern society the need of religion is no less paramount. As long as suffering exists in this world, the value and essence of religion is necessary. There is much strain in modern life. The cases of suicide, violence and crime are increasing at a very alarming level. Science cannot solve all the problems of modern life. If people of the society become too matter- of-fact in its attitude, too calculating in its

behaviour, too sophisticated in its value, then the order of the society becomes imbalanced. In order to make our lives more meaningful and purposeful, we will have to depend on some moral or spiritual truth. We will have to believe in some ultimate reality whether we call it God or a creature, life giving force or vital energy or spirit of human being. Integrated personality can be developed only out of the fusion of scientific temper, philosophical enquiry and faith in the unseen.

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