

CHAPTER-II

APPROACHES TO RELIGIOUS STUDY

In the history of religious study, Religion has been studied from different perspectives. Generally it is observed that religion has been coterminous with human history. In nearly all societies-primitive, agrarian and industrial- religion has been present in one form or other. Scientific study of religion begins in 19th century in which Max Muller played very vital role in this regard. Recently religion has been studied in its multidisciplinary aspect. With regard to the theoretical formulation of religion, there are generally different approaches to study of religion:

2.1 Anthropological approach

2.2 Psychological approach

2.3 Sociological approach

2.4 Phenomenological approach

2.5 Spiritual Approach of Radhakrishnan

2.1 Anthropological approach:

The religious history of mankind begins from earliest time. Evidence suggests that pre-historic human believed in an afterlife. As Martin Forward observed that red ochre was used to stain bones in some Neanderthal burials ground

about 150,000 years ago, probably for ritual purpose.¹ Anthropological study of religion replaced the speculative approaches of religion since 19th century. Anthropological study brought to light especially with regard to the primitive cultures, and also to the modern societies, which have to be proved very helpful in working out the genesis of religious belief and custom.

Religion is one of the most important and intricate aspects of culture as studied by anthropologist. Religion is basic to every human society, and significantly interacts with other cultural institution and social structure. Specific and universal definitions of religion notwithstanding, anthropologist have developed significant theories. Classified according to theoretical perspective, anthropologist has examined religion structurally, psychologically, socially, functionally, and symbolically. Anthropological theories of religion are diverse. They are based variously on ideas of human social structure, emotion, or cognition. Most of the theory concentrates on particular paradigm of human experience and some combine them. A few theories are indigenous to ethnography, but many have been borrowed. In the history of anthropological study of religion we get different types of theories from different aspects of human experience. The theories which we come across in anthropological study of religion are-

1. Evolutionist
2. Diffusionist
3. Psychoanalytic
4. Historical –particularism
5. Functionalist (societal)
6. Functionalist (individual)

7. Structuralist

8. Interpretivist

9. Constructivist

Each theoretical paradigm offers, given the particular question it poses, a distinct way to approach and understand the human experience. The anthropology of religion has often centred on that socio-cultural element that could be identified as “religious”: myths, ritual, magic, belief about God and divine beings, taboos and symbols.

Regardless of theoretical conceptualization of anthropological study of religion there is evident within the body of contributor an indebtedness to the constituency and the theories of religion developed by them, Theories of Edward B. Tylor, Herbert Spencer, and Sir James Frazer helped to lay the foundation as an anthropological fore-runner and often new theories are predicated on the foundation cemented on the past. Anthropological study of religion had their beginning in late 19th century with the seminal works of Max Muller, W. Robertson Smith, Edward B. Tylor, and James Frazer². These scholars of course, were not the first to take an interest in the comparative study of religion nor were they the first to speculate on the religion of pre-literate and tribal people. They were only first to suggest that tribal religion might be amenable to study the rules of scientific method and the first to posit specific methodological procedure for the comparative analysis of religious belief and practice.

Edward B Tylor (1832-1917) in his classical works “Primitive Culture” mentioned that “animism” is the point of departure for the birth and development of

religion. The term animism is sometimes used loosely alike for the belief that external things possess of a life akin to human soul. Tylor borrowed the term from a German chemist, George Ernest Stahl(1660-1734) according to whom all living things derived from “anima”, “soul” or “mind”³. Tylor located “animism “in the current atmosphere of evolution, and employed it to depict the culture of progress of humankind from lower to higher form. In fact animism is the ground work of the philosophy of religion, from that of savage up to that of civilized man. According to Tylor animism divides into two great dogmas, forming part of one consistent doctrine; first concerning soul of the individual creature which is capable of continued existence after the death and secondly other spirit, which can go upward to the rank of powerful deities ⁴.Galloway observed the transformation of general animistic belief into full-fledged spiritism. As he says “ The essential point was the liberation of “bound soul “, in other words, gradual loosening of the tie which linked the soul to a particular object or local habitation” ⁵. Thus animism, in its full development, includes belief in soul and in a future state in controlling deities and subordinate spirit which is resulting in some kind of active worship. Spiritism marks an advance on mere animism which implies a development of the idea of soul. Spiritism is a stage through which religion everywhere has passed.

Religious significance of animism is that man selects the object for its religious function by endowing it with a soul like his own. The evidence which bears on animistic nature worship shows that it was essentially connected with a belief in souls operating in the things which attracted man’s curiosity and wonder or excited his fear.

Fetishism is an outcome and expression of fully articulated spiritism. The word “fetish” (which comes from the Portuguese “feticio”; and this in turn from Latin factitious, “artificial “and facere “to make”) is an object believed to have supernatural power. Essentially fetishism is the attribution of inherent value or power to an object. The concept of *fetishism* was made known by Charles de Brosses Circea in 1757. Later Agust Comte used the concept to apply an evolutionary theory of religion, he believed that fetishism is the earliest form of polytheistic and monotheistic religions.

Fetish may be stone, a claw or even a detached bit of human body which is believed to be having mysterious power which is due to the presence of a spirit within it. The background of fetishism is always a well-developed spiritism. Fetish worship is a part of man to control the spirit for his own purpose. Regarding the relationship between fetish and its spirit Galloway observed “Between the fetish and its spirit there is, however no inner connection: the spirit is capriciously present in the object and it may desert it when the things will lose an its entire magic efficacy”⁶. Fetishism signifies the pre-ponderance of the magical element in religion which denotes the diversion of an existing religion in to wrong lines.

F. Max Muller in his third course of Gifford lecture ⁷ shows the historical manifestation of natural religion founded upon the nature of man; more precisely, upon the discovery of the some divine or infinite character within man, beyond the material body. Through the comparative study of conception of soul and the afterlife, Muller considers instances of ancestor worship as likely the earliest indication of human kind’s recognition of something not merely human , something not far removed from the divine, in man.

Sir James Frazer (1854-1941) was a Scottish social anthropologist who influences the early stages of the modern studies of mythology and comparative religion. His famous book “The Golden Bough” (1890)⁸ reveals and details similar magical and religious beliefs across the globe. According to Frazer human beliefs progressed through three stages: primitive magic replaced by religion, in turn replaced by science. Frazer maintains that the object of his work is to discuss the question of most general interest which is concerned with the gradual evolution of human thought from savagery to civilization. In this respect Frazer posits a series of phase or stages of human intellectual development and then explains magic, religion and science in an anthropological way.

W. Robertson Smith led the theory of sacrifice through his study of animal sacrifice among the ancient Arabs. According to Smith the original motive of sacrifice is to make an effort at communion among the members of the group and between them and their God.⁹ He affirms that the communion among the members of the group is effected through the sacrificial meal. Sacrifice was originally a gift to god to secure their favour or to minimize their hostility. According to Smith eating of sacrificial meal leads to establish a common bond among themselves. A recent contribution to the theories of sacrifice has been made by Evan-Pritchard in his “Nuer Religion” (1956). According to Pritchard sacrifice is a gift to God, designed to get rid of some danger of misfortune, usually sickness.

Max Muller, Smith, Tylor, and Frazer formulations of anthropological theory of religion have been characterized as “individualistic” by Evan-Pritchard¹⁰. They were primarily interested in human thought. All of them sought to understand religious belief and practice at its most fundamental and basic level. They tried to

define religion from evolutionary perspective and made valuable contribution to the study of religion and can profitably be read today.

But in due course of time evolutionistic explanation of religion faced severe opposition from the Diffusionist. Evolutionism is no longer an article of faith among the anthropologist. The Scottish anthropologist Andrew Lang (1844-1912) discovered a kind of Urmonotheismus (primordial monotheism) among various primitive tribes on the ground that they also conceived of a High God as the creator of the universe.¹¹ The anti-evolutionism of the Roman catholic scholar is known as degraation theory, according to which the most primitive man was in possession of a revolution of High god, but later this degraded itself into idol worship. The German ethnologist Wilhelm Schmidt (1868-1954) brought forward concrete evidence for a primitive monotheistic revelation from his study of various primitive societies in South America, Africa and Islands in the Indian ocean.¹²

Totemism is the key element of the study in the development of 19th and early 20th century's theories of religion, especially for the thinker like Emile Durkheim. The word Totemism is derived from the root "oode" (ojibwe language) which referred to something's kinship related. The totem is usually an animal or other natural figure that spiritually represents a group of related people such as clan. A totem is stipulated ancestor of a group of people. Totem supports the larger group than the individual person.

Totemism is a phenomenon which in its religious aspect is allied to ancestor worship, and has been found in various parts of the world e.g.-North America, Africa and Australia. The totem is a species of animal, and occasionally a species of plant, whose life is conceived to be bound up with the life of the tribe, and to be

closely linked with the wellbeing of the social whole¹³. The totem which in some cases is an individual animal is the visible embodiment of the unity of the society, and its life is mysteriously connected with that of all the members of the society. Animism and spiritualism are individualistic in their origin; they are developed out of the experience of individual, but the explanation of totem is the felt unity of the group that kinship of blood and life of which it is the visible token and guarantee. The religious significance of totem implies the social significance of religion.

Emile Durkheim identifies the social group with spiritual totem in Australian aboriginal tribe. He theorized that all human religious expression was intrinsically founded in the relationship to a group. He used Totemism as a case of “the simplest and most primitive religion that observation can make known to us”¹⁴. Durkheim used his analysis of Totemism to demonstrate the social origin of religion and the underlying unity of religious, philosophical and scientific thought. Totemism was not just a way of thinking but also of acting and telling, organised around the separation of the domain of “sacred” and “profane” that for Durkheim constitute the essence of religion itself”. He saw Totemism as the original form of religion. Contemporary Anthropologist Claude Levi Strauss in his book “Totemism today”¹⁵ argued that totems are chosen arbitrarily for the sole purpose of making the physical world a comprehensive and coherent classificatory system.

2.2 Psychological approach to religion

Psychological approach to religion is a result of scientific study of religion initiated in the last part of 18th century and early part of 19th century. Primary focus

of psychological approach to religion is the way in which religion operates in the mind of the individual. It is basically based on science. Psychological approach to religion is the psychological study of religious experience, belief, and activities. It aims to inform understanding of religion through science. In last century scholars have conceptualized religion as a way of living, rather than merely a belief system or institution. The study of religion from psychological perspective was inaugurated almost from the beginning of psychology's advent as a modern scientific field of enquiry. Almost all the religious philosophers of the world recognized that the source of religion basically a psychological one. What are the motives, which prompted man to be religious? What were the feelings, impulses, and ideas which conspired to bring about in human mind the consciousness of religion? These are the fundamental questions of psychological study of religion.

James Forsyth¹⁶ in his book "Psychological Theories of Religion" surveys the major theorists in the psychology of religion such as W. James, Freud, C.G Jung, Eric Fromm, Gordon Allport, Abraham Maslow, who are all seminal thinkers in this field.

William James (1842-1910) was the founder of psychological study of religion. In the history of psychological study of religion, influences of James endure still modern time. His "Varieties of Religious Experience" (1902) is considered to be the classic work in the field of psychological study of religion. At the outset of this seminal work James acknowledged the difficulties of providing an all-encompassing definition of religion claiming that unified conception of religion might be "things more misleading than enlightening"². He offered the definition of

religion in this way “the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude..... In relation to whatever they may consider divine”¹⁷

This definition indicates that religion does not require faith in a transcendent, monotheistic God, and that it does not mandate the social dimension of religious community. James distinguishes between “healthy-mindedness” and the “sick soul” as two extreme types of religious consciousness, the former being characterized by optimistic joy and the latter by a morbid pessimism. In between these extremes are “the divided self” and the stable, well-integrated believer. James develops lengthy analyses of religious conversion, saintliness, and mysticism. In going beyond these, he considers what philosophy might contribute to establishing “over-beliefs” regarding the existence and nature of the divine. He critically considers traditional arguments for God—the cosmological argument, the argument from design, the moral argument, and the argument from popular consensus—finding none of them particularly cogent, but exhibiting the most respect for the argument from design. He likewise weighs in the balance and finds wanting arguments for metaphysical and moral divine attributes, finding the latter of more pragmatic relevance to human values, choices, and behaviour than the former. In his final lecture, he draws conclusions regarding three beliefs that experience finds in religions in general: (1) that our sensible world is part of and derives its significance from a greater spiritual order; (2) that our purpose is fulfilled by achieving harmonious union with it; and (3) that prayer and spiritual communion are efficacious. Furthermore, religions typically involve two psychological qualities in their believers: (1) an energetic zest for living; and (2) a sense of security, love, and peace. Given that thought and

feeling both determine conduct, James thinks that different religions are similar in feeling and conduct, their doctrines being more variable, but less essential. Most generally, these doctrines attempt to diagnose a fundamental uneasiness about our natural state and to prescribe a solution whereby we might be saved.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) was a famous psychologist who contributed lots towards the psychological study of religion. Throughout his life Freud endeavours to understand religion and spirituality. He wrote several books devoted to psychological study of religion. Totem and Taboo (1913), the Future of illusion (1927), Civilization and Discontent (1930), and Moses and Monotheism (1938) are the most significant contribution of Freud in this field. According to Freud religion is an expression of underlying psychological neurosis and distress, deeply unconscious impulse reflecting human's buried fears and anxieties. At various points he explores the origin of indigenous clan religion. His approach to religion is quite different from Tylor and Frazer. Freud attributed the origin of religion to emotion such as hatred, fear, and jealousy. This emotion is directed to towards a father figure in the clan from the son who is denied sexual access to the females. This emotion eventually drives the son to murder the father resulting in the most important emotion in the forming of the totem, guilt. In short Freud attributed totem religion to be the result of extreme emotion, rash action and the resulting guilt.

In his writing, he suggested that religion an attempt to control the Oedipus Complex, a means of giving structure to social group, wish fulfilment, an infantile attempt to control the outside world. In "Totem and Taboo" he gave explanation of

genesis of religion in which he applied the idea of the Oedipus complex and postulated its emergence in the primordial stages of human development.

Freud laid the foundation of psychoanalysis and has had a tremendous influence on modern culture, in his broad theories; he attempted to explain about how we are influenced by the past event and by things outside our conscious awareness. He says “religion is an illusion and it derives its strength from the fact that it falls in which our instinctual desire”¹⁸. He also admitted 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. Freud viewed religion as originating in child’s relationship to the father, hence in many cultures God is viewed as a Heavenly father. In this way Freud reflects an attempt to fulfil our desire or wishes as an illusion.

Carl Jung’s (1875-1961) contribution towards the psychological study of religion is significant as he adopted a different posture, which is more sympathetic to religion and more concern with positive appreciation of religious symbolism. Jung considered the question of existence of God to be unanswerable by the psychologist and adopted a kind of agnosticism. He viewed all religion as collective mythology. Jung proposed two kinds of unconscious: personal and collective. Personal unconscious or (shadow) includes those things about ourselves that we would like to forget. The collective unconscious refers to event that we all share, by virtue of having common heritage (humanity). The collective unconscious which is the repository of human experience and which contains “archetypes”. For example, the

image “archetype” of a mystic hero is something that is present in all culture. Archetype of such type according to Jung viewed as God, because they are outside the individual ego.¹⁹

Recent development of philosophy of religion as well as comparative religion has furnished enough knowledge of common features as well as the differences between religions, and also drawn attention to empirical law and observed uniformities in the process of religious development. According to Galloway mind is the formative factor in bringing the consciousness of religion. He observed “in natural science you can work out your problem without the help of psychology, but in religion you cannot do so. Religious phenomena are essentially reactions of the mind upon the experienced world, and their specific character is not due to the material averment, but to the human conscious”²⁰. Therefore if we are to reach a general conception of nature and meaning of religion through the study of its development, we must regard that development in the first instance as a continuous expression of human mind seeking satisfaction for its needs. Religious consciousness arises due to interaction of mind with the environment. In every form of religion man wants to make a relationship with some higher power. The impulse to form this relationship and to secure satisfaction through it, proceeds from a felt need; which has been latent in human nature and this felt need quickens its utterance when it gets stimuli from the environment. This felt need is the universal phenomenon of human nature which is the secret of universality of religion. It reveals that phenomenon of religion is determined by the psychological constitution of human being.

Anthropological study of religion reveals that the psychical nature of man is responsible for religious phenomena. Eminent anthropologist E.B Tylor conception of animism as well as soul theory reflects basically a psychological mechanism regarding the imposing of spirit on an object. As he observed “there has arisen an intellectual product whose very existence is of the deepest significance, a “psychology” which has no longer anything to do with “soul”²¹. There is an impulse of primitive man to treat the things which impress and attract him in terms of will as well as feelings.

In this respect it is worthwhile to analyze the elements involved in the psychical life in order to determine more closely the ways in which these elements respectively influence the religious consciousness. This division of psychological element goes back to Greek thinker, Plato’s theory of ideal state based on the existence of “parts” in the soul and Aristotle idea of aspects of soul life, which are separable only in conceptual thinking. This reveals the different constituents of human psychology. Galloway says “the outcome of Aristotelian psychology was the broad distinction between the appetite and the rational aspect of the soul as we might say, between the conative and intellective functions. The three fold division into feeling, thought and will was first proposed by Tetens (1736-1807) and is received general approval of Kant”²². It reveals that psychical element which is involved in arousing religious consciousness in human mind are cognitive, volitional, and feelings. Though these elements are separated apparently, they work together in order to give rise to the conception of religion in human mind.

In the history of psychological study of religion, feeling in the form of fear, has frequently been regarded as the impelling force which aroused the consciousness of religion. In modern period David Hume laid stress on “fear” as the motive to religious act. Thomas Hobbs, one of the prominent philosophers of 18th century also recognizes fear as the natural seed of religion. Hobbes says “ this fear of things invisible, is the natural seed of that, which everyone in himself calleth religion; and in them that worship, or fear that power otherwise than they do, superstition”²³. There was some philosophers who tried to trace the development of religion from the “feelings of absolute dependence”. Due to consciousness of limitation of human being, they naturally resort to some kind of absolute reality. Ernest Cassirer says “according to Schleiermacher religion has arisen from ‘feelings of absolute dependence on the divine’. In the “Golden Bough” J.G Frazer adopted this thesis”²⁴. But feelings of dependence cannot be a purely negative attitude, it must be sustained by an interest, and this implies the presence of a volitional element. Therefor we can say that though feelings of fear and feelings of absolute dependence may be a cause from which we can trace the development of religion, but it is not certainly the sufficient reason of religion. Feelings in the form of emotion of fear and absolute dependence are only a partial explanation of religion. Galloway critically observed “the feelings of dependence, however essential to religion, would not by itself constitute a religious attitude any more than feelings of bodily comfort would do so. To become religious, feelings must be qualified by a cognitive element, a belief in a power or powers on whom individual depend.”²⁵ Feelings are confined only to impulsive emotional reaction, to manifestation of fear, awe, and joy. But a feeling draws definiteness of its appeal from its connection with desire.

We can observe that feeling depends for its intensity and distinctness upon the disposition of will. Apart from purposive life feelings would lose its practical value. Paul Tillich rightly observed “religion, if banned to the realm of mere feeling’s, has ceased to be dangerous for any rational and practical human enterprise.”²⁶

Hence, however central and essential feeling may be in religion, it depends for its religious significance on its relation to other constituent, and it grows in purity and ranged as an element in the concrete development of the spirit of religion.

It is observed, in the history of religious study that feelings factor are more active in the earlier stages of the individual as well as races. Their thought is mere servant of the immediate purpose, confined only to the primary level of sensation. Galloway observed that “anything like dispassionate reflexion is a remote from primitive condition. It was therefore especially the feeling and conative life of early man that determined the motives which led him to form religious ideas and custom”²⁷. Many of the religious philosopher are of the opinion that basically human beings are self-conscious, they are very much concerned about their limitation in the larger realm of the universe. This fundamental fact of human nature that man is an incomplete being, this incompleteness of man is revealed in the constant uprising of desire, which calls for satisfaction.

Attempt has been made to trace the origin of religion from conative aspect of human consciousness. With the activities of will, the presence of value in human life is intimately connected. The desire for good plays a very important role in leading man to be religious, which is an expression of volitional aspect of human nature.

Ritschl, modern religious philosopher conceived, religion comes into being in order to solve the contradiction between man's impulse to maintain his independence and his sense of limitation as a part of nature²⁸ A. Sabatier modified this view of Ritschl by giving psychological condition to it. According to Sabatier man in his psychical life, brings to a higher level the self- conserving impulse immanent in all life²⁹. This theory of Ritschl and Sabatier recognized a condition of religion not only in the purposive striving, but in the feeling element represented by the senses of distress and need. But by stressing on the self-conservative impulse of man he tends to derive religion from purely egoistic desire. But even in primitive religion we see the self-conservative impulse is tempered by further motives, the desire for communion with God. Psychological as well as anthropological studies shows that purposive life of man is reflected at every stage of his religious growth. Desire to know the divine is basic to human psychology. Feelings without the endorsement of desire are vague in religious consciousness. Galloway observed " the feelings impulses and the vague yearning of the primitive period are gradually transformed into conscious desire wider in their range and more enduring in their nature, and they are finally developed into ideals and aspiration which express the character as a whole. The will it is which, by its exercise, forms the permanent religious disposition and tendencies, so give reality and continuity to the religious life."³⁰ It reflects that religious consciousness is a transformation of feelings to will. Feelings are fluctuating and vary in intensity. But the heart of inner disposition is relatively constant, forming the permanent background of character that is fashioned by the activity of will. Through will man actualizes the belief and makes them a part of themselves. Religious ideas are means through which we can actualize will, they

give direction and meaning to feeling and through these ideas man has slowly raised himself to the vision of religion as life, and the religious life as reasonable service.

Apparently it is argued that thought or intellection is not an intense factor in forming consciousness of religion in human mind. But in fact we cannot ignore the influence of human thought in the development of religious consciousness. Apart from feelings and will, thought plays very crucial role in this regard. Thought first encircles religion with myth and legend; afterwards exercises on religious experience and translates it into doctrine. Refinement, modification and development of religion, most particularly based on human thought which is susceptible to influence from environment.³¹ Through the pressure of thought we can realize that religious systems are internally coherent and consistent with secular knowledge which can overcome the conservative tendencies fostered by feelings and habit. It can be observed that fixity and sameness of primitive religion are largely due to weakness of thought. Intellect gradually liberated religion from its native narrowness, and enabled it to exercise an enlightened and universal appeal.

Hence it reflects that man's whole psychical constitution is involved in his movement to religion. In other words feelings, willing, and thought or intellection are the primary factors in developing the idea of religion. The desire for good belongs to the human nature as an active being which is inseparably linked with the sense of need and incompleteness, and with the feeling tone which goes along with them. But neither the desire nor the feeling can create religious consciousness. It is belief, which can give religious satisfaction. It is little more than an instinctive idea and requires some cognitive activity which selects and holds the object before the

mind. Without the superior intellection that distinguishes man from the animals, religion would not come into being. The cognitive side of religious consciousness is represented by faith, and faith is stimulated by emotion and posits the object which will satisfy the need of the inner life.

2.3 Sociological approach to Religion

The study of religion has played a vital role in the discipline of sociology since its very beginning in the mid-19th century. Sociology of religion often asked the question about what people believe how religion is organised and how religion affects various aspects of social life. Sociological study of religion explores religion from a variety of different vintage points within the social science, and considers the influence of religion in different areas of social life including the family, race, imagination, and politics.

Sociological study of religion emerged from the philosophy of the enlightenment on the one hand and its Romantic critique on the other³². Though sociological study of religion attempt to make religion the object of scientific study, sociology has inherited certain pre-supposition from the philosophical discourse that shapes its perspective on religion in different ways. The renewed global importance of religion has a profound impact on the sociology of religion. It not only provided the discipline within an opportunity for empirical study of religious phenomena on a global scale, also it challenges its conventional theoretical perspective. In order to have better understanding of the development of the sociology of religion, one has to consider how social scientific understanding of religion is informed by basic

assumptions about western modernity, the course of the history, and the place of man in this world.

Martin Riesebrodt and Marry Ellen Knoieczny mention three classical paradigms that had the strongest impact on the sociological study of religion. They are Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Marx weber. Like Plato and Aristotle from ancient Greece, and enlightenment philosopher from the 17th through 19th century, the idea posited by these socialists continue to be addressed today. The works of founding fathers of sociology, including Comte, Marx, Durkheim and Weber make frequent reference to theological discourse or to studies of religious behaviour and belief system. However in the middle part of the last century sociology of Europe and north America came to see religion as of marginal significance in the social world, but with the advent of post modernity as well as high or late modernity, and the resurgence of religion in many different global contexts religion has acquired renewed sociological significance, both in developing societies and in Europe and north America. Consequently the social study of religion has begun to emerge from merging of sociological discipline and manifests a growing commonality of interest with mainstream sociological concern around such cluster of issues as ecology and embodiment, social movement and social protest, globalization, nationalism and post modernity.³³

Auguste Comte (1798-1857) was commonly regarded as the father as well as founder of modern sociology. He advocated three stages of evolution of human thought in his book "Course de philosophic positive". According to him in the first stage nature is explained in terms of supernatural beings, in the second by abstract concepts and in the third by scientific causes. He was of the opinion that religious

belief and rites bring about social solidarity.³⁴ In other words he emphasised the social dimension of religion. According to Comte sociology was modelled on natural sciences. Empirical observation of human society would give rise to rational and positivistic account to social life which would provide the organising principle for the science of society. In modern society sociology would replace theology as the source of guiding principle and value of human life. The positivistic interpretation of Comte's conception of sociology predicted the complete disappearance of religion and theology as modes of behaviour and belief in modern society. Another evolutionary sociologist Herbert Spencer traces the evolution of religion from ancestor worship through polytheism to monotheism. In his book "Principle of Sociology" the elements of cognitivist and evolutionism are prominent.

From same emergent tradition of evolution French sociologist Emile Durkheim offered a evolutionary account of human societies from tribal to republican, and from magical to rational, and an account which involves the gradual eclipse of religious rituals and dogmas. In his classical works "The Elementary Forms of Religious Life" Durkheim provides much richer analysis of the social function of religion. He considers religion as a distinctive aspect of social reality. By internally regulating the egocentric impulses of man religion makes social life possible³⁵. Drawing accounts of the religious practices of Australian aboriginal societies, Durkheim identifies a totemic principle in the interaction between religious belief and practices and nature of tribe. He was of the opinion that the ritual and doctrinal distinction between sacred and profane perform a vital social function in balancing the inherent tension of every society, between structure and counter structure order and chaos, morality and deviance³⁶.

According to Durkheim religion is a social fact. “In elementary forms of religious life” Durkheim seeks to identify and define basic element of religion. He distinguishes between magic and religion: magic being individual, religion being communal. Durkheim defined religion “ as a unified system of belief and practices relatives to sacred thing, that is to say , thing set apart and forbidden – belief and practices which unite into one single moral community called church, all those who adhere to them”(elementary forms of religious life)

For Durkheim sociological study of religion denotes the function which religion perform in mediating and generating social solidarity, sustaining society, in face of threats to its survival whether from other tribe, from within the tribe, and from natural disaster. According to him religion unites members of the society around a common symbolic account of their place in the cosmos, their history and purpose in the order of the things. Hence it reflects that religion is a source of social and moral order binding the members of the society to a common social project, a set of shared value and social goal.

Durkheim’s sociology of religion is based on social order and its socializing, civilizing, and moralizing mission. According to him, human beings have a double nature consisting of body and soul. On the one hand they drive by bodily needs, following their egoistic natural drives and desire; on the other they have souls, which are social and moral. The task of any social order is to keep the egoistic drive of individual in check and to transform these individual into social and moral agent who conforms to group norms.³⁷ Emile Durkheim laid the foundation of sociological study of religion in the west. His works exercise a considerable influence over the sociology of religion which may be seen in certain version of the

secularization thesis in Robert Bellah's approach to civil religion and moral value and in the works of Bryan Wilson on the function of religion

Like Durkheim Karl Marx (1818-1883) also regarded religion as a social product, and as an agent of social order in pre-modern societies. According to Marx primary function of religion is to generate order, not creating a commitment to a common social project, but rather to legitimize the unjust and harsh rule of feudal lords over the peasant or of capitalist over workers. For Marx religion obscures the true nature of things from the masses of the people, mystifying the origins and reality of their oppression, and representing the right of the rulers over the ruled as element of a divinely ordained social order. He also insists that religion acts as an opiate, drugging the masses in their oppression, promising them rewards in the hereafter, or providing them with ritual escape into ecstasy as compensation for their lowly status and oppression in the here and now.³⁸

According to Marx, religion is an expression of material realities and economic injustice. Thus problems in religion are ultimately problems in society. Religion is not the disease but merely a symptom. It is used by oppressor to make people feel better about the distress they experience due to being poor and exploited. Marx throughout his work saw religion as a part of a structural system of oppression. Marx's famous statement "religion is the opium of people" appears in his "A contribution to the critique of Hegel's philosophy of right" published in 1844. Marx argued that humans are the creation of their circumstances. Man makes religion, religion does not make man. Religion is indeed man's self-consciousness and self-awareness so long as he has not found himself or has already lost himself again. But man is not abstract being squatting outside the world. The state and his

society produce religion, which is an inverted consciousness of the world, because they are the inverted world. According to him religion is the general theory of this world, a universal basis of consolation and justification. It is the fantastic realization of the human essence since the human essence has not acquired any true reality. The struggle against religion is therefore, indirectly the struggle against that world whose spiritual aroma is religion³⁹

Marx defined religion in terms of social phenomenon like class struggle. It is born out of alienation of workers from the product of their work. In order to understand the Marx idea of religion, we need to explore the idea of “alienation” in Marx critique of religion. The concept of alienation is deeply embedded in all the major great religion and social and political theories of the civilized epoch, namely, the idea that sometime in the past people lived in harmony and then there was some kind of rapture which left people feeling like foreigners in the world. Generally alienation is defined as a constraining process of human consciousness arresting the development and ultimate potential of what human consciousness should properly be. P. Clodi said that alienation “ is the negative process by which a subject makes himself other than himself by virtue of a constraint which is capable of being removed on the initiative of the subject himself.”⁴⁰ Marx was very much concerned about the nature and process of alienation and he examined different type of alienation , how it happened and how it could be solved.

According to Marx religion plays an obvious role in this process of alienation. In early societies religion consists mainly in a response to the mysteriousness of the nature and expresses humanity’s lack of understanding and control. But in more advanced society’s religion increases the understanding of the

true nature of social relation by expressing the alienation inscribed into class structure. Religion by creating the illusion of a transcendental power of perfection which demand submission to the status quo, also prevent social actor from collectively establishing a social order that would allow them to realize their full potential as social and creative human beings.⁴¹

Religion, for Marx is like other social institution, dependent upon the material and economic realities in a given society. It has no independent history; instead it is the creature of productive force. Religion can only be understood in relation to other social systems and the economic structure of society. It dehumanizes man. Therefore it is the duty of man to over through all those condition under which he became dehumanized, oppressed and enslaved. Marx rejected all theories of supernatural powers, all the realities beyond the world and established the truth of this world, the only reality of this sensuous world which can be empirically verifiable. For Marx, sense perception is the sole criterion of reality, a sensuous or a natural being alone is real; a non-natural object, an object that is not an object of sense is an imaginary being, a being of abstraction and therefore, a non-being.⁴²

Since man is incomplete in his actual life, he creates an alien being outside and above himself, attributes his own powers to it, projects his own consciousness into it and therefore suffers a loss of power in himself without realizing that those alien powers are really his own powers, God derives his peculiar characters from what the man himself gives up in the process of fantastic creation of God. Consequently, "the more man puts into God, the less the returns (for) himself."⁴³ This the reason why according to Marx, man makes religion, but religion does not

make man. Religion is a mark of oppression and exploitation. For an oppressed man, religion provides an illusory relaxation from the hardship of his real life. For this reason religion, for Marx, is 'the opium of the people'. It is a hopeless search of man for a divine meaning in the face of his own meaningless existence.

Max Weber (1864-1920) was German sociologist and political economist who profoundly influenced the social theory, social research and the discipline of sociology itself. Weber's works in the field of sociology of religion started with the essay "The protestant ethics and spirit of capitalism" and continued with the analysis of the religion of china: Confucianism and Taoism, the religion of India: the sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism. According to Weber religion is one of the core forces in the society.⁴⁴ Weber attempted to find reason for the different development path of the culture of the western and Eastern tradition. He wanted primarily to explain the distinctive element of the western civilization in which he found that religious ideas had a major impact on the social innovation and development of economic system of the west.

Max weber was famous among modern sociologist for his systematic investigation into various traditions of religion. According to him rationalization is the key process in the development modern society. Reason steadily replaces faith. He claimed that the spirit of capitalism had its origin in the early forms of Protestantism, particularly Calvinism and the spirit of capitalism was one of the main factors in the development rational capitalism. Weber's sociology of religion begins with an enquiry into the religious sources of modern capitalist and ends with a cross culturally comparative study of rationalism embedded in the religious tradition of china, India, and ancient Judaism.⁴⁵ According to Weber modern West is

the result of a unique rationalization process, which has effected not only its economic system and its bureaucratic organisation but also its culture- specially its science, music and art.

Weber offers a penetrating consideration of religious meaning and doctrines, including belief about God, Theodicies, or explanation of evils, stories of salvation, and channel of divine power and grace. And finally he gives an extended consideration of the interaction between religious meaning and ethical system and human social order, and particularly of economic order and exchange relation. Weber's historical study of the interaction between religion and capitalism reflects his understanding of the generative potential of religious meaning and practice in the wider organisation of society.⁴⁶

Weber has been engaged in cross culturally comparative study of the economic ethics of the world religion. By studying the religion of China (Weber1920\1951) and India (1920\1958) he concludes that they offered to their practitioners very different psychological incentive from western religion, especially ascetic Protestantism⁴⁷. Western rationalization process of this religiously motivated ethos contributed to the disenchantment of the world by rejecting all irrational means of attaining salvation, and promoted the emergence of rationally organised institutional order and ethics.

Above discussion of Durkheim, Marx and Max Weber regarding the sociological study of religion reveals that they together did not expect that religion will disappear in due course of time, but they assumed that it would be transformed in the modern world. The next generation of scholars elaborated this argument in more details; usually fusing the tradition of Durkheim and Weber as they understood

them. Martin Riesebrodt and Marry Knoieczny observed that those who were working in the Durkheim tradition tended to focus on the integrative role of religion at the social centre, Weberian turned instead to religious movement at the margin of society.⁴⁸

The central debate in the contemporary sociology of religion lies in between advocates and opponents of the secularization thesis which has dominated society theory since Comte and Durkheim. Secularization refers to those processes by which religion loses its dominance and social significance in society. The principal theorists of secularization are Bryan Wilson, Peter Berger, David Martin, and Steve Bruce.⁴⁹ According to them secularization is a consequence of modernization. Cultural reading of new age movement and exploration of the interaction between beliefs concerning the unseen spiritual world and personal or social empowerment, exemplify the interactionist sociological paradigm. The principal contemporary exponent of this approach was Peter Berger (1929) He attempted in his famous book “Sacred Canopy”(1967) to explain religion in secular terms which he called “methodical atheism”⁵⁰ According to Berger religion is the human enterprise by which a sacred cosmos is established⁵¹. Religion confers sacred power on the object and meaning with which humans construct social world and models of the cosmos. Religion represents the attempt to set the human project at the centre of the universe, and to confer human meaning on the whole cosmos.

2.4 Phenomenological Approaches to Religion:

The term “phenomenology” has never been unequivocally established in relation to the study of religion. Phenomenological approach to religion operates in a

distinctive way in relation to the other disciplines and approaches which claim to us an understanding of the subject of religion. Perhaps the distinctive nature of method of investigation, boundaries, of phenomenological approach to religion contrast itself with other approaches to religion.

Though traditionally theology was the means of explicating religious meaning within the boundary of western society and in the context of Christian tradition, the revolution in thinking known as “enlightenment” changes the epistemological debate and is primarily exemplified in the writing of Rousseau, Kant and Hume, which leads to the emergence of new discipline known as sociology and psychology⁵². Alongside the emergence of scientific study and influence of new philosophical movement phenomenology was born and applied to the study of religion as a scientific method of investigation that contrast with theological approach.

Phenomenological approach to religion thus originated as an attempt to construct a coherent methodology for the study of religion. The philosophy of Hegel provided a basis for phenomenological study of religion. In his influential book “The Phenomenology of Spirit”(1806) Hegel developed the thesis that essence(wesen) is understood through investigating appearances and manifestation⁵³. Hegel’s intension was to show how these led to the understanding that all phenomena, in their diversity, were nevertheless grounded in an underlying essence or unity (Geist or spirit). This relationship between essence and manifestation provided a basis for understanding how religion in its diversity, could in essence, be understood as a distinct entity.

One of the noted religious philosophers Eric Sharp, in his book “ The Phenomenology of religion”,⁵⁴ virtually concludes that religion is an essentially human phenomenon and all religions as actually or potentially sources of knowledge. Phenomenological approach in religious studies does not seek to explain the origin of religion in any way, but rather to describe the religion from an internal point of view. Phenomenology of religion describes the religious phenomena in terms consistent with the orientation of the worshipper, a method consistent with current hermeneutical trends in humanities. The phenomenology of religion looks at religion as being made up of different components. It is by both identifying the different components within religion and looking at those across tradition that an understanding of them can be gained.

The philosophical movement associated with phenomenology was begun by the German philosopher Edmund Husserl(1859-1938). He developed a methodology which he believed articulated a logical and fully scientific analysis of the way humans obtain knowledge. Following Husserl, idea of phenomenology was expanded by philosopher like Karl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger. As the phenomenology of religion developed in 20th century, Husserl’s philosophy must be regarded as one of the major formative influence⁵⁵ with regard to the phenomenological study of religion alongside theology and social science. Though there is controversy as to the extent Husserl influences the phenomenological study of religion, but almost everyone is agreed that at the very least Husserlian terminology was transposed into and utilized within phenomenological analysis of religion. Husserl’s major contribution to the study of religion influences later phenomenological works of Max Scheler, Geradaus van der leeuw, Paul Recoeur

and many others. Phenomenology of religion has characterized itself as radically descriptive and antireductionist. It has often adopted the Husserlian term such as “epoch”, “Eidetic vision” and has sometimes utilized aspects of Husserlian phenomenological method. Although Husserl himself did not directly address himself to the study of religion, two of the concepts provided valuable methodological starting point for the phenomenological study of religion⁵⁶.

Phenomenology of religion starts with the view that religion is based on religious experience. Human beings have experience that they describe as religious; these may be traditional or non-traditional. They may focus on an inner feeling and outward forms. They may be institutional and involve organised religions or they may be highly personal and outside of any institutional framework. They may involve prayer, worship, ritual, nature of cosmic experience; Phenomenology of religion embraces a doctrine of “intentionality” which emphasises that all experience is an experience of something. Phenomenology essentially implies a philosophical method that can attempt to provide a neutral assumption of human experience. These essentially entail two steps – first the notion of “epoch”- the suspension of prior judgement and the “Bracketing” of the natural attitude- common sense understanding- so that a focus can be put purely on conscious experience, allowing a focus on the phenomena to speak for themselves, and second the notion of “Eidetic intuition” discovering through intuition the essence – the essential meaning of the phenomena.⁵⁷

Douglas Allen ⁵⁸ differentiates four groups of scholars who use the term phenomenology of religion. First there are works in which the term means nothing more than an investigation of the phenomena or observable object, fact and event of

religion. Secondly according to Dutch scholar P.D Chantepei de la saussaye, historian of religion Geo Widengren and Ake Hultkrantz, phenomenology of religion means –the comparative study and the classification of different types of religious phenomena. Thirdly numerous scholars such as W.B Kristensen, Geradaus van der Leeuw, Joachim Wach, Jauco Bleeker, Mircea Eliad and Jacques Waardenberg who identify phenomenology of religion as a specific branch, discipline or method within religious study. Fourthly there are scholars such as Max Scheler and Paul Ricoeur who explicitly identify much of their works with philosophical phenomenology.

In the history of religious studies the term “phenomenology of religion” occurs in the *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte*⁵⁹ (Hand Book of History of Religion) written by P. D Chantepei (1848-1920) in 1887 where he give “outlines of the phenomenology of religion”. Following Hegel Chantepei divides his science of religion in two areas of investigation known as essence and manifestation. His main concern was a systematic classification of religion and introduction of an appropriate methodology. He was one of the first to conceive phenomenology of religion as a scientific discipline⁶⁰. Chantepei’s emphasis on phenomenology of religion was more limited and his concern with ritual as the primary phenomenon did not lead to the philosophical deliberation.

Another famous scholar who contributed a lots towards the phenomenological study of religion was William Brede Kristensen (1867-1953). In Kristenesn’s book “The Meaning of Religion”⁶¹ (English translations were published in 1960) in which like Chantepei, Kristensen argues that phenomenology seeks the meaning of religious phenomena. He clarifies this supposition by defining

the meaning that his phenomenology is seeking as the meaning that the religious phenomena have for the believer themselves.⁶² According to Kristensen phenomenology is the medium whereby the philosophy and history of religion interact with and affect one another. In defining the religious essences in which he explores historical manifestation, Kristensen appropriates Rudolf Otto's conception of the Holy (The idea of Holy, 1923). Furthermore Kristensen argues that phenomenology is not complete in grouping or classifying the phenomena according to their meaning, but the act of understanding phenomenology has as its object to come as far as possible in contact with and to understand the extremely varied and divergent religious data.⁶³

W. B Kristensen and Nathan Soderblome were most distinctive figures with regard to the phenomenological study of religion. Van der Leeuw regarded Soderblome as the instigator of the change of the direction in the history of religion due to his acute insight and his deeply penetrating view of what "appears"⁶⁴. Following Otto Soderblom holds that "Holiness" is the great word in religion, it is even more essential than the notion of God. According to him real religion may exist without a definite conception of deity, but there is no religion without distinction between holy and profane.

Kristensen treats phenomenology of religion as being complementary to historical and philosophical approaches, but understood them to have different aims. According to him the task of phenomenology is to be the systematic grouping of characteristic data in order to illustrate the human religious disposition which would reveal the essential and typical element of religion. It was necessary pre-requisite to the philosophical task of determining the essence of religion. Equally historical

research uncovers the data particular to a specific religion, without which the phenomenological endeavour would not be possible.

Gerardus van der Leeuw was one of the pioneers of phenomenological study of religion. His book “Phenomenologie der religion” (1933, translated in English in 1938) laid the foundation of phenomenological study of religion. Leeuw follows Kristensen in many respects, though he also appropriates the phenomenology of Martin Heidegger and the hermeneutics of Wilhelm Dilthey. According to van der Leeuw understanding is the subjective aspect of phenomena, which is inherently intertwined with the objectivity of that which is manifest. He articulates the relation of understanding to understood phenomena according to the schema outlined in Dilthey’s definition of human science (Geisteswissenschaften) as science that is “based on the relation between experience, expression and understanding”⁶⁵ Leeuw also correlates subjective experience, expression and understanding with three objective levels of appearing- relative concealment, relative transparency and gradual becoming manifest or revealed where in the understanding of what is becoming revealed is the primordial level of appearing from which the experienced concealment and expressed transparency of appearing are derived⁶⁶. Like Kristensen Leeuw also appropriates Rudolf Otto’s conception of “Holy” in defining the essential category of religion. According to van der Leeuw transcendence becomes revealed in all human understanding and can be further described as sacred- an overpowering “wholly other”, which becomes revealed in astonishing moment of dreadful awe and wonderful fascination.

Phenomenological study of religion thus shows that it tries to give a comprehensive understanding of religion by embracing different aspects of religion. It emphasises what appears to us as religion in different perspectives of life.

2.5 Spiritual Approach of Radhakrishnan.

All social thinkers make all individual passive. A man cannot live by the providence of society, if he does not recover the faith in life and the universe. Sociologist neglects the inner cravings of man. As Radhakrishnan says “ in the depths of the human soul there lies something which we rationalize as the search for truth, a demand for justice, a passion of righteousness. This striving for truth and justice is an essential part of our life”⁶⁷ He further observes, “ In all religion there is a trans-social reference. No religion can fulfil its social function adequately if it is only social.”⁶⁸ Socialism cannot remove human selfishness. Although in some way we are able to solve some problems of life, to free ourselves from death is impossible. So to know the spirit in man is above social consciousness. There are several elements lying at the root of religious consciousness. Viz. faith, hope, and charity, admiration, wonder and reverence, sense of finitude and the transitoriness of the world and a longing for the eternal from which the finite self and temporal world derive their existence, by which they are maintained and to which they return at the end. Therefore religion may be said to be the manifestation of human consciousness of those perennial instincts and emotions which create in the soul, the spirit of unrest and discontent at the finite and the temporal and generate a thirst for union with the Supreme Being. Religion an endeavour to “restore the sense of unity”⁶⁹ Religion is not merely concern with the other-worldly interest and salvation of the soul, but

must also occupy itself with the knowledge of this world and make an attempt to understand its meaning in order to appreciate the aim and ideals of life and also to find out the means and processes of their realization on the earth.

Radhakrishnan conceives man as a spark of spirit or fragment of the Divine and therefore a principle of light and power. So long as man attention is limited to his surroundings and takes himself as product of objective nature, he is subject to the forces around him. When he is aware of his true being, he becomes superior to the forces around him. For Radhakrishnan, religion alerts man to realize the nature of the Absolute from where the entire world is originated. The Absolute is god when we take it in the cosmic scheme, the highest ideals of religious person. This view of religion can remove hostility among various religious institutions. The different religions are not rival or competing forces, but fellow labourers in the same great task.

Religion is not creed or a code but an insight into reality. Our intellectual creeds are imperfect. They are perfect in intuition or integral experience. The religious thought of Radhakrishnan is based on the ideals of integration within the self and the integration of the self with the universal self or Atman or the spirit. The religious life is a spiritualization of the soul. We exclude spirit from our life which is the beginning of sin, according to Radhakrishnan. We are not conscious of our ignorance and eventually we fall into fragmentariness, frighten of life and remain spiritually dead.⁷⁰ Radhakrishnan affirms religion as a continuous search for the truth. The essence of life is creativity. It is a living creation of something new, not a dead connection of cause and effect. The inner compulsion which lies behind that which is visible to our eyes is an urge to create, to germinate, to make alive, to bring

forth something new out of the hidden treasure of being. The end of the man is to let the spirit in him permeate his deepest self by losing his selfish ego. Man is not mere sum of instinct and desires. He seeks to be a single indivisible unity or organism. Integration is the goal. Human mind seeks fulfilment. So anything short of the eternal and the absolute can never satisfy man. According to Radhakrishnan, only integral intuitions which are supra- intellectual are our authority for religion.

Religion is essentially a transforming experience; it is the reaction of the entire man, of his total personality; it fosters world unity; it satisfies the demands of reason and the needs of humanity. True religion stands for the fellowship of all faiths. Radhakrishnan does not make a fetish of the past; the past is only an inspiring ideal and not of prison house. We look backwards and live forwards. Religion starts within the individual but it must end in a fellowship. When the mystics refer to the “kingdom of God” they does not mean this country or that country or that continent, they mean the entire world community. So Radhakrishnan suggests that all the political ills, economic confusion and psychical activities of our life can be set right by the power of the spirit, a power which will help us to discipline our passions of greed and selfishness and organise the world which at one with us in desire.

According to Radhakrishnan, though man belongs to nature, ha has his root in the invisible and intangible world. As he expresses his view, “the uniqueness of man among all the product of nature lies in this, that in him nature seek to exceed itself consciously, no longer by an automatic or unconscious activity, but mental and spiritual effort. Man is not a plant or an animal, but a thinking and spiritual being set to shape his nature for higher purpose. He seeks to establish order and harmony among the different part of his nature and strives after an integrated life”⁷¹ But the

question arises: how could such a life be restored? Radhakrishnan firmly replies “ Religions attempt to satisfy this transcendent need of man by giving him a faith and a way of life, a creed and a community, and thus restore the broken relationship between him and the spiritual world above the human world around.⁷² Religion in its spiritual sense is not what we find in the plurality of religions, but it is religion as such. This may be called universal religion. Spiritual religion in the form of spiritualized humanism can save humanity. Religion is not the academic abstraction or the celebrations of ceremonies but a kind of life or experience.

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