

**POSSIBILITY OF UNIVERSAL RELIGION: A  
REASSESSMENT OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA**

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*for the Award of the degree of*

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**in**

**PHILOSOPHY**



**Submitted by**

**R. Ashok**

**Under the Guidance of**

**Dr. S. INDIRA**

**Professor and Head**

**DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**

**SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES**

**PONDICHERY UNIVERSITY**

**PUDUCHERRY- 605014**

**INDIA**

**July 2018**

Dr. S. Indira  
Professor & Head  
Department of Philosophy  
Pondicherry University



### CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **“Possibility of Universal Religion: A Reassessment of Swami Vivekananda”** is a record of the original study and research carried out by Mr. R. Ashok, Research Scholar, Department of Philosophy, Pondicherry University, under my guidance and supervision, and submitted to the Pondicherry University for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy.

Place: Puducherry

Date:

(Dr. S. Indira)  
Supervisor

**R. Ashok**

**Ph.D scholar**

**Department of Philosophy**

**Pondicherry University**

**Email:ashokrathinasamy44@gmail.com**



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## **DECLARATION**

I, **R.Ashok**, hereby declare that the thesis entitled **“Possibility of Universal Religion: A Reassessment of Swami Vivekananda** “submitted to the Pondicherry University for the award of the degree of Ph.D. in Philosophy has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associate ship, fellowship or other similar title or recognition.

**Date:**

**(R.ASHOK)**

## **COUNTER SIGNED**

**(Supervisor)**

**(Head of the Department)**

**(Dean)**

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The research topic exclusively observes Swami Vivekananda's concept of Universal Religion in its wider scope. Throughout the human history, religion has significant place and is considered as the belief system of human beings. Religion is not looked by the people merely as a belief system, rather considered beyond the stages and has become the part and parcel of every individual's life. Religion either directly or indirectly is involved in the day today life of human being and it travels along with him in different forms, so that religion cannot be separated from human beings. In most of the circumstances, the being of religion becomes an unavoidable entity. On the other hand, when we look at the human history, there have been many evidences and records on the issues such as wars, violence, riots that were culminated in the name of religion and these issues still continue to persist in 21<sup>st</sup> century. Violence or intolerance among the human beings is rapidly increasing in the name of religion. The researcher's main focus is on this point and has made a maximum effort to analyse the issue of religion through Swami Vivekananda's views and signifying Universal religion. Swami Vivekananda has multiple personalities. He was not only a spiritual leader but also a philosopher, religious reformer and he made a bridge between the west and east in his short lifetime and is the role model and iconic figure among youth in the modern period too. Further, in the thesis the researcher would like to analyse various concepts of Swami Vivekananda on religion, and also an

attempt is made by researcher to make religious harmony among the human beings through his ideas of religion. The researcher would like to analyses the practical infirmity to emphasize the Universal Religion of Swami Vivekananda and made an attempt for the possibility of religious harmony and minimize the religious conflicts among human beings through the approach of Universal Religion of Swami Vivekananda.

### **Review of literature**

**Chattopadhyay**<sup>1</sup> (March 2015) in his article, addresses Swami Vivekananda's Universal Religion and insists that it has the potentiality to overcome the problem of religious dissension, conflicts and disparities. He further tries to elaborate that, Universal Religion is not a new form of religion instead, a way of unifying all good concepts from every religion such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and so on. The author points out that, the concept of Universal Religion can be realized through the lens of humanity. Moreover, he opines that, the concept Universal Religion does not have scripture, leader and institution unlike other organized religions around the world. He says, the motive of Universal Religion is to bring peace of harmony and humanism.

**Swami Bhajanananda**<sup>2</sup> (April 2008) in this paper the author focused on two important concepts, the first one: Harmony of Religions and the other: Swami

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<sup>1</sup> Chattopadhyay, *Universal Religion of Vivekananda: A Way Out of Religious Dissension*, Journal of East West Thought, 2015, p.73.

<sup>2</sup> Swami Bhajanananda, *Harmony of Religions from the Standpoint of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda*, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata: 2008, p. 53.



Vivekananda's doctrine of Universal Religion. In the first concept, he says that, the diversity of religion is not only the philosophical problem, but it has also immense social, cultural and political consequences. Further he says, the harmony of religion should be distinguished from indifference because it is observed that, both harmony and indifference are not same. However, for any religion, the ultimate aim is: harmony and peace of the mankind. In the second concept, the author emphasizes the concept of universal religion of Swami Vivekananda through certain anecdotes and compares the concept of universal religion to the garden with different flowers and he says every religion has some positive aspects and some drawbacks. When all the religions come together under the umbrella of universal religion, they make up their deficiencies. The author believed that, universal religion is the ideal religion and it assumes the world religions liberally to interact with each other for the common welfare of humanity and that interaction can be called as interreligious dialogue.

**Pillachira Mathew Thomas**<sup>3</sup> (October 1974). In this research, author says, though Hinduism is a Universal Religion, it did not spread all over the world because; there was no missionary like Christianity or Islam. Above all the reason believed by the author is that 'Hinduism has never outgrown the stage of a national religion'. He sternly emphasizes that, Hinduism in India - due to its nature of accepting any religion can be at prime face considered as a universal religion but its major challenge rests in itself to show that Hinduism

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<sup>3</sup> Pillachira Mathew Thomas, *Twentieth Century Indian Interpretations of the Bhagavad-Gita: a Selective Study of Pattern*, Hamilton: McMaster University, 1974, p.89.

is a Universal Religion. While ultimately Vivekananda solved this problem and outreached Hinduism to the nation world.

**Swami Dayatmananda** <sup>4</sup> (December 2014) says, the aim of Swami Vivekananda's Universal Religion is not to extend or spread Vedanta to all parts of the world, the ultimate aim of his idea of universal Religion is co-existence of all religions and accepts the best elements among each other religion. He believes another important thing, to make the harmony of religions, there is no necessity for any man to change his religion and embrace another.

**Arvind Sharma** <sup>5</sup> (December 1998) addressed on the concept of Universal Religion with seven dimensions such as: emphasizing the multiplicity of religion, eternality of religion, complementarity of religions, humanity of religions, harmony of religions, unity of religions and Vedanta as a Universal Religion. Moreover, Swami Vivekananda believed his concept of universal religion is the ideal religion. Author stresses that, Swami Vivekananda does not associate the idea of Universal Religion with the single set of beliefs and practices; on contrary the idea of multiplicity of sects and also diversity exist in the past and in present as well as it will exist in future, that is the true nature. But for Vivekananda, diversity is not contradictory that is only supplementary.

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<sup>4</sup> Swami Dayatmananda, *Living the Spiritual Life*, The Vedanta Kesari (1914 - 2014)—A Journey of 100 years, Chennai: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 2014, p. 606.

<sup>5</sup> Arvind Sharma., *The Concept of Universal Religion in Modern Hindu Thought*, London: Macmillan, 1998, p. 46.

## **Problem of the Study**

This research is an attempt to investigate the important issues in the field of religious studies. It focuses on the issues such as the origin of religion, its existence and continuance. This is followed by the questions: what are religion and its origin? What are the causes of religion and its several dimensions? Such basic inquiries require a further analysis into Possibility of Universal Religion.

The prominent issues are: -

- What is meant by the term 'Religion'?
- The nature and function of religion both at individual and societal level.
- Religious conflict and its impact on societies.
- The problem of establishing Universal Religion.

There are many thinkers who have approached the issues mentioned above by advancing various theories. The present work is an attempt to examine these issues from the standpoints of Swami Vivekananda

## **Need of the Study**

The concept of the Universal Religion has been discussed by many thinkers before Swami Vivekananda, but he was the only person highlighted it to all over the world through his wonderful ability. The aim of this research is to explore the concept of "Universal Religion" and apprehend the reason for it being still in as concept. On the other side, this research will also focus on unravelling the importance of Universal Religion and its prophesy on religious

harmony so as to have a common resentment on the resolving religious violence among different religions. Further, the preaching of Swami Vivekananda would propound on the different ways of establishing Universal Religion.

### **Objectives of Study:**

- To understand the concept of religion from historical point of view.
- To analyze the reasons for religious conflicts.
- To examine the impact of religious conflicts in the society.
- To emphasize the significance of Universal Religion.
- To establish ways in articulating the conception of universal religion contemplated by Swami Vivekananda.

### **Methodology:**

The methodology executed in the present work is mainly descriptive, analytical and partially historical.

### **Sources:**

Since this research exclusively deals with the thinker-based study, it mainly draws its resources from the complete works of Swami Vivekananda. They constitute the primary source of the present study. And all other relevant writings, books, articles and electronic resources on Swami Vivekananda's philosophy and the notion of religion and Universal Religion in general constitute the secondary sources.

## **Chapter Layout**

Excluding introduction and conclusion, this thesis is divided into four main chapters. First chapter deals with the historical overviews on religion from the ancient to modern perspective and how religion got developed in various periods using various theories of both Indian and Western notions on religion. The second chapter presents the explanation of relation among the Societies, Cultures, and Religions. It also concerns on how the society is constructed by religion and how religion accepts various people? This chapter also interprets on the various perspectives discussed by Swami Vivekananda on society like the condition during no religion in the society and the way the mind, consciousness would have been in the society. The third chapter discusses the religion by Swami Vivekananda's interpretations and his rational approach to religion, nature of man, God, and soul. This chapter will further deal the ideas of religion from Vedic points of views and general practice of religion from theories. The fourth chapter highlights the main or core concept of Universal Religion along with its critique on the system of Swami Vivekananda's methods.

## **An Overview of all Chapters**

The first chapter has five sections; the first section starts from the introduction, nature of religion, its origin and the relation between each religion. Section 2 discusses the theories from three main disciplines such as anthropology, psychology, and sociology on religion and their relational aspects in Philosophy. Section 3 explains scientific notion of religion. Historically

scholars argued that religion and science are two separate entities while both are important for the upliftment of the human society. There were many scholars supporting each of these concepts, meanwhile the general conception of science holds that there is nothing to do with religion. It is a superstition or emotional feeling of the human being. Section 4 deals with postmodern views on the concept of 'religion'. Postmodernism attacks the tradition, values, realities and universalism. Its ultimate aim is to prove that, nothing is purely objective, there is nothing as such as permanent true or false and good or evil. Researcher analyzed the postmodern ideas on religion with two prominent thinkers such as O.S. Guinness and Allan Bloom. Section 5, discusses the eastern and western perspective of theories on religion. There are many differences between the Indian and Western concepts of religion. The term religion is not considered, as same as the western and connotes altogether different meaning. There is no direct meaning for the term 'religion' in the Indian context. Its relevance is related to the Sanskrit name Dharma which means the 'cosmic law'. Also, this section discusses about the western concept of religion, particularly on three major recognized religions - Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This section will also enlighten the basic principles of these religions and point out the differences among each other. The discussion in this part deals with different Asian religions that interpret Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Confucianism, Taoism and Shintoism and also apprehend the similarities and details with regarded the religious understanding.

The second chapter is Socio-Cultural Standpoints on Religion. In this chapter researcher tries to examine the relation of different Societies, Culture, and

Religion. Here the researcher intends to analyse the religious construct of society and its acceptance by various people. Because religions and cultures are concerned as same entities by the people according to their traditional ambience. Religion as an institution has important role in formalizing and civilizing the human beings and moreover this chapter discusses about the two extreme powers of religions, such as unified and diverse force. The researcher has tried to analyse the consequence of human social life without religion. Swami Vivekananda says, when we apart religion from a human being, nothing remains, instead of brutes of barbarians, an understanding of Swami Vivekananda's perspective on religion stands valid.

The third chapter is Swami Vivekananda's Views on Religion. This chapter discusses about Swami Vivekananda's notion of religion and his interpretation. To him, Religion is not just a talk and doctrines or theories, nor is it sectarianism. Religion cannot live in sects and societies. It is a relationship between soul and God. He explains that religion does not consist in erecting temples or buildings crouches or attending public worship. As well as it cannot be found in the books, words, lectures or in any forms of origination. Religion emphasizes on realization and does subscribe to particular creed or faith. He said that "I shall try to bring before you the Hindu theory, the religion that comes from without, but from within. It is my belief that religious thought is in man's very constitution, so much so that it is impossible for him to give up religion until he can give up his mind and body, until give up his thought and life." <sup>6</sup> His rational approach to idea of religion

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<sup>6</sup> Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 4, Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 14<sup>th</sup>, ed, 2012, p. 24.

was derives from Vedanta and compares it with science. Many scientists consider Vedanta as one form of science. British Philosopher and mathematician Alfred North Whitehead, physicist Brian David Josephs and others too have studied Vedanta and correlated it with science. This chapter extends Swami Vivekananda's ideas on practicing religious methods from theories.

The fourth chapter is Critical Approach and Re- Assessment of Universal Religion. Religion has an important role in culturing the human life. Its ambit is unavoidable on either way whether we talk on theism or atheism; somehow its relation travels parallel along the humanity till its end. Its virtue would be always there along with the humanity whether is believed or not. Religion is imbibed and is not inculcated by force. Mostly it is the society and the family that inculcated the aspects of religion in man. But the teachings of family and society does not provide the prophecy of importance about religion rather only provides the signs of norms and practices that needs to be followed on the name of religion. An emphatic revival of religion is not the ideal of a common man, perhaps they are merely the followers of an assigned religion. If at all any one throw into the legacy of religion, it is merely out of his concern and out of his anguish to thrive to understand the real meaning of religion. Otherwise, for a common man it should be a complete conscious process to understand his own religious understanding. When this is the case it is copious to talk on the followings of Universal Religion. Religion in common could be asserted to the conception as one of the root cause of violence among world population. Because, the diversified religious sentiments had waged conflicts against each other claiming the dominance and supremacy. And to add fire to



it, religious leaders and their fanatic attitude on maintaining their position cradles religious violence among the masses. Selfishness is the profound character of a human being. This attitude is the biggest challenge to understand Universal religion because the very tendency to accept other religion and their ritual behaviours are propounded to be as prohibited. A man always thinks that his religious sentiments are the ultimate, others are not. Apart from selfishness, another important thing is: the competitive mentality between his own religions to others. When good concepts are propounded, there is a tendency to assimilate good things from other religion. If the same thing exists in his own religion, it may be lead to competitive mentality.

Swami Vivekananda puts forth a basic question to the mankind that, if a man doesn't know, his own religion, then how is he going to recognize others religion. Swami Vivekananda's Universal Religion emphasizes on the unity of all religion and all good thoughts and ideas. He says, the ultimate aim of all religions is to attain the God or understanding the reality through various path and stress on to the famous connotation - all the water sources like streams, rivers, ultimately reach ocean that is the aim of universal religion. There are different paths to attain the religious goal. Some choose the easiest way to reach the goal but for some the way is to cross all the hardships, example; Jainism. Another important issue is that, for a common man his religion has already delineated certain value, norms and customs which we otherwise call as the path way to attain the religious goal. But however, none of them would like to adapt this new path as it would have to face dire consequences.

For Hindu, the prescribed pathway is Vedanta, for Christians in Bible, for Muslims in Quran and so on. Moreover when a man chooses another pathway

or other religion, he may face consequence from his own religious people. Swami Vivekananda's Universal Religion should be understood by religious leaders. Religion is unavoidable and a very important entity and it performs a role of a tool to construct realm in the socio, political and economy. So it could be emphasized that, one who understands the concept of Universal Religion can overcome the conflicts among religions and help in making of mankind.

The Chapter five is Conclusion. The researcher concluded that, the ultimate aim of religion is to embody the supremacy of humanity and to create a congenial space for the upliftment of people. Despite the existence of religious difference, still the religion holds a mutual recognition against each other. This is the basic idea of Universal Religion. Unambiguously, in contemporary world, such thoughts are differed as Pseudo-religious and conferred by man's ignorance. Basically most people without understanding the basic idea and clarity of any religion, fit into miss-understating on religious principles. And religious leaders take advantage of the people's religious ignorance and spread encouraging the religious fanatic attitude among the people. Resulting which we find in the contemporary period religious fanaticism and that is leading to destructive of human race. Religion has two extreme capabilities, one is it can unite the people and the other it can make diversity among the people. Swami Vivekananda says religion can build hospital, open the charity, and give education as well as can destroy mass of people. The concept of Swami Vivekananda's Universal Religion can make peaceful world when it is understand by the all kinds of people because it is help to understand the basic

essence of all religion, however, everyone has confusion regarding the religious ideas and they paradoxically each other.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **HISTORICAL OVERVIEWS ON RELIGION**

#### **Introduction:**

Religion, the most debated topics in every sense, has been debated much from within as well from outside. Arguments form the ultimate base for religion; one should say it so, as it argues about the presence of an ultimate power with its devotees as well those who speak against. There are number of questions and arguments always linger with regard to religion, but often the question omitted by the devotees and provoked by those who oppose, or question religion is; when did it originate? There are some answers and explanations from several perspectives like anthropological, psychological, historical and sociological. Defining religion is much complicated because of its holistic nature. Every religion has its own history and specific characteristics; and hence it is defined by various disciplines with different understandings. The word Religion is very complicated to explain just like the word God, culture, life, and afterlife, because religion is a very old concept and always keep changing. One cannot find out or put the same meaning to all the religions. There are many religious views that are followed by millions and millions of the people ever since the very existing of the culture. Some of them are:

**II.1 Anthropological views:** Anthropology is the scientific study about human beings which helps to understand human nature, culture, customs,

taboos and its studies which are most prominent among the indigenous people or tribes.

**Animism:** The term is coined by the cultural Anthropologist Edward Burnett Taylor. It is derived from Latin word 'anima' which means life, breath, soul. Animism is a belief system that "assumes that the seen world is related to the unseen; an interaction exists between the divine and the human, the sacred and the profane, the holy and the secular. Personal spiritual beings and impersonal spiritual forces everywhere are thought to be shaping what happens in the animists' world. Animists live in continual fear of these powers."<sup>1</sup>

Early anthropologists perceived that animism is the source of every religion. During ancient period primitive people believed that, all natural objects are animated by the spirits, they believed that every natural object like rocks, trees, and rivers possess different sprites, so they believed that all the powers found in the nature has relation with one's personal life, and that may affect his day to day life. "Man in that stage (i.e., the animistic) may hold that a stone, a tree, a mountain, a stream, a wild animal, a heavenly body, a wind, an instrument of the hunt or of labor or of domestic utility indeed, any object within the range of real or fancied existence (and fancy looms large in this domain) possesses just such a soul as he conceives

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Tylor, *Religion in Primitive Culture Part 2*. London: John Murray, 1970, p. 38.

himself to have, and that it is animated by desires, moved by emotions, and empowered by abilities parallel to those he perceives in himself.”<sup>2</sup>

The concept of animism was generally accepted by most of the scholars, and still we find the existence of such belief in our religions in modern days too. Most of the religions that are in practice today possess the animistic concepts. For example, the concept of animism takes large place in Hinduism, Hindus worshiped Sun, (Surya Dava) tree, (Pipal tree, banyan tree, Tulasi, rivers (Ganga, Kaveri) and animals like (Monkey, Elephant). Theravada Buddhism is one of the divisions of Buddhism, which follows and practices the animistic worship that is still in existence. They upheld and keep the core concept of Buddhism particularly in south Asian countries like Mongolia, Vietnam, Cambodia, China, Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia and Myanmar. The ancient Egyptian culture is another example to prove the concept of animism; these people worship the natural objects or elements as their God and goddesses. They also worship forms of animals that are called zoomorphic worship, for example crocodiles and lions. Furthermore, some of their God's idols show half of it as human and half as animal and is called anthropomorphically worship. In Hinduism also, we find that resemblances of anthropomorphic worship in many gods like Hanuman and Ganapathy.

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<sup>2</sup> George William Gilmore, *Animism or, Thought Currents of Primitive Peoples*, Cambridge: 1919, p.10.

**Animatism:**

The primitives saw the supernatural as a domain of impersonal power or force. It has influenced them under certain conditions and they believed that, they could control it. This view of the super naturalism is called as animatism. This impersonal force exists in the universe and could reside in people, animals, plants and an object was called mana.

Mana: Mana is impersonal force or power (elaborate). The book “The Melanesian” 1891 written by the Anthropologist, Robert Codrington, describes in detail on the belief of mana. The term was literally appropriated from the usage of the word mana by the Polynesian and Melanesian island indigenous people in their Maori linguistic culture in and around New Zealand. Just as the way the term Mana is used by Maori, different communities refer the same with different teknonym across the world. “The Eskimos name this force as Sila (or khila) using a word like the Russian word sila, that is “a force.” The Iroquois call it orenda; among the Algonquin a different word is used for this force, manitou, which bears the same meaning. The same force is also known under the name of wakan or wakanda among the Sioux, poknut among the Shoshone, yek among the Tlinkit, sgana among the Haida, and nauala among the Kwakiutl. But such a

belief is not peculiar to the indigenous peoples of North America, and it may be observed in the internal areas of Africa, Southeast Asia, and Oceania”<sup>3</sup>.

Although, Robert Codrington describes it as the belief and force or power, but, the term Mana was initially introduced by the American Anthropologist Robert Marett. The impersonal power can be related to the concept of Kami in Japanese folk religion Shinto, Kami is not god or gods it is just a spirit. However, Japanese people believe that, force or spirit exists in all places, parts or things. “There are spirits that are concern with human beings-they appreciate our interest in them and want us to be happy- and if they are treated properly they will intervene in our lives to bring benefits like health, business success, and good exam result” (Shintoism)

According to Codrington mana is a supernatural state of certain influential power that is invisible and intangible. He writes: “This is what works to effect everything which is beyond the ordinary Power of men, outside the common processes of nature, it is present in the atmosphere of life, attaches itself to persons and to things, and is manifested by results which can only be ascribed to Its operation. When one has got it, he can use it and direct it, but its force may break forth at some new point.” <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Kseniya Bychenkova, *May the Force Be with You: The Animatistic Minimum in the Mythological and Religious Consciousness Comparative Humanities Review: Vol. 3, Article 8*, (2009) p.36.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Codrington, *The Melanesians: Studies in Their Anthropology and Folk-lore*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1891, p. 119-120.



**Totemism:**

The concept of Totemism was formulated by Victorian Anthropologist Johan McLennan in his book 'The Worship of Animals and Plants'. Totemism is considered as the trait in the religion where belief in the kinship of group of the people, the term derived from Ojibwa word totem "one brother-sister kin" *oto* means a blood relationship between brother and sisters, both having same mother and not marry each other. The term totem refers to natural objects, animated or in animated. The totem can be a plant or animals, totemic groups having social unique identity, they want to distinguish from one totem group to another, so they never ever use any other totem group symbols, sign, or any marks and emblems. They want to be considered entirely different from other groups in all means, like even in language, life style, culture, weapons, painting in their bodies also. We find totem in most of the indigenous people and they never accept the merging of cultural and identified separate.

**II. 2 Psychological views on religion:**

Psychology is the scientific study of the mind and behavior of human being. It is a multifaceted discipline including many sub-fields of study like human development, social behavior and cognitive processes and effectively applied in the fields of sports, health and clinical observations. There was no

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major role for religion in Psychology until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but after the contribution of William James in his works, psychology received significant attention in the field of philosophy of religion. Most of the works in psychology did not devote much attention and barely gave due importance to religious ideas that, carved the mind of human survival really very significant and value reading. Further, most of the psychological theories highlight emotional features of religion. The leading advocates of these theories are William James, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and Alfred Adler.

### **William James: 1842-1910**

William James was the American Philosopher, Psychologist and also the founder of Pragmatism. One of his classical works *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (1902) made a strong impact among psychologists, because the main content of this book relinquished on the religious experiences and the approach of William James towards the concept of religious experience was made as a new platform in the realm of Psychology. This book mainly focused on the concepts.

1. Healthy Mind and Sick Soul
2. Institutional Religion
3. Personal Religion or Mystical experience

The book made tremendous impact and got influenced in the realm of psychology because it was the first book in the field of psychology gave details about the religious experience and is considered as one of the classic works of William James in the purview of the religious scholars.

Psychologists of 19<sup>th</sup> century inspired the primary motivation to the study of psychology of religion from this work. According to his religious views, there are two forms of religion, one is healthy and another is sick form, but at the same time there is possibility for both forms. Healthy form means, optimistic approach towards the religion and sick form means pessimistic approach to religion.

According to William James, when a person thinks, evil is not an important thing in the world, he always tries to minimize the awareness of the evil, by the way they are living and leading life with joy and who ignore and reinterpret his experience of the evil, he can transform the evil into good. James said that the person who is sick always tries to maximize thought of evil and he disregards the good things and eventually, by mistake he started to believe that good things to be unreal. According to William James, sometimes human awareness varies in specific feelings. Further he says that, there are two kinds of religion, one is institutional religion and other is personal religion. In every society, religion became institutionalized or organized and its contributions are inseparable. They play an important role in formulating the society. Personal religion infers the individual religious experience or the mystical experience, William James was more interested to know the personal religious experience and believed that, religious consciousness is created by the individual with the help of worship, meditation, and deep devotions like eastern monks.

## **Sigmund Freud :( 1826 - 1939)**

Sigmund Freud was a famous Psychiatrist; his contribution in the field of Psychology took another level, particularly his concept about the origin of religion. His approach was entirely different from other Psychologists. His theories on religion made controversies, debates and anyone can simply understand from his theoretical perspectives that he was anti- religious. According to Freud, religion is a form of obsessional neurosis. It is a sort of illusion which involves physical symptoms like pain and neurotic behaviours. Freud believed that, in any religion the pragmatic concepts are common like Symbolic meanings, Rituals, Hysteria and Guiltiness which are commonly found features amongst religious followers. Freud proposed the personal experience as the conflict between what he wants to do with his own desires that are represented by self-identity and what he is forced by society or parents to do. Freud represents this as Superego. In other words, the conflict is determined by minimum or to maximum level by the Ego.

Sigmund Freud strongly believed that, religion comes from the illusion of human mind; it was the projection of the child's physical relationship with the father, because in most of the religious practices, God is treated as a heavenly father. He details about the nature and origin of religion, in his book of Totem and Taboo (1931). In this book he says, the origin of religion is nothing, but it is Oedipus complex, Freud put the name for this concept from the story of Oedipus, who was a king in Greek mythology. He killed his father and unknowingly married his own mother. Oedipus complex means, the relation between the male child, his mother and father. He was

contravened by famous Psychiatrist C. Jung; the concept still holds stand in debates. The male child wants to make love and sexual relationship with his mother, but mother and father already having the relationship, as the result of these feelings male child starts to outlook his father as a love competitor, so the male child develops jealousy, anger and hatred towards his father and intends to kill him. At the same time, he also loves and appreciates his father in this situation ambivalent feelings arise and it leads to dishonour and guilt. As the child grows up he represses these feelings of desire for his mother and hatred towards his father into his subconscious mind. That is difficult to repress them however and resumes as neurotic symptoms, repeatedly in the form of religion and religious practice. Religion tolerates the believer to behave in neurotic overhead ways and compromises a way to reimburse for the guilt the child feels.

### **Alfred Adler: (1870 – 1937)**

Alfred Adler was a famous Psychiatrist from Austria. He was associated with Freud but later he parted him because, Alder highlighted the concepts, role of goals and motivation in his book of Individual Psychology 1925, Freud had differences with his concept and duly Adler had to leave from Freud like Jung. One of the very famous ideas referred by Alder is the - inferiority complex of human being which the religion assimilates and provides compensation. When he spoke about the religion, he says, in most of the religions, God is considered as a super being, omnipotent and perfect being. Human being wants to be associated with God, so they achieve perfection. Further on the very question of the existence of God, he believed

the concept of God as a motivator and helps the people to motivate to do good performances, so the performances or acts has effect on societies too. Our view of God is imperative but more important is that; it can activate and control one's actions. According to Adler, the idea of God has had a guiding idea for mankind towards an ideal society. Thus, Religion is important to initiate the social movement in every society, because it is the social aspect of human life. When Adler compared the impact of science and religion on society, he found religion to be more dominant or powerful and had the capability to motivate the people more effectively than science.

#### **Carl Gustav Jung: (1875-1961)**

C.G. Jung was psychiatrist and founder of analytical Psychology. He was influential in many disciplines like Philosophy, Anthropology and Religious studies. He was the follower of Freud in the initial stages, later he left from the school of Freudian thoughts because of conceptual clash. Freud's explanation on certain psychological concepts on sexuality, dream, Para psychology, unconscious mind and religion was not convincingly apprehended by Jung. Therefore, he differed in his opinions and had to explain his views contrary to Freud's concepts. In his writings, contrary to the prepositions of Freudian ideas, it can be found that, especially in religion, he highlighted the role of religion in society, though it had positive and negative realms. He asserts that, religion is one of the earliest and most universal activities of the human mind.

According to Jung, belief on religion is basically considered as a form of psychological defences. He said that, human beings are naturally religious. Traditional religion and religious beliefs have psychological perspectives; because he felt religious practices can help to get mental benefit and satisfaction of the individual. According to him religion is a source of unconscious mind where there are two kinds of unconscious, one is personal, and another is collective. Personal unconscious come from experience of individual's feelings, thoughts, attitudes and memories these are all not easy to bring to our conscious, because all are very complex in their nature. Jung says in his writings; personal unconscious is felling- toned complex. Collective unconscious or Archetype: According to Jung, "The collective unconscious - so far as we can say anything about it at all - appears to consist of mythological motifs or primordial images, for which reason the myths of all nations are its real exponents. In fact, the whole of mythology could be taken as a sort of projection of the collective unconscious."<sup>5</sup> Collective conscious is common to all humankind; it is derived from ancestral memories that are hidden in unconscious mind which is distinct from individual's unconscious. "Storehouse of latent memory traces inherited from man's ancestral past, a past that includes not only the racial

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<sup>5</sup>C. G. Jung, *The Structure and Dynamic of the Psyche*, V 8, 1960, p. 152.

history of man as a separate species but his pre-human or animal ancestry as well”<sup>6</sup>

Our collective unconscious or archetype are contented with the inherited, which is universal information or kind of data, by birth all human beings are having the psychic archetype, but they are not having conscious about the psychic archetype, but it is innate. C. G. Jung believed, the whole of mythology could be taken as a sort of projection of the collective unconscious.

### **Sociological Views on Religion:**

It is the study of human beliefs system, (religion) practices, institutional and organizational form of religion, through the practices of sociological methods. As a belief system, it shapes what people think and recognize about the world and as a social institution, religion is a pattern of social actions that are organized around beliefs and practices that people understand and develop the meaning of existence. Throughout the history, religion has continued to be a central part of societies and human experience, shaping how individuals react to the environments in which they live. Since religion is such an important part of societies around the world, sociologists are very much interested in studying it. Sociologists attempted to explain the effects of society on religion and the effects of religion on society.

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<sup>6</sup> S. Calvin Hall and Gardner Lindsey, *Theories of Personality*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1957, p. 80.



Sociologists tried to understand, analyze the role of religion in societies and how people approach and following their religion and formulate theories. The pioneers of sociology are Emil Durkheim, Max Weber, Karl Marx and others contributed on the basic understanding of religion from their diverse ideological backgrounds.

### **Emil Durkheim:**

The sociological study of religion is initiated with the seminal works of Emile Durkheim. According to him, religion has powerful role in the human society. Durkheim's views on religion are different from another sociologist. According to Durkheim, "A religion is a unified system of belief and practices relative to scared thing things apart and forbidden –beliefs and practices which united in one single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them" (Durkheim, Elementary Forms of Religions Life, 1912). A Durkheim idea of religion in 'Elementary forms of Religions life' is basically not a supernatural entity or not a divinity, but it can protect the society. We can find some common elemental forms in all religions. Durkheim asserted that, the place of religion in the society infers its value and the effects. According to Durkheim, religion is always an integral part of society. It represents the collective representation and acted as a source of foundation of unity. Religion offers meaning to human life, it provides social governing and helps every individual to connect or related with each other.

### **Sacred and Profane:**

In Durkheim's writings, we can find very significant concepts related to the understanding of religion – Sacred and Profane. These two concepts take prominent position and considerable place in his religious theories. According to him sacred is nothing but an ideal with ultimate value and considered as holy. Sacredness is a human perception about the precious or valued things in the religion. Certain components are considered as sacred like offerings, deities, and auspicious materials. The conception of sacred is not only found in primitive religion (tree, animals, bird, rock are treated as holy or sacred things in tribal religion) but also in modern religious practices (all the holy books are called sacred, holy book Torah for Jewish, Bagavad Geeta for Hindus, Quran for Muslims, Bible for Christians). So, whatever is treated by religion as special, reverence and extraordinary are categorized as sacred. The profane is considered as ordinary or routine things in a life of an individual. These activities are not holy, they are considered as taboos in food consumption and habits. Profane sometimes pollutes the sacred, i.e. hunting or eating meat is not a prohibited one, but killing or consuming scared animal is viewed as forbidden act and it will pollute sacredness.

### **Max Weber:**

Weber believed that, religion is constructed on cultural need of the human beings. He concentrated on how religion made impact on economic aspects of the society, especially in the western society. According to him, capitalism has more influence in western society by controlling economy

because of the impact of Calvinism (Protestant Christian religion). He arrived at this concept through his understanding on United States of America. He had observed the relations between capitalism, labor and protestant ethics. Weber not only concentrated on the impact of economics in religion but also on the ethics and its influence in religion. Western religion gives more importance to materialized things because of industrial revolution. Therefore, Weber labelled his work as a realistic understanding of the material conception. Weber defined the relation between the religion and economic in his work 'The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism 1905'. He argues that capitalism ruled the people in the name of religion or God. The capitalists are forced the people to accept the work or any kind of profession which they need in the name of God or religious ethics. The priests convinced the people to do the work in favour of capitalist to ensure the rewards from the God. This formation of labor exploitation is also same as that of the Vedic concept of Varna dharma in Indian tradition. Weber says, there are some virtues in protestant religion, those virtues are important for functioning of the society, this is called charisma. It means extraordinary power influence and inspires others. Weber analyzed western society as different sects. Which consists of: Priests - or religious leaders? Mystics-having some unusual experiments in religion. Ascetics- people who deprive themselves of normal human comforts and enjoyment. Prophet- The people believe that they receive some messages from God and deliver these messages to the common people in the society.

Weber also observed the role of capitalism in other religions like, Hinduism and Confucianism in the Asian societies. He argues that, the concept of Capitalism does not exist in Asian countries, as existing in the west. According to Weber, India was very large and developed country in means of economic position, scientific inventions and trading tie-up was established with various countries. On the other hand, it still holds the spirituality and Indians give more importance for the religious ethics rather than the economic pursuits based on Dharma. The Indian religious ethics is ritual and value based and not by economy. He further argues that, there is a possibility of Capitalism exists in India through the culture of Hinduism.

The Weber's works gave the understanding that, the difference between the role of capitalism in the western and Indian society is, Western Capitalism in the name of Religion or God and in India capitalism is existed in the name of caste systems or Varna Dharma. Weber says Indian religion or Hinduism fail to provide the appropriate tenet for growth of Capitalism. Hinduism did not have the intension to improve their economic position, because of the basic principles. But China very advanced and developed country in the field of economy, trade and manufacture of many products like papers, silk and electronics and has different approach. Though, capitalism was not developed and undertake in the field of economy due to its religious background, the China's religious Philosophy of Confucianism was not permitted the people to go beyond their ethical values, not only in the field of economics but also over the life of people. The Confucians ideology is very closely related to the nature. The Confucianism advocates that, human

beings should have belief on nature, giving respect and follow the universe, cosmos order. The moral conduct was directed by its tradition. The capitalism is considered as alien concept because it promotes accumulation of wealth, profit orientation and individualism are against the tradition of the Confucianism of China.

### **Karl Marx:**

According to Marx religion is a social institution. It is related to the material and economic reality. As a materialist, he was against the concept of creation theory and analyzed the origin of God and religion by dialectic approach. Marx says, “Religion is the sigh of oppressed creature, the heart of heartless world, just as it is Spirit of Spiritless situation”.<sup>7</sup> He quoted religions as ‘opium of the masses’. He viewed religion as a mighty instruction of the capitalist to control and exploit the labours of the working class. Marx put forth three major reasons against religion. They are:

1. Religion is irrational, which is delusion, it is neglected the people to understand the basic and recognized reality of life.
2. Religion refutes all the honourable in human being by rendering them as submissive, and acquiescent to tolerate situation.

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<sup>7</sup>Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1977, p. 37.

3. Religion is hypocritical, even though it strength profess appreciated or acceptable principle, it is always being on the hands of oppresses.

According to Marx, religion makes divisions among the working class people. It also gives illusionary imagination for them. It preaches a better and happiest life in the next life, whereas he organized the proletariats to overcome the exploitations and win the better world in the current life itself through economic prosperity. He strongly believes that, religions will disappear soon after the working-class revolution and also through formation of the class less society.

### **Scientific views on Religion**

In the history of human beings, religion and science exist as two extreme forces and lead the human society. According to historians, since the beginning of civilized human society that is from the means of undeveloped or uncivilized conditions (as tribe) both religion and science have started to grow gradually. For example: invention of fire is considered as science but worshiping or giving respect to the fire is considered as ritual or religion. Whatever may be the nature, forcefully one cannot understand and could not control the human being, and those things become the God that is called animism. So, there is no doubt that, religion and science are the two pillars, both moves in their own way. Human beings always try to understand the truth of anything with the help of science and scientific tools and through the way of deducting methodology. On the other hand, religious people are curios to search the fundamental reality of the universe and its creation also

through spirituality and experience. When we look back in to the history, one can find the competition between religion and science, there were many evidences in western countries, where many scientists and thinkers who criticized religion were punished and brutally killed in the name of religion and particularly those who speak and write against Bible.

During the period of ancient Greeks; thinkers, philosophers, theologians and scholars from religious institutions looked at religion and science together, as they never perceive any distinction between science and religion. Ancient Greek gifted us many thinkers, like Aristotle, Plato, and Galileo and so on. They were interested in both science and religion. Even though there was no freedom for thinkers, their invention was banned by the religious leaders particularly church and infallible Popes. For example, when Galileo said, earth moves around the sun, he found that with the help of telescope, even though he was a hardcore theologian, the entire Christianity looked at him as enemy of Jesus and Christianity forced him to pay apology to the church moreover they demand him to delete the debatable concept which they presumed against Jesus or Bible. He said, “Of course God cannot be wrong, Jesus cannot be wrong, all the infallible popes cannot be wrong, but poor Galileo can always be wrong. There is no problem about it – I will change it in my book. But one thing you should remember: the earth will still go around the sun. About that I cannot do anything; it does not follow my orders. As far as my book is concerned I will change it, but in the note, I will

have to write this: The earth does not follow my orders, it still goes around the sun.”<sup>8</sup>

In modern times science deals with many things in its own ways. For example; the research about universe, solar system and planets are all well-developed but at the same time the knowledge about the planet and universe already explained by many ancient religions, may be that explanation was not in scientific manner, but we can't denied who had the knowledge. Indians had more knowledge about planets and their rotation. Since ancient days we had many thinkers, like Aryabhata, Bhaskara and Vrahmihira. During the modern period, Science deals with planet research, but Indians are worshipping planets as Gods from the very beginning as part of astrological conception. Most of the time religion made attempts and offered the chance to science to do further research to find the realities. If nothing was said in Bible about the structure of Earth, according to bible, the Earth was flat, so the church did not allow the Columbus to travel, he argued with the church people and the leaders, along with many evidences and tried to prove that Earth was not flat but round, if they had accepted Columbus word, he might not have interest to find or prove that Earth is like a globe. Thus, sometimes religion unknowingly opened the room to rationalized thinkers or scientists. Even though science is improving in many fields, like

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<sup>8</sup> Osho, *Danger, truth at work: the courage to accept the unknowable*, New York: Osho Media International, 2010, p. 59.



explaining the function of universe and origin of human being through valid theories but the important matter is, there are some questions, for which, science cannot give valid or strong answer for example, why that universe exists? Why human beings exist? And how human being attains more knowledge than other living beings, through evolution? These are the basic questions, science could not explain.

### **Postmodern Views on Religion**

The concept of postmodernism started during 19<sup>th</sup> century in European countries. Those who understand this concept must understand modernism. Modernism emphasises on the tradition, absolute reality and perfection in all existing things. It gives more importance to Meta narrative and Grand narrative stories. The meaning of postmodernism is: 'after modernism' that raises is considered as the reaction of modernism. It deconstructs all the ideology of the modernism in all the fields. Postmodernism attacked the tradition, values, realities and universalism. The aim of postmodernism was to prove that, nothing is purely objective, there is no permanent true and false and good and evil. Postmodernism kept away with many things that religious followers or people treated as valuable or important in their religion. It considered that every existing society continues change, so there is no place for absolute values but only relative and there is no absolute faith. It ignores the value of individual religious desires. The religion and morality are formed by cultural framework of certain time, place and community. Post modernism allowed the individual to deal with his own religious urges and he can make his own spiritual or divine world, freedom

for everyone in the realm of religion, it was not fixed the rule for religion what modernism did, if a person, feels good, about something he can go for it. The notion of postmodernism to religion is manmade; it can be changed or altered at any point of time.

According to postmodern thinker, O.S. Guinness, “Where modernism was a manifesto of human self-confidence and self-congratulation, postmodernism is a confession of modesty, if not despair. There is no truth, only truths. There are no principles, only preferences. There is no grand reason, only reasons. There is no privileged civilization, only a multiple of cultures, beliefs, periods, and styles. There is no grand narrative of human progress, only countless stories of where people and their cultures are now. There is no simple reality or any grand objectivity of universal, detached knowledge, only a ceaseless representation of everything in terms of everything else”<sup>9</sup> So, there is nothing absolute reality, perfection, truth and false. On the other hand, everything exists as it is even religion also. Human beings are following many religions in this world, may be or may not be scientifically proved but still they are existing and followed by huge people whether it is right or wrong. The postmodernism dislike the truth that is well articulated by Allan Bloom in his book, *The Closing of the American Mind*, according to him, “The danger...is not error but intolerance. Relativism is necessary to

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<sup>9</sup> Os Guinness, *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds: Why Evangelicals Don't Think and what to Do about it*, London: Hodder & Stoughton Religious, 1994, p. 45.

openness; and this is the virtue, the only virtue, which all primary education for more than fifty years has dedicated itself to [teaching]. Openness - and the relativism that makes it the only plausible stance in the face of various claims to truth and the various ways of life and kinds of human beings - is the great insight of our times. The true believer is the real danger. The study of history and of culture teaches that the entire world was mad in the past; men always thought they were right, and that led to wars, persecutions, slavery, xenophobia, racism and chauvinism. The point is not to correct the mistakes and really be right; rather it is not to think that you are right at all.”<sup>10</sup>

Postmodernism was never against the religion, but it says there is no absolute religion; every religion is right as well as wrong, when a religion or follower claims that religion is absolute. In this world everything keeps on changing so we can't find the perfect reality whether it is religion or God or any concepts. Today something may be true or truth, but it may will be false tomorrow so the aim of postmodern philosophy on the religion is, religion is made by human being for his own convenience. Everyone has a right to follow his own religion and opinions, to the notion that in every body's opinion religions are equally right.

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<sup>10</sup> Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, London: Simon & Schuster, 1987, p. 25.

## **Major Institutional Religions: From Asian Countries**

There are many religions originating and existing in Asiatic countries, but in this discourse seven major religions and their main Philosophical ideas and important principles, are existing and still practiced by majority of the people in Asiatic countries and all over the world, those religious roots are from the eastern countries like, India, China, Japan, and so on. Those religions spread from eastern to other parts of world countries. There are four religions which are from origin of India such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism.

### **Hinduism:**

Hinduism is one of the oldest religions in the world. According to 2012 survey, around 13% of the world people belongs to Hinduism. One million people are following Hinduism all over the world. This is considered as 4<sup>th</sup> biggest religion. It is very difficult to find out the funder of Hinduism unlike Christianity and Islam, that is why it is called as *Sana tana Dharma*, it means eternal religion, the term Hindu come from the Sanskrit word Sindhu. India is very secular country, many religions followed by large number of people since long decades, this is the mother land of some of the religions like Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and it accepts the alien religions like Christianity and Islam. Hinduism is never considered as religion that is called as *Dharma*. Generally, the term *Dharma* has been misinterpreted since beginning, sometimes it is considered as a form of religion. *Dharma* and religion both are separate, and both seem to be same but misunderstand

by people. The term Dharma derived from Sanskrit, the root '*dhr*', which means to hold, maintain, keep and "Maha Bahratha, says, *Dharma* restrains creature"<sup>11</sup> There is no equal term in English to define the term Dharma; it is very difficult to explain. According to Rig-Veda, *Dharman* means cosmic ordinance or upholders, supporter of cosmic law and encompasses many meanings like righteousness, religion, quality and conduct. Dharma is not only related to cosmological entities, but also contributed to day today life like social Philosophy, ethics or morality.

### **Two major systems:**

Basically, Indian religion is divided in to two major parts. orthodox and heterodox. Both systems are clarified by many schools. In Orthodox system, comprises of *Samkhya*, *Yoga*, *Nyaya*, *Vaisheshika*, *Mimamsa*, and *Vedanta*. In each school they have founders. In heterodox system the schools are; Buddhism, Jainism, *Carvaka* and *Ajivika*.

Other facts of Hinduism: Hindus believe in four Vedas, *Rig*, *Yajur*, *Shama*, and *Atharvana*. They are composed by Sanskrit and called as holy books of Hinduism approximately six thousand years ago. Epics like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are also scared or holy texts in Hinduism. In Hinduism there are many Gods, so it is called polytheistic religion. Hindus believe the concept of *Karma* (action) everyone will get punished or reward according

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<sup>11</sup>V. Jha, *Dharmasastra and Social Awareness*, Delhi: Sri Satguru publication, 1996, p. 26.

to their *Karma* or action. The aim of every Hindu is attaining the *Moksa*, because, according to Hinduism, every living being cannot escape from life cycle because of rebirth. Until attaining the *Moksa* no one can escape from rebirth. One who wants to attain the *Moksa* must resolve his *Karma*. Rituals, Worshiping and Sacrificing are the important things in Hindus religious life and people believe that they can help to satisfy the God.

### ***Varna* system:**

All over the world no country practiced very openly the caste system among human beings, there may be colour, racial, creed disparities in some place or particularly in some religions even though they have difference but not hierarchy like Hinduism, in India there is a practice of caste or *Varna* system. *Varna* system is one of the important and sin identity for Hinduism, unfortunately both *Varna* and Hinduism are inseparable entities since *Vedic* period. According to G.S. Ghurye, “Caste is a Brahmanic child of Indo-Aryan culture cradled in the land of the Ganges and thence transferred to other parts of India.”<sup>12</sup> If anyone wants to understand the origin of *Varna* system, who go through *Rig Veda*, the ancient Hindu book, gave detailed description about the *Varna* system, According *Rig Veda*, the cosmic man or self is called *Purusa*, all the *Varnas* created from his parts of the body. There

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<sup>12</sup>G. Ghurye, *Caste and Race in India*, Bombay: Popular Prakash, 1969, p.178.

are four main castes existing in Hinduism and all created by *Purusa* such as *Brahmans* created from *Purusa's* head, *Kshatriyas* from hands, *Vyshya* from thighs, and *Sudras* from feet.

According to Hinduism, the caste system is not created for dividing the people by birth, but by their occupation or duties. The *Brahmans* duties are performing the religious ceremonies, Philosopher, adviser for the King and working as a teacher. *Kshatriya's* duties are governing the people, working as a warrior and protect society. *Vyshyas* involve producing the material things, working as merchants and being as business man. *Shudras* are workers or labourers for the above three classes and one more caste is there, that is untouchable they are called out of caste; their duties are all non-hygienic works like scavenger, sewages. Untouchable people did not allow enjoying anything on par with the upper-class people. There are some other names also used to call untouchable like *Dalit*, *Panchamas* and *Harijan*. 18<sup>th</sup> century the social reformer Jyotiro Phule he introduces the word *Dalit* for oppressed untouchable people.

### **Buddhism:**

Buddhism is one of the important and popular religions in eastern part of country and spread all over world, this is the 6<sup>th</sup> biggest religion, and around 376 million people followed Buddhism. Siddhartha Gautama was the founder of Buddhism in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, Buddhism is considered as part of Hinduism, Swami Vivekananda says, Buddhism is the fulfilment of Hinduism even though it is raised and developed in India, it spread all over

the countries. Buddhism is one of the heterodox religions, it does not believe any Gods, Buddhist aim, or goal is to attain the enlightenment through following the principles of Buddhism that is: liberation from *samsara* or lifecycle. In Buddhism their main principles are: Four Noble truths and Eightfold Path. Buddha while struggling for enlightenment, he discovered the four noble truths, it was the first teaching for his followers and this was the central teachings of Buddhism.

**Four Noble truths are:**

The truth of suffering (*Dukkha*)

Life is full of suffering and struggle; there is no ultimate happiness and satisfaction in our existing life.

The truth of the cause of suffering (*Dukkha Samudaya*)

According to Buddha, craving or thirst is the ultimate cause for suffering, our human mind always blames the outside things for our problems, he says, too much of our desire and attachment of something lead to suffering. So, everyone must understand that, the root cause of suffering is desire.

The truth of the end of the suffering (*Dukkha Nirhodha*)

How do we get the solution for our suffering? Buddha says, non attachment or Nirvana is the only way to put end to the suffering.

The truth of the path that is free from suffering (*Dukkha Nirhodha Marga*)



Following and practicing the eightfold path is the way to attain the liberation and avoiding the suffering, in this stage one who strictly follow the discipline, meditation and mindfulness, craving and clinging will be stopped. Eightfold faith divided in three parts Wisdom, morality and concentration.

**Eightfold path:**

1. Right view
2. Right resolve
3. Right speech
4. Right conduct
5. Right livelihood
6. Right effort
7. Right mindfulness
8. Right concentration

The first two paths (right view, right resolve) are called wisdom or *Panna*. The second three paths (right speech, right conduct and right livelihood) are called morality or *Sila*. The last three paths (right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration) are called as concentration or *Samadhi*. Thus, Buddhism gives more importance to human being, ethics and morality, Buddha in his life time did not speak about God and mostly he refused the concept of God, he always thinks about human being life and their liberation. In later period of Buddha, he was considered as incarnation of lord Vishnu.

**Jainism:** Jainism is one of the oldest religions, originated in India, the period of Jainism is not cleared because it has very early history and the general notion about the founder of Jainism is Mahavira or Varthamana Mahavira is: 24<sup>th</sup> Tirthankara, but some of the Jain scholars say Mahavira was not the founder of Jainism, but he systematically organized the Jain principles which were followed by the predecessors and their preaching are like Philosophies, beliefs and customs. All these principles are still followed by the Jain people. Varthamana Mahavira born in 599 B.C. from *Kshatriya* family, he left from his family at age of thirty after his parents passed away.

**Principles of Jainism:** Jainism is the extreme ethical religion like Buddhism, there are many principles strictly followed by Jain laymen and monks. According to Jainism, there are three jewels (*Trirathna or Rathnatraya*)

1. Right faith (*Samyak Dharsana*)
2. Right knowledge (*Samyak Gyana*)
3. Right conduct (*Samyak Charitra*)

Right faith

1 belief in two-fold division of the universe in the distinctive living and non-living elements

2 beliefs in the interplay of soul and matter through the process of seven fundamental

3 beliefs in the true Prophets (*Tirthankara*) true Scriptures (*Shastras*) and true Preceptors (Jain Saints)

Right faith means, The Jain followers should have faith in substances which are existing, faith means not mere faith that should be determined and avoid the presumption and superstition. A Jain must have the skills to determine to find the truth and differentiate from untruth. This is one of the hardest principles to be followed in Jainism, because every human being has faith in things that are perceived and perhaps our sense organs commit some mistakes. Once the person over comes from this problem, he can reach the next stage that is right knowledge. Right knowledge means one should understand the reality of life, like why the world is complicated? What is the happiness and unhappiness? Where did we come from? Why someone is happy, and someone is unhappy? According to Mahavira these questions or variations of life is not determined by the God or supreme being, these are the results of our actions in this life and in previous lives, every living being including animals, micro organisms and plants are having pure soul and has freedom, but the action or karma of present life or past life covered this purity. This is the basic knowledge about the life and everyone should have. Right conduct is last jewel in Jainism one cannot attain the right conduct without right knowledge and right faith. “Just as a sick person, who has faith in his medicine as well as full knowledge thereof, will not be cured of the disease unless he takes the medicine according to the prescribed procedure,

similarly, an individual possessing right vision and right knowledge shall not be successful in his efforts unless he necessarily practices right Conduct”<sup>13</sup>.

### **Jaina Ethics:**

Ethics is one of the main principles in Jainism, according to this; twelve vows should be followed by all Jain followers that is called *Vratas*.

Five vows of limited Nature (*Anuvratas*,)

1. *Ahimsa* - (Non – violence). This is the core principle among the five vows, according to Jainism every living being has rights in the world, so killing or harming any kinds of living beings like animals, insects and plants is considered as violence.

2. *Satya* - (Truth fullness). This is the second vow; speaking truth, avoiding anything if it is false, avoiding cheating anyone through our thoughts and actions. In some specific circumstances if a person speaks truth and that truth is harmful to anyone, better keep silence.

3. *Achaurya* or *Asteya* – (Non- stealing). His third principle says no one steals other properties, do not rob not only by one own self, but do not through by others.

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<sup>13</sup> [www.jainworld.com](http://www.jainworld.com)

4. *Brahmacharya* – (Chastity). This fourth vow speaks about the sensual controls, here the house holders should be pure, and they do not indulge any kinds of sensual relationship with anyone, apart from legal weeded spouse and also too much of indulgence of any kind of sensual pleasure avoided even with the own spouse. In this case the Monks should not involve any kind of enjoyments.

5. *Aparigraha* – (Non- attachment). This is the fifth vow, speaking about the non-attachment to the material things. According to Mahavira, the real joy and richness never come from out of the world, it means external objects and it never gives peace all that comes from within our own mind, so that everyone should realize. A Jaina follower must know his needs like properties, lands, goods any kinds of valuables things and they do not keep more things; he should limit to keep and used their material things.

### **Three Merit vows (*Guna-Vratas*).**

6. *Dik Vrata* (Vow of limited Area of Activity). This vow minimizes and limits the individual from worldly activities to certain area or places in all the ten directions including above and below so that the individual gives up committing sins. It really helps the individual to avoid violence or keep the non-violence and this vow helps to maintain the space limits.

7. *Boga-Upbhoga Vrata* (Vow of Limited of Consumable/Non-Consumable). Consumable (*Boga*) anything more than used one time is considered as sin such as food, drinks, fruits and flowers. Non-consumable (*Upahoga*) whatever the things not restricted by the *Aparigraha*, it means

any kind of objects can be used several times, such as cloths, furniture, occupation of places. Thus, one should use these two things consumable and non- consumable are depending up on his capacity and his very basic needs limited by this vow.

8. *Anartha-danda Vrata* (Vow of Avoidance of Purposeless Sins).

This vow emphasizes to avoid the unnecessary commitment by one's mental and physical activities such as thinking about something which is not in Jain principle like thinking or talking and preaching about evil, God and inconsiderate actions like walking on grass, indirectly support to war and reading or listening unethical books or literature.

**Four Disciplinary vows (*Siksha-vratas*).**

9. *Samayaika Vrata* (Vow on Equanimous State for limited Duration)

*Samayaika* means relationship of Meditation soul with the nature. This vow is the stepping stone to get the renunciation. According to this vow, the state of equanimous is important to attain the renunciation. If a Jain person sitting down more than 48 minutes in one place, during this time he must concentrate on reading religious books, praying and meditation so that it may repeated in many times in day, it can be observed through our sense organs.

10. *Desavakasika Vrata*- (Vow of Activity of Limited Space) This vow speaks about special or new limit of space; it is already denoted *Dik Vrata* and *Bhoga-Uphoga Vrata*. The life-long limitation of doing some business in some areas and articles are restricted in some days and

sometimes of week. That means performing some activities by everyone is restricted like business, travelling beyond certain city, street and house. This kinds of restrictions still followed by many religions.

11. *Paushadha Vrata*- (Vow of Ascetic's Life of Limited Duration)

Every Jain person should live his life as an ascetic for a period of time. In this period of time he should stay in secluded place, keeps away from all sinful activities, curb from looking for all kinds of happiness from all objects of the sense, and perceive limits of body, speech and mind. That person should follow the *Maha-Vratas* or five great vows in this time and also, he has to spend time for meditation, reading scriptures, worshipping *siddhas*. This vow will help the individual to stimulate and cultivates one's religious life and this is considered as training for an ascetic life.

12. *Atithi Samvibhag Vrata*- (Vow of Charity) This vow concerns about treating the Monks, Nuns and Pious and also needed people, one should have offered the food, clothes and medicine but the same time that food should not be prepared specially or separate for ascetic, offering food or any articles to monks or nuns provides an inner satisfaction and one's who offered food and other needed things, his awareness leads to a upper level and these activities saves him from acquiring further sins.

**The sects of Jainism:**

Jainism is divided into two major sects; one is called Digambara and second is Svetambaras. Digambaras pressure the practice of unclothes or nudity will help to attainment of liberation or salvation. This kind of practice was not

followed by Svetambaras, they are wearing the white cloths and they used to cover their mouth and noses with cloths to avoid killing micro organic creatures. According to Digambaras, there is no possibility for women to attain the salvation. If they want, they should be reborn as a man, but in contrary, Svetambaras women are accomplished in existing or present time can attain the salvation next the idol of Tirthankara wore. This is accepted by both sects but Svetambaras used to covered or wearied cloths to idols but Digambaras keeps up the tradition that idols as nude. Recognized literature for Svetambaras is angas and sutras, for Digambaras only the *Siddhant* or doctrine.

### **Sikhism:**

Sikhism is one of the 5<sup>th</sup> largest organized religions in world, it is the monotheistic religion and originates from 15<sup>th</sup> century in Indian region of Punjab, in all over the world 61% of the followers of Sikhism are living in the state of Punjab and remaining people spread in all over the countries. Sikhism is founded by Guru Nanak Dev. This is the traditional religion and its Philosophy and other principles are called as the Gurmat, which infers 'of the Gurus'. The followers of Sikhism are called Sikhs, it means disciple or learners. Sikhs are basically well-known for their skills of fierce and warriors and Sikhs identify through their five physical symbols. They are called as *kakar* such as:

1. *keshas* (unshorn hair),
2. *kangha* (a comb),



3. *Kara* (metal bracelet),
4. *kachchera* (under garment made by cotton),
5. *kirpan* (small size of sword),

All the above five things every Sikhs should keep their bodies.

**Principles and Holiness of Sikhs:** Guru Granth Sahib or Adi Granth is the holy book of Sikhism. It contains 1430 pages, treated with great respect, which is kept in their temple or Gurdwara. According to Sikhism there is only one God but no gender and material form to God. Sikhism rejects the caste system, class, race, creed, and sex. This is the only religion giving equal respect to women. The aims of Sikhs is the cycle of birth and rebirth and attains or unite the soul to ultimate Universal soul through the help of teachings of gurus, doing meditation, service to society without selfless mind and mind control, proper regulation of desires and instincts. There are four cardinal sins in Sikhism, they are: four sins should avoid by all Sikhs, which is called (*Kurahts*) such as Sikhs should not cut their hair in their entire life, should not commit adultery, should not use tobaccos and any kinds of drugs and eating ritually offered meat.

In Sikhism there are five evils and those evils should be controlled by all Sikhs such as, *Kaam* (lust), *Krodh* (anger), *Loba* (greed), *Moh* (worldly attachment) and *Ahamkara* (egoism). Prohibited, according to Sikhism rituals, idol worship, yoga, superstition, pilgrimages and fasting are strictly prohibited.

## **East Asian Religion:**

There are three major religions originated in East Asia such as Taoism, Shintoism and Confucianism

### **Taoism:**

“Accept everything as just the way it is”

Taoism is one of the ancient religious tradition, emerged in china, it was the miner native religious community in china from the beginning, founder of this religion Lao-tzu or Laotse 600 B.C. and he is considered as the father of Chinese philosophy. The direct meaning of this name ‘Taoism’ in English is the ‘way or path’, sometimes it utters Daoism, the main principle of this religion is morality and way of the nature, the whole universe and everything flows with mysterious unknowable force that is called Tao. According to Taoism, all the elements of the universe not only subjected by the physical theories and law of materials but also that can be applicable to the spiritual universe or immaterial.

**Yin-Yang Theory:** Taoist believed that all things have dualistic nature that is called Yin-Yang. and that Taoist concluded Yin is feminine and Yang is masculine such as life-death, good-bad, light-dark, heat-cold, happiness-sadness....further if someone does not know what heat means, he has never been cold so that, if someone wants to know about heat, he should know about cold, both are different prints in two side of one paper. So, this is the

inseparable or dualistic attributes to continue all the nature material and immaterial of spiritual.

**Eight Pillars of Taoism:** According to Taoism, there are eight pillars or important principles; all will help to lead the peaceful life to human being. According to the book the Great Tao, written by D.R Stephen T. Chang, detailed the eight pillars of Taoism such as,

1. **Tao of Philosophy.** It describes the function of nation such as politics, economics, family, military and many other philosophies related to welfare of human being
2. **Tao of Revitalizing.** This is a kind of exercise to our internal organs, it teaches us how to sit, walk and so on...
3. **Tao of Balanced Diet.** This principle helps to regulate our food habits and food related illness and keep our body in proper manner.
4. **Tao of Forgotten Food Diet.** This emphasizes our herbal food and its importance
5. **Tao of Healing Art.** This is related to realm of medicines and treatments like Acupuncture, Acupressure and all healing methods.
6. **Tao of sexology.** It is the believed as the first philosophy of sexuality, it directs the people to make proper sexual relation and provide the natural family planning.

7. **Tao of Mastery.** It is related to Numerology, Astrology and directionology.

8. **Tao of success.** This helps to reveal the secrets of success of our day to day life.

### **Shintoism:**

Shintoism is considered as indigenous religion from Japan, the term 'Shinto' refers to "way of the Gods". Basically, it was an animistic religion and it does not trace a founder; mostly Shintoism is interlinked with both Buddhism and Confucianism in later days. There are no scriptures for this religion both nature worship and ancestor worship are given due importance. Every ancestor becomes God and Japanese believe that their ancestors are connected with their day today life even in modern days.

### **Shrine and Kami rituals in Shintoism:**

The concept of spiritualism in Shintoism is very unique, because they do not worship any statue or idols, rather worship nature like, mountain, river and tree. Even in their temples or shrines there are no idols. Generally, the most prominent people's god of Shinto is called as 'Kami'. It is a kind of force that possess polytheist concept an exhibit in single Kami. Meanwhile each and every natural element is called as various Kami. "Recognizing the presence of Kami, humans have built shrines to honour it/them. There are even approximately about eighty thousand shrines in Japan. Shrines may be as small as bee-hivers or found in elaborate temple complex covering

thousands of acres. Some honour Kami by protecting the area; some honour Kami with special responsibilities, such as protecting crops from insects”<sup>14</sup>. Every shrine or temple has a priest and they occupy hereditary positions. Every devotee donates something at the place of worship according to their wealth such as coins, rings and bells. These kinds of attitudes exist in many religions particularly in Hinduism and further they clap many times at the shrine to gain the attention of Kami. This practice is also found in Hinduism particularly in the worship of lord Shiva and others. Among Shinto people, they believe water is a natural element that purifies the Shinto peoples. “Before people enter the Shinto shrine, they will splash water on their hands and face and rinse their mouth to purify themselves in order to approach the Kami”<sup>15</sup>

### **Shintoism Ethics:**

There is no code of ethics in Shintoism like other religion such as Christianity or Islam. But the followers of Shintoism believe that, they are the biological descendent of Kami, so naturally they consider themselves as the human beings who know good from evil. “Human beings having been produced by the spirit of the two-creative Kami and are naturally endowed with the knowledge of what they have to do and what they ought to refrain

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<sup>14</sup> Mary Pat Fisher “*Religions Today, An Introduction*” Routledge Fetter lane, London: 2002, p. 127

<sup>15</sup>Ibid, p. 130.

from. It is unnecessary for them to trouble their heads with systems of morality... if a system of morals were necessary, men would be inferior to animals, all of whom are endowed with the knowledge of what they ought to do, only in an inferior degree to man”<sup>16</sup> But in later period Shintoism was associated with Buddhism and Confucianism. However, the followers accept and adopt the ethics and morals from both these religions.

### **Confucianism:**

Confucianism is one of the major religions in China. Across China there are more than 6 million people who follow Confucianism is followed as minority religion in many European countries, North and South America and other part of Asian countries like North and South Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Taiwan and Hong Kong. Confucius (551 to 479 B.C.E) is the founder of this religion and thus, the name is accomplished and attributes the system based on the teaching of Confucius. Basically, this religion is called the way of life. Its system is profoundly taught in most of the endeavours in the area of human life such as Philosophy, family, rituals, education, art, culture and ethics. All the principles described in the writings of Confucius and his disciples are called Analects. Confucius asserts that the teachings and writings of him for his disciples were not his own innovation instead they were rediscovered from the ancient societies which had been truly existed.

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<sup>16</sup> D.B. Picken Stuart, *Essentials Of Shinto*, London: Westport, Connecticut. 1994. p. 344.

In ascertaining the concept of Confucianism, the real task for him was to get back and make that all in appropriate form.

**Teachings of Confucius:** Confucius ideas were followed by the people as a religion and sometimes it is called as philosophy. Even in modern days there are debates about his teachings whether it is religion or philosophy. The focus of his teachings was both social and political in their nature. Even though they are interlinked, social teachings deal with the individual and his relationship with family members and society. The political teachings deal with the function of government and relation of ruler and people of country, military, and education.

**Extract of Social teachings or code of ethics:**

According to Confucius, everyone must have compassion with each other, no men should be treated as others and everyone should imbibe the notion of unity and oneness. When one goes out of the front gate, continue to treat every person in a receiving mentality as an honour to them as guest. When directing the actions to subordinates, do so as though officiating at a great ritual sacrifice. Do not do to others what you would not wished to be done to you. Then there can be no complaint against you, in your state or in your household.” (Analects of Confucius 12.2) Confucius says that there are five relation-ships that are important to make the ideal society and sometimes these relationships are considered as social ethics.

**Parent and Child:** Every parent be indebted to the Childs love and carefulness, they should give good education, that endorses the intellectual

and ethical growths other hand, child should be obedient towards the parent, reverence, respect, taking care of them in their old age and further child keep on respecting of their elders and give respecting to ancestors through worshipping them.

**Husband and wife:** The role of husband in family is to lead the home, protect the family and providing all the material things to family members with right path and the role of wife is to maintain the house, cooperate with her husband. Confucius says, the women's' virtues are identified through their deferential, forbearance and silence. These virtues are giving inner strength to the house holding wife.

**Elder brother and younger brother:** All older brothers help their younger ones to adopt with the society and make him to understand about the social roles. The younger should learn good things from older; he must obedient and give respect to his old or elder brother.

**Ruler and subject:** The ruler should be benevolent like a parent and the subjects must be indebted, obedient and show loyalty. Virtue is the ultimate quality of both the ruler and subject. "If a ruler himself is up-right, all will go well without orders. But if he himself is not upright, even though he gives orders they will not be dutiful. One who governed by virtue is comparable to the polar star, which remains in its place while all the stars turn towards." <sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p 115



**Friendship:** It should be constructed based on mutual virtues, if anyone is not having siblings or by virtue if they do not fulfil it, instead of friendship with that place virtual friendship will help to one self development.

**Confucius Education System:** Virtue is the core concept of all the systems of Confucius, particularly, he stresses more importantly on the virtues in the field of education. He believed that education is the most valuable tool to create the ideal society or state and at the same time, education must have virtues otherwise that education will not fulfil the requirements in society. “Confucius set the tone for Chinese education in a number of important ways. Firstly, affirming that moral training is a key part of education and that such knowledge cannot remain academic, but must be reflected in behaviour”<sup>18</sup> According to him, education should be common for all, there should be no discrimination between the poor or rich. One, who gets education, will help him to understand the society and it can make him to pass the moral code to the next generation, even though all are capable to gain the knowledge. According to Analects, there are classifications about the learners, the most intelligent and most stupid cannot be changes, the second is someone who’s knowledge by birth: they are called as highest people, some who learn through study, some who learn through challenging work, some who work hard and still do not learn, he is called lowest type.

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<sup>18</sup> Starr Don., [www.universitas.21.com](http://www.universitas.21.com), *China and the Confucian Education Model*, May 2, 2012, p. 8.

### **Major Intuitional Western Religion:**

There are many religions followed by the westerners but, three important religions are signified by them such as, Judaism, Islam and Christianity and in this section discourse is made on some of the important and basic concepts of the three religions such as history, belief, concept of god and rituals.

#### **Judaism:**

Judaism is one of the oldest monotheistic religions in the world, when we look back the history of the Judaism, it is the root of both Christianity and Islam and all the three religions are called Abrahamic religions as well as prophetic religions, because divine power sent the message for the ordinary people through the prophets. Generally, people who follow Judaism are called Jews and they are scattered in all directions of world. Even though this religion was the mother of both Islam and Christianity, Judaism is numerically becoming minority around the world. In contemporary period, there are only sixteen thousand millions of the people following Judaism. The origin of Judaism known by the holy book of Jews people called Torah and it means 'God's Teachings or Old Testament' written in the language of Hebrew. According to Judaism, one can understand that, there were four important leaders such as, Abraham, Moses, David and Solomon. They are considered as heroes by the Jews and their contribution were imported to develop the religion of Judaism in ancient days.

**Concepts of God:** Judaism is the monotheistic religion, there is no place for many Gods, and the only one God is called Yahweh. I, even I, am the lord; and beside me there is no saviour.” (Isaiah 43:11) “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord” (Deuteronomy 6:4)

Idol worship is strictly prohibited in Judaism which means no form or forms and shapes, “Do not make any Gods to be alongside me; do not make yourselves Gods of silver or Gods of gold.” (Exodus 20:23). According to Judaism, God has many attributions, such as, God is Designer, he has all the power to create the world and all the existing things such as living and non-living beings were all designed by him and he is simply the artist or designer. God is the omnipotence of world; he has the power to control over all his creation, as a human being what one can do is to give way to God as well as, you turn things upside down, as if the potter were thought to be like the clay! Shall what be formed say o the one who formed it, “You did not make me”? Can the pot say to the potter, “You know nothing”? (Isaiah 29:16.) God is omniscience; he is the well-known person about the past, present and future of all entities and as well as he is being as above all and he knows all the hidden thoughts in our heart, “Lord searches every heart and understand every desire and every thought” (Chronicles 1, 28:9.)

**Jews Rituals and Belief:** There are many rituals performed by Jews in their whole life, as well as many of them are still followed their ancestors even in the modern days. Performance of rituals starts from birth until death in Jews community. Some of the important ceremonies such as, Circumcision, adulthood, menstrual purification and marriage. There are some regular

practices among Jews such as, they should pray three times in a day-morning, afternoon and after sunset and visiting Synagogues or temple on Monday, Thursday and participating in Sabbath, Synagogues service lead by the Rabbi or religious teachers. They are well known for Jews religious laws and traditions. Another important ritual is Jews food laws; they are very unique and separated from others religious community in the way of food habits or food laws and taboos. This is called *kashrut*. According to Hebrew bible, whatever the food taken by Jews is called Kosher, which means something allowed to eat like sheep, goats but some animals. However, there are prohibitions on not to eat animals like, pig, camel and hyrax. “There are some animals that only chew the cud or only have a divided hoof, but you must not eat them. The camel, though it chews the cud, does not have a divided hoof; it is ceremonially unclean for you” (Leviticus 11). On the other hand, death ceremony also strictly following by the Jews people, they believe resurrection, so that cremation of dead body not allowed and embalming.

### **Christianity:**

Christianity is popularly known as a world’s largest religion, spread all over the world in vast numerical, people who followed this religion are called Christians, Jesus Christ was the founder of Christianity and basically Christianity build upon the Jewish belief systems such as the concept of one god and the messiah or messenger.

### **Trinity:**

The central doctrine of Christianity is Trinity, which means God being as the unity of three separate persons, such as Father, son and Holy spirit and each of the individuals are naturally divine, at the same time, there seems to be a contradiction or misunderstanding this doctrine that in there are many ways to understand the concept of trinity, if one takes the milk as example, if milk is considered as Father, the properties of milk is curd and butter, just like Son and Holy Spirit. Milk is the unity of curd and butter, both butter and curd having separate taste and qualities just like Son and Holy Spirit even though they have separate identity but at the same time, butter cannot be as milk or curd cannot be as butter and milk cannot be both butter and curd, milk has special characteristic, thus the above distension makes clear about the Trinity. “We worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in unity, neither confusing the Person, nor dividing the substance. For three is one person for the Father, another for Son, and yet another for the Holy Spirit. But the divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one.... Thus, the Father is God; the Son is God, and Holy Spirit Is God: yet there are not three Gods, but there is one God.” <sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Fr. Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, *Divine Intimacy*, vol. 3, San Francisco: 1987, p.228.

### **Dispute on Jesus birth:**

Many Christians believed that Jesus Christ was the founder of Christianity and the meaning of name Jesus is 'God saves' by Hebrew literature, Jesus Christ claims himself is the son of God, but both Jews and Islamic believers are opposite to the concept of son of God, because one can understand the religions of Jews and Islam, but they believed that there is any son for God, God is the only ultimate reality. They believed and accepted the messengers. Jesus has done many miracles in his life like heals the blind person, raising from after death and appear before his disciples, and his birth is also considered as miracles. "But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for the conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.'" (Matthew 1:20) Since ancient period up to modern days, there are some controversial debates and arguments about the birth of the Jesus Christ and his absence of eighteen years. Many of the modern religious scholars and religions like Islam put the question about the virgin birth of Jesus, they disagree the virgin birth and Jews and Islam followers says, Jesus virgin birth was illegitimizing. On the other hand, the New Testament not cleared much about the Jesus life after the age of twelve until thirty still the debates going on among the theologians, historians and many scholars. Some say that he was staying with his father Joseph, learning the carpentry work and spending his time to read Jews religious writings, on another opinion he moved from his place and went to Himalaya in India and

someone argued he spent his time in England, like that unproved and imaginary beliefs and speculations with regard to absence.

### **Teaching of Jesus:**

Most of his teachings or preaching recorded by his disciples or Apostles like Matthew, Mark, Luke and John according to their documentation we can understand the life and teachings of Jesus. Jesus travelled and preached in front of the people. Most of his teachings was story likening, related to the love, peace and haven or kingdom of God. He made the right path through his preaching to reach the heaven. Many of his teachings were taken from Jewish law. In Jesus, life he did not maintain disparity among the people. During the period of Jesus there were lot of people suffered by discrimination in Jewish society but he treated all in the same way, and most of his friends were poor and lower level in society like fisheries, toll collector, he behaved with his disciples in a humble manner and he washed his disciple's feet, his main teachings were love your neighbours as yourself, sermon of the mount was the incident in Jesus, from there only he started his preaching.

### **Islam:**

Islam is the second major religion in the world, 1.6 billion people are belonging to the religion of Islam, Islam is not the autonomous religion, it is the Prophetic religion like, Christianity and Judaism. Prophet Muhammad was the founder of Islam according to Order, he is called Allah. The Arabic word Islam refer the meaning Peace but unluckily some people from other

religions, been considered Islam as source of violence, radicalism and fundamentalism. But reality there is misunderstanding with regarding to the views on Islam. People who followed the religion of Islam is called Muslims, which means a men or women who submits to the will of God and one cannot be as a Muslim by simply born in Islam, according to Islamic law, the real Muslim must believe one God that is Allah, and everyone accept the Prophet Muhammad as a last Prophet.

### **Five Pillars of Islam:**

There are five fundamental faiths or Pillars in Islam particularly mentioned in Hadiths, every Muslim should believe on that such as,

1. Declaration of faith or *Shahada*:

It is the belief of monotheistic God, that is Allah and there is one messenger of God, is called Prophet Muhammad.

2. *Salat* or Prayer

Every Muslim should accomplish prayer five times daily such as: *Fajr, Dhuhur, Asr, Maghrib* and *Isha'a*. Above all the prayers have to be perform orderly dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset and evening, all the prayers should be facing the *Kabah* in Mecca by the person, as well as every Friday young males of Muslims joint together and worship.



### 3. *Sawm* or Fasting

This is the third pillar of Islam, during the ninth month of the lunar calendar (Ramadan) every Muslim should keep on fasting from dawn till sunset.

### 4. *Zakat* or alms charitable

This is considered as voluntary charity to the slave, poor, debtors and needy people, according to this faith or Pillar, wealthy people should spend their 2.5 % of one's income distribute to above people.

### 5. Hajj or Pilgrimage to Mecca

Hajj is considered as the aim of Muslims, this is the called spiritual journey or Pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca and this is mandatory duty for all Muslims.

## **Concept of God in Islam:**

Generally, the concept of existence of God. Plays a major role. In most of the religions God has many names and forms but in the case of Islam, the concept of God is very unique that is called Allah, there is no form, no gender and plural like gods or goddess and no similarity for him so that Muslims believe that Islam is completely monotheistic religion. In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Say (O Muhammad), He is God, the One God, the Everlasting Refuge, who has not begotten, nor has been begotten, and equal to Him is not anyone" (*Surah Al-Ikhlās*, Chapter 112). There is no inequality among the human beings in God's creation. Basically he is not in favour for certain group of people, race, wealthy and poor but people themselves made unequal through the way of getting favour by their

merits and devotion. There are two major branches in Islam namely *Sunni* and *Shia*; both are politically different but not spiritually. Between the *Shia* and *Sunni*, the quarrel started after Prophet Muhammad's death. *Shia* in Arabic means supportive or group, they accept the leadership passed from the Prophet Muhammad, direct relation to Ali bin Abu *Talip* and they do not consider anyone else who has been elected as leader so that they are known as Party of Ali or people of household. *Sunni* Muslims believe the tradition of the Prophet and do not accept the blood relationship of Prophet Muhammad. The meaning of the Arabic term *Sunni* is: following the tradition of Prophet' and they believe new leader should be elected from among the those worth full one, the friend and adviser of Prophet Muhammad, Abu Baker elected as first leader or Caliphate.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **SOCIO-CULTURAL VIEWS ON RELIGION**

#### **Introduction:**

Society, culture and religions are considered as important entities of human beings in all over the world at any time. Because those three things are inseparable from human beings in day to day's life, most of the times human beings cannot think beyond three things at any circumstances, particularly religion and culture are very sensitive matters because both culture and religions are the basic elements to construct the society and they have important roles to channelize the human beings in a moral way. Society, culture and religions work as controlling mechanisms.

#### **Religion and society:**

Since the dawn of human civilization, religion has been an important aspect of the society. Conferring to anthropologists the world religions ongoing as the movements of explanation and renaissance for groups looking for more inclusive answers to their difficulties. The simplest way to define religion is to refer it as a belief or the worship of a God or Gods. From the ancient period religious groups influence and inspire human beings by generating conceptions of which is right, and which is wrong. Undoubtfully religion offers the forte and helps which is essential to deal with the determined dilemmas. Some people's opinions and absence of any tangible sign may be immature. They are not elevated in the communities even though they practice their religion with piety and obligation. Religion and religious activities have an

immense influence in today's society. Generally, these effects are diverse and both negative and positive influences can be resulted.

According to Vivekananda, "there is nothing that has brought to man more blessings than religion, yet at the same time, there is nothing that has brought more horror than religion. Nothing has made more for peace and love than religion; nothing has engendered fiercer hatred than religion. Nothing has made the brotherhood of man more tangible than religion; nothing has bred more bitter enmity between man and man than religion. Nothing has built more charitable institutions, more hospitals for men, and even for animals, than religion; nothing has deluged the world with more blood than religion."<sup>1</sup> Religion has both positive and negative aspects, one who believes the religion may be a peaceful one. When a man follows the path of religion, he grasps it as the occurrence of an ultimate power that is above human beings. These things bring a sense of humility. Religion emphasis upon the good actions that matter in life and thus help to make a better human being through the instructions. Religions and its negative effects to individual and society has been criticised from early to modern period. Even though religions are helping to uplift the mankind, the bitter truth is that all religions have of many unbearable hidden issues such as wars and terrorism and so on. Religious wars will make both physical and mental forceful conversion through the utilization of poverty of other religious people. Religion has been prominent among the people of this world. Diverse groups and communities of people organized to form and follow certain religion. Religion is a trust that people follow to make societies. They believe in their religion because it gives them mental power

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<sup>1</sup>*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, Volume 2, p.291.

and peace of mind. In the contemporary period, the word religion is highly glorified. More than this rehearsal offers peace and happiness to the people of the societies. There are many religions followed by people like, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Sikhism. Though, people follow these beliefs blindly from long periods sometimes it leads to the major conflicts and riots. In the name of religion, many fake leaders take the advantage of the circumstances which are socially intolerable, leading to tensions and wars.

### **Religion and Culture:**

The concept of culture is extremely an intricate one. It is one of the grimmest concepts to define at the times. Many disciplines like Anthropology, Sociology, Philosophy and other scholars have attempted to define the culture. Every discipline appears to be aware with culture. But there is no uniform definition to culture. The concept of culture not only varies according to the Scholars or definition by discipline but also according to the period, because culture keeps on changing and one culture can't be followed by all groups or all people and specific cultures can be accepting by some people in one place but denied by others. For example, in Indian culture eating beef is denied by some group of people but it is accepted by other groups. It means people who consume beef are not considered as uncultured people, it is their own culture. Thus, the culture's definition is varying from person to person and place to place. It depends up on people's convenience, ecological and many of the things like food, clothes and shelter.

## **Culture**

The social tradition of people infers their culture. This contains the information that it is a result of thousands of years of association. People from certain areas behave according to their culture that reflects on attire, language, views, customs, and traditions and even on the articles and devices used by the people. Culture is a communal knowledge and henceforth used and shown by all people of the society. According to E. B. Tylor, culture is, “That complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”.<sup>2</sup> Cultural Anthropologist, Paul G. Hiebert defines culture is, “The integrated system of learned patterns of behaviour, ideas and products characteristics of a given society.”<sup>3</sup> According to William A. Haviland, cultural anthropologist, “Culture consists of abstract values, beliefs and perceptions of the world that lie behind people’s behaviour and which that behaviour reflects. These are shared by the members of a society, and when acted upon they produce behaviour considered acceptable within that society.”<sup>4</sup>

## **Religion:**

In ancient times of animism there was mainstay of people of all societies and it was considered as religion. Early People were terrified by natural marvels and

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<sup>2</sup> E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, London: Bradbury, Evans and co., 1871, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Paul G. Hiebert, *Cultural Anthropology*, New York: J. P. Lippincott Com, 1976, p. 25

<sup>4</sup> William A. Haviland, *Cultural Anthropology*, Chicago: 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1990, p. 277.

they could not find answers to the phenomenon like lightening, fire, earthquake and volcanoes. They created elucidations to make sense of things about them. These incidents create a system of beliefs that is called as religion. If one does not want to dig deeper into what constitutes a religion, sacredness and profane in a society reveals about the religion being practiced there. The concepts of morality and what is right and wrong are based upon the religion being practiced in a place by the people. Belief on God or Gods worship and provision are the fundamental ideas of all religions of the world. The more significant concept is that of morality and right or wrong as it aids as a guiding force to the people of a religion. Religions have sets of principles, beliefs, codes and rituals that make them different from other religions and different religions have different descriptions.

#### **Distinction between culture and religion:**

Culture and Religion seems to be similar but, both are separate, but much closer. There are various theories that propose a perfect relationship between them. Religion is the soul of culture. This view doesn't reflect the fact that, there are many non-religious cultures still exist. One can preserve culture but religion is totally separate. The cultural essentials must not be disordered with the religious essentials. There is no universally accepted definition of Culture; however everybody agrees that, it refers to all the compound knowledge that exists in folks of a certain Society. Culture is reflected in the linguistics, in costumes and also in the devices used by the people and also in the way of communication that is distinctive of different people. However, these are only the concrete aspects of culture and how the people in a society observe themselves and their knowledge that is learned and

not the result of hereditaries which is closer to the concept of culture. Religion is a portion of all cultures and in fact most of the ethnicities and customs in each culture have a religious basis.

- “Culture is a process of evolution while religion is a process of revelation.
  - Religion exists in some written forms like holy or sacred books while culture exists in practical form. Behaviour and habits shows the culture of a specific community.
  - Religion is wholly God made while culture is manmade.
  - Two different religions mostly share the same culture. For example, some of the habits of American Christian and Muslims are same but same religion may not have diverse cultures.
- Cultures vary with the passage of time while it is impossible to rewrite the fundamental structure or basic structure of the religion.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Religion and Institution:**

Every religion has its own institutions around the world and all religious institution established for the sake of their own religious people’s upliftment. If people follow their own religion then why should they need the institution? Answer is, no country has only one religion or religious followers, people belong to several religions and they spread it. Some religions may be majority and some may be minority, for example in India Hinduism is the major

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<sup>5</sup><https://www.differencebtw.com/difference-between-culture-and-religion/14-2-2018>)



religion and minorities are Christianity and Islam. So, the role of institution is governing the people and provides the basic needs like food, education and medical. Religious propaganda is one of the important aspects of religious institution.

### **Religious conversion:**

Religious conversion is one of the significant parts of religious institution. Religious conversion means, a religious follower converts from his own religion to other religion, there may be social, economic conditions or any kind of reasons behind. There are many evidences regarding the matter of religious conversion in the human history up to the present period and most of the war and riots done in the name of religion particularly happening for religious conversion in and around the world. "Religious conversion provides converts with an opportunity to embrace a community of faith and a philosophy that nurture and guide that offer a focus for loyalty and a framework for action. Whether the conversion is from one religious tradition to another, from one denomination to another, from no involvement to participation in a religious community, or is an intensification of commitment within one's faith, the process can be complex but compelling and transformative."<sup>6</sup>

Religious Conversion is a complex and multi-dimensional activity.

Religious conversion has always been a problematic issue. In Western

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<sup>6</sup> Lewis Rambo Ray, *Understanding Religious Conversion*, USA: Yale University Press, 1993. p. 31.

countries it is different from the eastern countries because in western countries most of the people belong to Christianity and Islam and there is less social hierarchy. In Christianity there are many divisions, but they cannot convert from one division to other and in Islam two major divisions: one is Shia and the other is Sunnis. If anyone wants to convert from Shia to Sunnis or Sunnis to Shias they can, just like divisions of Indian religion like saivas and vainavas. In eastern countries like India there are many religions like, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. Hinduism followed by many people and it has number of sub-division like, Saivism, Vaishnavism, Buddhism and Sikhism. In Hinduism there is class disparity like, *Brahmana*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Sudras*.

#### **Reason of religious conversions in India:**

India being multi religious country encompasses many religious faiths. However, these religions are cocooned by the systems of caste in India and every religious system has caste hierarchy, it is due to the influence of the Hindu manifold that upholds the caste system in India. Most of the religious conversion had been taking place in lower strata in the hierarchy of religion. The main reason is:

- Constant oppression on the lower strata by elite class;

People are well known that, it is the fundamental reason for religious conversion particularly in south Tamilnadu, India most of the conversions happening due to the domination of the elite class. The education, job opportunities and basic needs of day today life and all other things are handled by refuges of the upper-class people. These things are still happening in

Tamilnadu particularly in southern region in the name of class disparity. According to Dr.BR. Ambedkar, this is not a fight between two enemies. Class struggle is concerned with the problem of untouchability. The struggle is between the untouchable caste Hindus people. This is not the discrimination against a person on the perpetrators. The class struggle is associated with social status. To keep a proper relationship with another class, a class that reflects protest, demands equal status with other classes. Here it is very easy to understand the reason of upper-class people's anguish. If anyone behaves as their equal, it hurts them. Untouchability is not short-term or temporary issue. This is eternal conflict. It has been existing over the generations to generations; even after the individual death. Because of low caste, the Hindu believes that, Religion is immutable. Depending on the circumstances there is no chance for change, if somebody is in Hinduism. One can be continued there until his death. The fight between Hindus and untouchables is continuing forever constantly. The most important question is how to face this struggle.

□ Gaining economic, social and political status

From 1930 onwards, many Christian missionaries established in Southern Tamilnadu by the British. The missionaries stated that, the schools provide education for the lower-class people. Because of the Christian missionaries the awareness about education, economics and politics in the lower-class people made possible. Then people started converting from Hinduism to Christian voluntarily.

□ Religious conversion through propaganda

The holy book of Islam's Quran and Christian's Bible reveals propaganda is a religious duty for everyone. In Islam it is called as '*thava*' which means call everyone to this Islam through publicity and it should not be through force. Now days there are many religious conversion meetings founding the missionaries. According to Vivekananda, "Those who are converted, are the few who make a sort of living by hanging round the missionaries. The converts who are not kept in service in India, cease to be converts. That is about the entire matter in a nutshell. As to the way of converting, it is absolutely absurd. The money the missionaries bring is accepted. The colleges founded by missionaries are all right, so far as the education is concerned. But with religion it is different. The Hindu is acute; he takes the bait but avoids the hook! It is wonderful how tolerant the people are. A missionary once said, "That is the worst of the whole business. People who are self - complacent can never be converted."<sup>7</sup>

According to the Indian constitution, an Indian citizen can follow any religion which he likes and he can propagate such religion among the people. At the same time, if a person is forced to convert by any other people to any religion, it is a crime and if a person he or she committed that crime, he or she can get a jail term up to three years with 50000 thousand rupees penalty and if that crime happened with the Scheduled caste and Scheduled tribe people or

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<sup>7</sup>*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, Volume 8, p 147

minors, they will get more than four years jail term and one lack rupees penalty.

- Religious conversion through one's own experience and knowledge.

A person can change his religion through the influence of others religious culture, tradition, principals, belief, worship and inter caste, inter religious marriages and so on.

### **Issues associated with religious conversion**

#### **Communal tension and Social isolation**

A person when converts from one religion to other, encounters some problems in the society, people may avoid that the person's relationship due to the reason of unawareness of the conversion and people may think that converted person will propose for everyone to convert. Even that person may be neglected by the family members, relations and neighbours also and he is not allowed to any functions and rituals in the society.

#### **Cultural identity and legal problems:**

Religious conversion makes the individual, social isolated in the beginning stage the converted person has to struggle to the identity problem. However, his name will be changed and he is in the new circle and he has to adopt the new culture, and those people cannot get alliance very easily. In countries like India, there are certain legal problems behind the Religious conversions. In Tamilnadu according to the anti- conversion act; a person from the Dalit category like SC or ST after conversion to other religion like Muslim or Christian, he will be treated like MBC, he won't get any reservation and he

will not allow for any privileges, these are some of the legal issues encountered during the conversion. People are being killed because; they cling too tightly to their own beliefs and ideologies. When we believe that, ours is the only faith that affirms the truth, violence and suffering will surely be the result. The present religious leaders should take it upon themselves to provide spiritual knowledge and preach tolerance instead of initiating communal hatred by flaming speeches or literature. Whatever the religion one follows is the route that converges towards one takes in getting to the same destination as the others. Until one feels secured with in the religion the process of religious conversion will persist.

### **Religion: Unity or Diversity**

Religion as unified force:

Due to the growth of evolution throughout the world, many religions were recognized and each of them motivates to moral, ethical and truthfulness. Most of the world religions encourage being virtuous towards others and leading peaceful life, even though the ceremonies, customs and worshiping system of each religion is different. They have to motivate the people of different paths. So, religions encompass the spirit of collective harmony. The aim of every religion is maintaining the harmony. All the major religions like Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Buddhism have been established to maintain harmony. There are many religious leaders and preachers of many religions in the world who are involved in encouraging their own religion. The aim of these preachers is to rise the number of people more and more and towards growth the number of people of one religion. The dissemination of

religions has only been done to grow the sense of unity. Wherever the unity and harmony are not among the people, religion will be terminated. Even though in India there are many religions practiced by many people still is the secular nation, one can find many similarities from subclasses of Hinduism, for example both Buddhist and Janis core concept is: Ahimsa or non-killing, non-killing infers that not only human beings but also to the any living being but both ideology or lifestyle are different. The world is encountering dangers because of the religious conflict, in the history of the world, although religions are separated due to the principle and theories, but some religions embrace good faith of other religions. Some of religions are:

#### **Din I Ilahi, Brahmo Samaj and Bahai movements:**

Din-I Ilahi or the religion of God was a religious movement in India established by Mughal emperor Akbar in 1582 CE. The main aim of Akbar was to combine Islam and Hinduism into one faith, and also to add some of the aspects of Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Jainism too. Akbar had a peculiar personality in the Mughal dynasty. He ordered for translation of Hindu Vedas and Ramayana and Mahabharata. He forbidden killing of cows, desisted from eating meat on some days and celebrated non-Islamic festivals. He had more interest on religious matters and he found an academy during 1575, which was called Ibadat Khana, or the House of Worship; it was the meeting place of all religious faith, many religious leaders and thinkers like Hindus, Islamise, Jains and Persian involve discussing the religious matters, faith and God. They debate each other, even Muslim leader from Shia and Sunny sects also clashed with regard to highlighting their religion. Akbar

pondered and debated on comparative religion of Sunnis, Sufis, and Pandits of Hinduism, Catholic priests from Portuguese Goa, Paris and Zoroastrians for knowing the ultimate truth. Akbar called academic monks from Europe, Hindu and Buddhist monks and yogis supported them gave them separate interviews and was absorbed seriously. Akbar was not satisfied with any one of them, so he concluded that, all the good faith of religions comes under one platform. This is the only way to put an end to the religious conflicts. In 1582 he yielded a new religion which is called Din I Ilahi, but people were not hassled to admit it. He has given more freedom to the people to follow their own religion, at the same time he announced if anyone interested to adopt other religion, they will be associated. Akbar struggled to combine Hinduism and Islam, because in India major population belong to Hinduism. It was considered as mass religious revolution by historians and most of the Muslims became against his new religious movement including his family members also. But Akbar did not consider about the opponents and consequence, he followed his religion till his death. Even though there was a political phenomenon behind the foundation of Akbar's revolutionary new religious movement Din-I- Ilahi, it is still admired by the people because Islam is one of the strict religions and there is no place for idol worship. But his religion not followed by anyone after his demise, but it was considered as a brave and wonder attempt to unite various religions under the one umbrella.

### **Elements of Din-I- Ilahi**

- Highlighted morality, forbidden lust, sensuality and pride, and removed



Piety. The central value of this is self-denial and compassion.

- ☐ The killing of cow was forbidden. (Brahmanism)
- ☐ No scriptures (Natural religion)
- ☐ Sun worship should be followed in four time in a day (Hinduism)
- ☐ Fire worship (Zoroastrian)

### **Ten virtues of Din-I- Ilahi**

Freedom and charity

Refraining from bad action and disgust of anger with mildness

Limiting worldly wishes

Taking the path of non-violence in social life

Piety, wisdom and meditation

Sublimity

Soft voice, calm words and fair speeches.

Affectionate attitude for others

Development of attachment towards the Supreme Being

Self-purification by enkindling longing for God.

Akbar was more interested in understanding other religions than his own religion. His comparative religious thought is made sympathy to all religions. His doctrine was called as *Sulh-i-Kul* or peace with all. He stressed on the peaceful and synchronicity of the people from various religious societies, but his new generous religious attitude considered as hostility of Islam. Maxmuller said, regarding Akbar's effort of new religious movement, consider as he was the first student of comparative religion in his era. Akbar's

religious thoughts and actions showed his extreme anxiousness, was worried about the religious situation in India because there were harmful among the people. There is a need for peaceful and tolerance among the religious followers. He thought that, religion should unite the people, but the situation was entirely opposite, so he struggled to make new religious ideology such as Din I Ilahi. He believed that, his religious thoughts as Universal, peaceful, tolerant and unites the people. Even though many Muslim leaders were against his religious ideology but certain people from other religions praised him and nickname like Lord of the time, (Sahid I zaman) perfect man (Insan I camil) and lion of God (Shir I khuda). Moreover, Hindu people called him as incarnation of Lord Rama. Akbar believed in the unity of the nation that can be attained through his new religious idea. Unfortunately, it was failure due to the political phenomena and strong fundamentalism of other religions. If his religious ideology was succeeded, there is no doubt that Indian religious history might be tremendously change and religious tension or war could be avoided.

### **Brahmo Samaj:**

19th century was the most important in Indian history. During this century there are many cultural changes and political turns. Brahmo Samaj had a significant influence on the development for society founded in 1828 AD. This is the first reform movement. Raja ram Mohan Roy was born in a wealthy family in 1772 His family had faith in Vaishnavism. His family was engaged in tax collection under the Mughal rulers. He studied English, French, Latin, Hebrew, Greek, Sanskrit and Hindi. His authors introduced him to Aristotle, the Koran and the Bible and have gone to England several times because of his

passion for English thought. When he started living in Calcutta, he began struggle against religious and social evils in Hindu religion. It is apt to say that Raja ram Mohan Roy is the father of renaissance in modern India. He opposed the idol worship and criticized the cynical and irrational religious rituals of the caste system. He was convinced that only one God was insisting on Hinduism, Christianity and Islam, and he rejected many of God's worship of the Indian religion, the Lord of the Christian, his Son and the Holy Spirit. He was aware that Hindus knew the philosophical light of Christian and Islamic religion.

Brahmo Samaj members should follow the 'single deity' worship. Raja ram Mohan Roy has made it clear in the Brahmo Samaj document. When worshipping God, we should worship with not only our hands but also with the heart. One should remove the haughtiness of ourselves and devote our soul to God. Thus, Raja ram Mohan Roy insisted that, people can feel that, all are brothers. Many of the key members of the Indian National Congress are Bengalis. Among them are those of the Brahmo Samaj. Specifically, Vipin Chandra Paul, Arabido, C.R. Das are the members of the Brahmo Samaj. Like these, Ishwara Chandra, Tagore and scientist Jagdish Chandra Bose and Prabhullah Chandra Rai are known as intellectuals in Bengal. They are from the Brahmo Samaj. Brahmo Samaj is a vast feeling of consciousness that adapt to Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity and all religions and their religious literature. This movement was primarily considered by the wisdom of Hinduism. Therefore it was designing as a platform for intellectual activity. The Brahmo Samaj has removed caste oppression in Bengal and cultivated human love. Brahmo Samaj means the Association of the Worship. Rajaram Mohan Roy felt that idolatry should not be done. He has created two systems

called the Atmya Sabha and Unitarian Church before commencing the Brahmo Samaj. In 1815 the Atmya Sabha was formed in Calcutta. Many of the progressive minded Bengalis joined it. The association focused on prohibition of getting rid of sexual abuse, removing polygamy and improving female education. At the same time, supporting English education also provided the idea of studying Indian scriptures and religious beliefs with English thinking. English-speaking Indians believed that, English education would help them avoid the barrier to mix their heritage identities with the British. Unitarianism was very popular, and it is emerged in western countries as against to Trinitieism. Raja ram Mohan Roy communicated with this movement and said that he wanted to spread the theory of 'one deity' in India. The result is the Unitarian Church. Roy has said that they accept the Christian religion from its miracle. Raja ram Mohan Roy has learned about the Islamic religion in Patna during his youth. At the same time, he has learned deeply in Hindu cults in Kashi. Later, Calcutta realized the Christian religious values. He has also gone to Tibet and studied Buddhism and Jewish religious ethics. He felt the need for an organization to work with many religions, and he created the Brahmo Samaj. "My English friends criticize the superstition of Hinduism. It looks right to me too. Therefore, I created my system to exclude them from pure wisdom," said Raja ram Mohan Roy

### **Bahai:**

The Baha'i faith is the world's youngest religion, which came into Persian in 1844. Today it is an independent global community with over 65 lakh believers in more than 300 countries and regions. Bahais are now living in over 120,000 local communities around the world. The Bahai faith was revealed by the

name of Baha'u'llah. The translation of “Baha'u'llah” is “the light of the Lord” or “Tejas”. It is also translated as “Vishnu Yasha” in the Sanskrit. It is said to be “Glory of God” in English. The essence of Baha'u'llah's message is about human solidarity.

### **The Role of Bahai's to make Universal Unity of Humanism:**

The Baha'i religion has a very different approach to current social problems. The Baha'i Faith and the various activities of its members focus on the world's major improvements like Cultural diversity and environment. To diversify the decision-making process, including new ideas of security; This includes the social and economic justice in the world that has become a global neighbourhood from the renewed commitment to family life and ethics. Its unity is the most unique fulfilment of the Baha'i Faith. The Baha'i community has successfully overcome the long periods of time to divide between religions and communities, including social and political movements, other religions. The Baha'i faith which has the most turbulent history, like other ancient religions has so far preserved its unity. Baha'u'llah has challenged the work of a global unity that day. That activity has been greatly improved today. Traditional obstacles such as race, class, religion, and nation are gradually disassembled through the history of history. Baha'u'llah foretold that, the present forces will create an international civilization over time. The main challenge for the world's people is to accept the truth about their unity and to help create this new world. Baha'is around the world are trying to create a new and peaceful global civilization. They often act to achieve this goal through the individual and social transformation. Baha'u'llah says that, a world society must be thriving, and it must be based on certain basic principles. All

preferences; Full equality between male and female; Understanding the basic unity between the great religions of the world; Reducing the distance between poverty and mass; International education; Compromise between science and religion; Continuous balance between environmental and technologies; Baha'is throughout the world express their commitment to these doctrines. It is often expressed by a large number of social and economic development programs that are recently implemented in the basement community communities through the transformation of individual and Baha'is. The three fundamental beliefs are the foundations of this unity.

**God is one:**

The doctrine of the Bahai's that God is one. In universe all the beings and energies contained within it are created by a supernatural force. This power, which we call God, is perfect and full of knowledge over his creation and complete authority. Although we have different opinions about the nature of God, we worship him differently, but they refer to him as "Allah" "Yahova", "God" or "Brahma."

**All religions are the same:**

In fact, there is only one thing in the world that is God's religion. This occurs evolution, and every religion in the world represents a whole stage of evolution. The teachings and actions of God's incarnations are guided by God and are not natural or human. Baha'u'llah describes the event that takes place whenever the incarnation of God appears in the world to insist on this view. All the works of God's incarnation represent God's Word. These words are considered as important phenomenon known as the Apocalypse, because

the specific deity is the longest standing on earth after the disappearance of the planet. For this reason, the writings and words of God's incarnations are referred to as "Revelations" in a limited rang.

**Humanity is one:**

While the path towards God is said to be strong, Baha'u'llah reveals that, the path towards God is the only general path, and the people of the world are travelling in different positions. Baha'u'llah's prayer is said to be as follows; "Lord, you have made men all the same from a parent ... You are destined to live as one family" Mankind has one God as His Creator; It is made from the same soil. Baha'u'llah taught that man's outbursts are not reflected in his true spirituality. Baha'u'llah also teaches that all world religions have been created to gradually reveal God's goodwill and purpose.

If the global human society is to prosper, it must be set up on the foundation of some basic principles. The most important of these are:

- ☐ Humanity is the same family
- ☐ All kinds of racial, religious, artistic and cultural priorities must be removed
- ☐ Full gender equality between male and female
- ☐ The fundamental unity of the world's primary religions should be discerned
- ☐ Excessive poverty and excessive wealth should be eliminated
- ☐ Everyone must be forced to educate
- ☐ Everyone should explore the truth arbitrarily
- ☐ Finding compatibility between science and religion

- ☐ A global health institution based on social security and human solidarity
- ☐ Accept a World Translation with Mother Language
- ☐ To establish the same economic system internationally
- ☐ All children must be educated

The growth in the soul is the real life. The life of the soul takes place in a short time of this world and continues to be stable in the different worlds of God.

The goal of human life is to live a godly life in the world and live in the path of God, to prepare himself for the spiritual world that God has given to man, and to reach the One who created Him there.

#### **Religion as Diverse Force:**

Religious conflict and all kinds of religious problems have evolved along with religion created by men, no one denied that, the truth that religion become powerful force to make divisive among the people. By looking back the histories there were many brutal killings, mass wars and violence happened in the name of religion. Perhaps religions created for social unity and govern the people since long years, but religious people do many things against the religion. All kinds of religious issues have existed during civilization, but the question is why these issues still persist even in modern and civilized world also? No religion teaches about violence or division, but religions emerged as biggest power to create in every society, it is really shocking because, even though there is good purpose to the society, it leads to the opposite consequence. Everyone has the responsibility to look in to the religious issues with seriousness, because the whole world is struck by the



religious issues due to the loss of humanity in the name of religion that is reflecting all over world in the forms of war, terrorism and conflicts.

According to Swami Vivekananda, ones who understand and the sources of the religious experience must transcend his natural urge towards sensual world. Emotions of religious expressions in everyday life are not the uniform. Religious thoughts are articulated within an enormous range in day to day life and it keeps on changing from place to place, man to man, time to time. Consequently, the world religions have many kinds of doctrines, ritual and experience and every religious group like Hindu, Muslim, Christian and Buddhist have their own faith and rituals.

Swami Vivekananda believes that, the diversity of religion is made by God himself. He says, “This is a fact in the history of human race that all these great religions exist, and are spreading and multiplying (except Zoroastrianism). Now, there is a meaning, certainly, to this and had it been the will of all-wise and all-merciful creator that only one of these religions should exist and the rest should die, it would have become a fact long, long ago. If it were a fact that one of these religions is true and all the rest are false, by this time it would have covered the whole ground.”<sup>8</sup> Sri Ramakrishna believed that, diversity of religions is, as the will of God. He elucidates that, the existence of all the religions is by will of God. Sri Ramakrishna says, God gives to diverse people what they need and pleasure and digest. “The mother does not give fish pilau to all her children. All cannot digest it; so, she

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<sup>8</sup>The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, Volume 2, p 362

prepares simple fish soup for some. Everyone cherishes his own way and follows his own nature.”<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, Vivekananda says, multiplicity of religions is necessary for the upliftment of spiritual society and material development. He believed, “it is the clash of thought, the differentiation of thoughts, which awakens thought and makes societies dynamic”.<sup>10</sup> Further he asserts, “If there were not different religions, different world-views, no one religion would survive.”<sup>11</sup>

The above view reveals that, there is no need to worry about religious diversity. It is the basis of our existence; one must be inspired by it and at the same time one should be conscious that religious diversity. It is the key sources of present day conflicts in most of the fields like social, political, and cultural and so on. For centuries the supporters or followers of different religions have clashed to one another. They continue to fight and kill each other, in numerous cases regrettably in the name of religion and all this fighting is for the sake of religion or for the sake of individual or nationwide motivations unseen underneath the pretext of religion is a stuff to explore, and this is the concern of anyone here and nobody can contradict that the utmost part of the responsibility can be placed upon religion.

The modern Neuroscientist Abhijit Naskar says, “You can reach the roof of your house by stone stairs, by wooden stairs, by bamboo steps or by a rope. Likewise, there are diverse ways of experiencing the Absolute Divinity the

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<sup>9</sup>Gupta Mahendranath, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Madras: Swami Nikhilananda, 1985.

p. 540

<sup>10</sup>The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata Volume 2, p 362

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, Volume 4, p482

Ultimate Oneness. In fact, in that blissful state of oneness, you and God are one and the same thing.”<sup>12</sup> “Religion doesn't divide the society, the humans reading the wrong books to understand religion.”<sup>13</sup> Above quest shows Swami Vivekananda's idea of religious diversity is similarity to modern religious scholars too. According to theologian Wilfred Cantwell Smith, “Religious diversity poses a general human problem today because it disrupts community. It does so with a new force in the modern world because divergent traditions that in the past did and could develop separately are today face to face. Different civilizations have in the past either ignored each other or fought each other; very occasionally in terry ways perhaps they met each other. Today they not only meet but interpenetrate; they meet not only each other but jointly meet joint problems and must jointly try to solve them. They must collaborate. Perhaps the single most important challenge that mankind faces in our day is the need to turn our nascent world society into a world community.”<sup>14</sup>

Swami Vivekananda, Abhijit Naskar and Smith is not only correlated to the nature of diversity but also it expresses the importance of how a person who viewed the diversity of religion. Both optimistic and pessimistic thoughts are considered here to understand the religious diversity. The whole idea depends on the way who look at diversity and it has creative and a negative power. On the other hand, Swami Vivekananda believed, to make the harmony of religion in the society by sorting of religious differences, here the significant thing is how different religious followers observe other religious groups or followers

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<sup>12</sup> Abhijit Naskar, *In Search of Divinity: Journey to The Kingdom of Conscience Neuro Cookies*, 2016, p 112

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p 30

<sup>14</sup> Wilfred C. Smith, *"The Christian in a Religiously Plural World," in Christianity and Other Religions*, Philadelphia,: ed. John Hick and B. Hepplewhite, 1980, p. 94-95

either as opponents or as friends. Thus, the attitude of others to attain religious harmony will be further important than the presence of diversity of religions itself. There are three important approaches existing in human mind with regard to the religion such as the Rigid or adamant approach, integrating approaches and multiple approaches.

**Rigid or adamant approach:**

A religious man strongly believes and thinks that, his religion is the best in the world. Apart from his religion, rest of all are worst and no one can convince him. Those people are called as fundamentalists. They never accept others religions even though who knows good things about other religions. Moreover, they blindly follow their own religion without asking any questions even though there are unworthy concepts, so these kinds of attitudes will lead to religious discrimination and diversity. Those people can do anything for their religion. They even ready to sacrifice their lives, they can easily misused by their religious leaders and the resolute of these attitudes will be the root cause of many social evils like religious terrorism, bomb blast, human bomb explosive, religious attacks, riots on minorities and so on. Those people have narrow religious mind because they believed we have our own God; holy book and we have our own path and ideology than why should we think about others religion because they are satisfied with their religion and they make all false statements of other religions. The whole world is affected by this kind of attitude. The above attitude with the story of well-frog of Swami Vivekananda and also story of elephant and blinds by Ramakrishna.

**Integrate approach:**

When we look back the history, there are many attempts made by the eminent thinkers to integrate all the religions. Integration is the understanding of the different religions by accepting all good thoughts to unite different faiths. For example, Akbar, Bahauallah, and Ram Mohan Roy. They were try to put an end to the unlimited violence and fighting between diverse religious sects by tying them, Akbar tried to unite the Islam and Hinduism in the name of Din I Ilahi, Ram Mohan Roy tried to unite Christianity and Hinduism in the name of Bhramho Samaj and Bahauallah the new religious movement trying to unite all the religions in the name of Bahaism. Integration of religious attempts is done by those three thinkers. But the result was not successful, because of the people are fundamentally religious.

**Multiple approaches:**

Multiple approach view tried to admit others. Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda were not only good examples of this multiple approach towards religion; they practiced in their real life through the service, tolerance towards various religions as different pathways leading to the same goal. The aim of multiple religions is reaching the same goal though the different way, one way maybe an obstacle, other maybe quite easy another maybe very much hard to reach so the way is not considered as primary. At same time criticizing others way infers to criticizing one's own religion too.

Thus, Swami Vivekananda says, "I accept all the religions that were in the past and worship them all; I worship God with every one of them, in whatever form they worship Him. I shall go to the mosque of Mohammedan, I shall enter the Christians Church and kneel before the crucifix; I shall enter the

Buddhist temple, where I shall take refuge in Buddha and in his law. I shall go into the forest and sit down in meditation with the Hindu, who is trying to find the light which enlightens the heart of everyone.”<sup>15</sup>

In the writings of Swami Vivekananda, one can find many declarations. His ideas with regard to different religions are; no need to be critic of any religions and without any attempt to throwaway or to unite them, accepting them naturally as they are. He did not consider all the same, because he was aware of the variations among various Classifications. He believed that, this is the only way accept all religions as it is to make religious diversity as a foundation of dynamism rather than a negative element to the unity and harmony of the community.

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<sup>15</sup>*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, Volume 2, p374

## CHAPTER IV

### SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S CONCEPTION OF RELIGION

#### Introduction:

Swami Vivekananda was the unique personality during his time particularly the concept of religion, his approach towards the religion was entirely dissimilar from others and his religious ideas made new platforms not only in India but also in western countries. Even though he was considered as a Vedantic Philosopher by the people. He looked at anything from the rational manner and this kind of attitude shows his individuality. According to Swami Vivekananda, "Religion is the manifestation of the divinity already within man. Therefore, it is not necessary to have doctrines or dogmas and intellectual argumentation. It is a realization in the heart of our hearts. It is touching God; it is feeling God and realizing that I am a spirit in relation with universal spirit and all its great manifestation"<sup>1</sup>

One cannot find religion in any text or it is not a principle and system and we can't search the religion in temple or in any kind of place and anywhere. But those things may help as the tool, who tries to understand the religion, then the questions like, what is religion? Where that religion is existing? And what is the form of religion? He says, religion is nothing, but it is the relation between the individual soul and Supreme Being or God, and also it is the personal experience and realization through the spirituality. "Religion does not mean simply worship of a divine being. It is a way of life-matter of

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<sup>1</sup>Jyotirmayananda, *Vivekananda; His Gospel of Man Making*, Madras: 1988, p. 55.

“being and becoming.”<sup>2</sup> Other important questions are what is the purpose of religion for the society? What can we get from religion? His answers are; the aim of religion, lead human being from ordinary life to spiritual life and make perfect and ethical society. He says, “again and again you hear this objection advanced, ‘what good can religion do? Can it take away the poverty of the poor?’ Supposing it cannot, would that prove the untruth of religion? Suppose a baby stands up among you when you are trying to demonstrate an astronomical theorem, and says: ‘Does it bring gingerbread?’ ‘No, it does not’, you answer. ‘Then’, says the baby, ‘it is useless’. Babies judge the whole universe from their own standpoint, that of producing ginger bread, and so do the babies of the world. We must not judge of higher things from a low standpoint. Everything must be judged by its own standard and the infinite must be judged by the standpoint of infinity. Religion permeates the whole of man’s life, not only the present but the past present and future...Is it logical to measure its values by its action upon five minutes of human life? Certainly not.”<sup>3</sup>

Swami Vivekananda believed that, religion originated from two signified theories such as one is spirit theory or ancestor worship and other is super natural or nature worship theories. Both the theories were accepted by many scholars even in modern days also. Both theories have the common element and they are beyond human mental sense, however, with regard to the first theory, primitive people could not know very much about death,

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<sup>2</sup>Swami, Vivekananda, *A hundred years since Chicago, A Commemorative volume – I*, West Bengal: Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna mission, Belur, 1994, p. 35.

<sup>3</sup>*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, Volume 1, p. 3.



because death is beyond their control and it made them confused and they might thought that dead body can live in another level, they might come again in the real life so that, they kept all the things in the burial ground whatever they used in their life like hunting weapon, ornaments and dress. That reason could be the root of ancestor worship, this practice followed in many religions around the world particularly old Egyptian people still following the old tradition in modern days also. In orthodox Indian tradition and also some of the indigenous people around the world followed the traditional methods. The second theory reflects on the natural force and awe on those natural forces by primitives might be the reason to root the origin of religion because of much natural force and elements like thunders, rain, sun, twister, flood and so on. In Indian religion, there are many Gods called by the name of natural force like the sun is called Suriya dev, for rain- God Indiran, the wind or air God called Vayu so that Swami Vivekananda believed that, natural worship is also the significant reason for the origination of the religion.

#### **IV.1 Rational Approach to Religion:**

Since ancient times religion and science understood as two extreme entities. During Swami Vivekananda period, people believed that, religion and science cannot travel together particularly in Indian tradition. But Swami Vivekananda broke that idea and he paved new vision and expression to make the relation between religion and science, According to him, religion means not only mere worshiping of God and spiritual orientation. that religion is very closely related to science and he says, how the scientific laws or mathematics cannot differ in any place of the world like

that the personal experience of any religious man or mystics cannot differ from one another, this the real science. The aim of the religion is to find out the truths of the metaphysical world such as God and soul on the other hand science deals with the physical world. According to him, physical science and religion are indifferent and have a close relation. “There are two worlds, the microcosm, and the macrocosm, the internal and the external. We get the truth from both by means of experience. The truth from internal experience is psychology, metaphysics, and religion; from external experience, the physical sciences. Now a perfect truth should be harmony with experiences in both these worlds. The microcosm must bear testimony to the macrocosm, and the macrocosm to the microcosm; physical truth must have its counterpart in the internal world, and the internal world must have its verification outside.” <sup>4</sup>

Swami Vivekananda believed that, Indian approach on religion is the most similar to the scientific approach of the physical world and he tried to compare the Upanishad Sages with scientist but both are defective, because both do not have much knowledge about the other area or fields. Scientific study deals with the rational approach to find out the truth and facts from outside and religion tries to understand the reality or truth from inner mind with mystical experience. Religion is nothing, but the spiritual realization of human being particularly in Hindu tradition, religion is considered as an inseparable entity within most of the human beings and their life so that he said, “I shall try to bring before you the Hindu theory that religions do not come from without, but from within. It is my belief that religious thought is in man's very constitution, so much so that it is impossible for

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<sup>4</sup>*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, Volume 3, p. 347.

him to give up religion until he can give up his mind and body until he can give up his thought and life.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, self-realization will help everyone to understand that God not from the outside but within their soul.

### **Religion and Science:**

Swami Vivekananda believed that all religions speak the same truth and he considers that religion is also a kind of science. He insisted that religion and science should work together and understand the reality absolutely. In the lecture on “*Religion and science*”. “Swami Vivekananda said that, experience is the only source of knowledge. Religion is the science where there is no surety, because it does not think as a science of experience. This should not be. There is always a small group of men who teach religion from experience. They are called mystics and these mystics in every religion teach the same truth, this is the real science of religion. As mathematics in every part of the world does not differ like the same way mystics do not differ. They are all similarly constituted and similarly situated. Their experience is same and becomes law. Swami Vivekananda revealed the close inter-relationship between the physical science and the science of religion. “There are two worlds: one is microcosm another is the macrocosm, the internal and external, we get truth from both these by means of experience, the truth gathered from internal experience is psychology, metaphysics, and religion, from the external experience, the physical science. Perfect truth should be in harmony with the experience in both these worlds. The microcosm; must bear testimony to the macrocosm and the macrocosm to the microcosm; physical

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid, Volume 3, p. 4.

truth must have its counterpart.”<sup>6</sup> He rightly pointed out that, the scientific approach of the physical world is very similar to the Indian approach of the religion. He said that, comparisons of the Upanishad sages with the scientists are naturally defective. He identified that, sages are ignorant of physical science and scientists are ignorant of religion. The scientific spirit and approach find expression in any department of scientific study in the gathering of relevant facts, their rational interpretation and facing the final challenge of verification has been the Indian approach. According to this approach, “The practice of religion is a ceaseless quest after the facts of man’s inner life, at the innermost depth of which it finds the truth of god, which it defines existence, infinite knowledge, and bliss, the *sat-cit- Ananda*. Brahman; it comes across, at the intermediate depths, all higher values which find expression in any man’s ethical, moral and aesthetic experiences. A dispassionate study of these facts constitutes the science of religion, the science and art of the spiritual life.”<sup>7</sup> Swami Vivekananda explained the Indian approach towards religion and the cause of the misunderstanding between science and religion. He said that, religion deals with truth at a metaphysical world just as chemistry and the other natural sciences deal with the truths of the physical world. The books are mostly ready to learn chemistry is the own mind and heart. The sages are often ignorant of physical science because he reads the wrong books- the book within and the scientist is too often ignorant of religion.

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<sup>6</sup>*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata, Vol 3, p. 4

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.* p 6

### **Vedanta and Science:**

To the general understanding of the common people, Vedanta means religious Philosophy of Hindu tradition or end of Upanishads and, they believe it as the significant concept of Hinduism or Hindu Spiritual Ideological Systems but the reality is far away. Basically, most of the Vedanta philosophies exist as science and its approach expose rationality, then why people, do not have much knowledge about Vedanta or why they have misconception on Vedanta as a religion, because from the very past Vedanta did not teach certain group of the people due to the hierarchal social system. Science deals with many matters like Medicine, Astronomy, Geography, mathematics and so on. All those things were explained by Vedanta in some thousands of years ago. Both science and Vedanta speak the same things, but they differ in their methods and approach for finding truth or understanding the reality, science goes with the methods of reasoning and critical inquiry. On the other hand, Vedanta is inner or self-inquiry, moreover scientific inquiry towards on object and Vedanta concern on the subject. In the twenty-first century, many scientists accept Vedanta because; it is basically related to science. According to Swami Vivekananda, "Science is nothing but the finding of unity. As soon as science would reach perfect unity, it would stop from further progress, because it would reach the goal. Thus, Chemistry could not progress farther when it would discover one element out of which all other could be made. Physics would stop when it would be able to fulfill its services in discovering one energy of which all others are, but manifestations and the science of religion become perfect

when it would discover Him who is the one life in a universe of death, Him who is the constant basis of an ever-changing world”<sup>8</sup>

There were many Philosophers, scientists and thinkers of the world admired Vedanta and they also praised the advanced knowledge of Vedanta. For instance many of the thinkers/scientists had apprehended the significance of Vedanta on its scientific tempers like British Philosopher and mathematician Alfred North Whitehead. He says, “The vast knowledge of today cannot transcend the *buddhi* (intellect) of the *Rishis* in ancient India; and science, in its most advanced stage now, is closer to Vedanta than ever before.” The great scientist Albert Einstein says, “We owe a lot to Indians who taught us how to count, without which no worthwhile scientific discovery could have been made.”<sup>9</sup> Another physicist Brian David Josephson says, “Vedanta and the *Samkhya* hold the key to the laws of mind and thought a process which are co- related to the quantum field, i.e. the operation and distribution of particles at atomic and molecular levels”<sup>10</sup> So the above thinkers writings and their understanding on the Vedanta is the evidence to prove that Vedanta has a close relation to the modern science.

### **Religion is soul**

Swami Vivekananda raised the question: How can all these varieties be true? If one thing is true, its negation is false. How can contradictory opinion be true at the same time? This is the question which he intends to answer, and whether the all religions of the world contradictory? He did not mean the external forms in which great thoughts are clad. He did not mean

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid, Vol, 1, p. 14.

<sup>9</sup><https://www.thoughtco.com/quotes-in-praise-of-india-1770404>

<sup>10</sup><https://books.google.co.in/books>

different buildings, languages rituals and books engaged in various religions but he means the internal soul of every religion. Every religion has a soul behind it, and that soul may differ from the soul of another religion, but they are not contradictory but supplementary. Each religion takes up one part of the great universal truth and spends its whole force embodying and typifying that great truth. It is, therefore an addition but not exclusion. That is the reason why system after system arises. Each one embodying a great idea and ideals must be added to ideals. He said, "I worship God with every one of them in whatever form they worship him not only shall I do will these, but I shall keep my heart open for that may come in the future."<sup>11</sup> He has used the metaphor of the infinitely many radii and the centre of the circle. All the radii meet the centre. When there is no diversity it cannot be said that the centre is the essence of the radii or that is the universal of the particular radii. The centre is the goal to which all the radii lead.

### ***Bhakti yoga:***

"A real genuine search after the Lord, a search, beginning continuing and ending in love. It is a religion of love."<sup>12</sup> This way deals very little with philosophy. What is the meaning of *Bhakti*? It means deep love or affection; the devotee has a deep love of God and that love converts to emotion. He always thinks about God. That is called *Bhakti Yoga*. Who one attains God through *Bakthi yoga*, is called *BhaktiYogin*. Vivekananda says that, strong emotions have the capacity to awaken and activate the potential powers of man, and it is possible to activate so much that man can know God himself.

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<sup>11</sup>Swami Vivekananda, *What Religion is*, Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 1972. p. 32.

<sup>12</sup>*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, Vol. 8, p. 75

Ordinary emotions can be converted into powerful feelings. Vivekananda discussed *Bhakti Yoga* through *Vishishtadvaita* and *Advaita* points of views. He says about, Ramanuja understands of *Bhakti* yoga as, “The system of Ramanuja admits the unity of the total, within that totality of existence therefore for all practical purposes. This system also brings dualism; it was easy for Ramanuja to keep the distinction between the personal soul and personal God very clear.”<sup>13</sup> Ramanuja accepts the unity of existence, on the other hand all practical purposes and its implications are idealistic, and the liberated Jiva attains the extreme state, where all desires are realized. According to Ramanuja, the unity of the total and within that totality of all existence is eternal differences in their nature. He always distinguishes between the personal soul and the personal God very clearly. He said Sankara's Advaita Philosophy of Iswara is the highest reading of the absolute by the human mind. There is a clear-cut difference in the conception of *Iswara* between the *Bhakti* and Advaita schools. According to Vivekananda, the worship of Avatars is the part of Bhakti yoga. It is necessary for a *Bhakti Yogin*. The Avatars can transmit Divinity and true devotion. The incarnations are the highest manifestations of Iswara through human beings; we can see God through them. “Higher and nobler-than all ordinary in the world. They can transmit spirituality with touch, even with a mere wish. The lowest and the most degraded characters become in one second saints at their command. They are the teachers of all teachers, the highest manifestations of God through man. We can't see God except through them, we cannot help worshipping them; and indeed, they are the only ones whom we are bound to

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<sup>13</sup>Swami Tapasyananda, *The four Yoga of Swami Vivekananda-Condensed and retold*. Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1979, p. 103.



worship.”<sup>14</sup> There are certain basic disciplines which are necessary for spiritual growth and development of devotion. These disciplines are:

1. *Viveka* or discrimination
2. *Vimoka* or abandonment of all desires except for God.
3. *Abhyasa* or practices
4. *Kriya* or discharge or duties
5. *Kalyana* or purity
6. *Anavasada* or strength

Devotion controls the passions and the practice of spiritual *Sadhana* helps to produce *Sattva* Guna. Vivekananda says: “Bhakti Yoga is the science of higher love. It shows us how to control it, how to manage it, how to use it, how to give it a new air as it were and from it obtain the highest and most glorious results, that is how to make it lead us to spiritual blessedness. Bhakti yoga does not say “gives up” it only says “love; love the highest” and everything low naturally falls off from him, the object at whose love is the highest.”<sup>15</sup> The devotion implies a sense of highest delight in the devotee. *Bhakti* is not motivated by any thought of return; it leads man to the highest state. At last, comes the full blaze of light in which this little self is seen to have become one with the infinite man himself and is transfigured in the presence of this light of love, and at last he realizes the beautiful and inspiring truth that love, the lover and the beloved are one.

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<sup>14</sup>Swami Vivekananda, *Teaching of Swami Vivekananda*, Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 1971. p.

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<sup>15</sup>Swami Tapasyananda, *The four Yoga of Swami Vivekananda-Condensed and retold*. Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1979, p. 33.

### ***Jnana yoga:***

The way of Jnana yoga has brought about a distinction from true to unreal. The true reality is Brahman and the phenomenon is nothing but appearance due to Maya. The Jnana Yogin discriminates the reality and tries to realize the identity of *Jivatman* and *Paramatman* through his experience. According to *Jnana yoga* the cause of man's suffering is the ignorance of the identity of Jiva and Brahman. According to the *Jnana yoga*, man is a universal being. He is Omni present, Omni potent and omniscient; we can attain this highest state when he realizes true nature the universal being. Realization of our true nature as Brahman is the only way to conquer the death. Vivekananda thunder voice is that, "we are not individuals yet. We are struggling towards individuality, and that is the infinite and is the real nature of man. He alone lives, whose life is in the whole universe, and the more we concentrate our lives on limited things the faster we go towards death and that is why the fear of death comes. The fear of death can only be conquered when man realizes that so long as there is one life in this universe, he is leaving. When he can say, I am hi everything and in everybody, I am in all life, I am the universe, then along comes the state of fearlessness." <sup>16</sup>

Advaita Vedanta is the only philosophy that can attract the rational mind, its metaphysics or logic is not destructive in nature. Advaita Vedanta does not have any quarrel with the dualistic philosophies. The philosophy of *Jnana yoga* is Advaita with its impersonal God with only three attributes - Sat-Existence, Cit - knowledge, Ananda - Bliss... This philosophy is the only remedy for the correction of all one side and exclusive of religion, with the

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<sup>16</sup>*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, Volume 8, p. 80.

gradual realization of these truths, with gradual perception of the physical and moral harmony and unity of the world the Janna yogi attains peaks of wisdom and spiritual experience that are denied to ordinary mortals. “He looks at the whole world and also at himself from such a lofty, ethereal, noble view - points, that all elements of littleness, weakness, sin, vanish and he is as it were one with the everlasting and the universal.”<sup>17</sup>

### **Raja yoga:**

The religion is not only based on the Divine experience of ancient sages. The science of yoga teaches us how to get this divine experience and Raja Yoga offers us how to train our body, mind and senses to realize the highest reality. “The Science of Raja Yoga proposes to put before humanity a practical and scientifically worked out method of reaching this truth.”<sup>18</sup> The well-trained mind is an instrument in the hands of the soul through proper training.

The concentrated mind directed towards the internal facilities like a dissipated ray, then illumine. Vivekananda said, “The science of Raja yoga in the first place proposes to give as such a means of observing the internal states.” The instrument is the mind itself. The power of attention, when properly guided and directed towards the internal world, it will analyse the mind and illumines the facts for us. This only means at knowledge.

According to Raja yoga, there are eight steps. They are:

1. *Yama* - which consists in the practice of non-injury, truthfulness, non-

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<sup>17</sup> D.V, Athalye, *Quintessence of Yoga Philosophy based on the teachings of Swami Vivekananda*, 1960, p.8

<sup>18</sup> *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, Volume 6, p. 128.

- Stealing, continence and non - reception at a gift.
2. *Niyama* - Which consists purity, contentment, austerity, study and Self-surrender to God
  3. *Asana* - Perfect Body posture for deep meditation.
  4. *Pranayama*- Control of vital force.
  5. *Pratyahara* - Restraint of the senses from their objectives.
  6. *Dharana* - Fixing of mind on a particular spot.
  7. *Dhyana* - Meditation
  8. *Samadhi* - Attainment of super consciousness.

The first two steps *Yama*, *Niyama* are moral disciplines, the third step *Asana* is very important in Raja Yoga. The practice of *Hatha* Yoga or *Asana* purifies the nerves system of the body. Sincere practice of *Pranayama* will raise the *Kundalini Shakti*, when this *Shakti* is raised, tremendous will power generated. Vivekananda said about *Kundalini Shakti*. That “It is triangular a form in which, in the symbolic language of *Yogis*, there is a power called the *Kundalini* coiled up. When the *Kundalini* awakes it tries to force passage through this hollow canal and as it raises step by step as it were, layer after layer of the mind becomes open and all the different visions and wonderful powers come to the yogi, and when it reaches the brain the yogi is perfectly detached from the body and mind; the soul finds itself free.” The fifth step of Raja yoga is *pratyahara*, which literally means ‘gathering towards’. In this step a yogi with holds the mind from going along the way of perception and in gathering this *pratyahara*. In *Dharana*, the yogi holds his mind at a certain point. In the state of *Dhyana* and *Samadhi*, the Raja Yogi holds that, the mind can go beyond the self-consciousness level of the mind. Vivekananda says,

“Samadhi is the property of every human being every animal from the lowest animal to the highest angel,” some time or other each one will have to come to this state, and then he understands the real religion. Till then we only struggle. Towards that that stage, there is no difference between theist and atheist because no one has pleasant experience. Each of the steps to attain Samadhi has been reasoned out, properly adjusted, scientifically organized and when faithfully practiced, will surely lead us to the desired and then all sorrows ceases, all miseries vanish, the seeds for actions will be burnt and the soul will be free forever. So, the four *Yogas* are not exclusive of each other and the divisions of *Yogas* are made only based on the dominance of one type of quality and character. In all ordnance with the normative ethics of the Bhagavad-Gita, Vivekananda has reinterpreted the *Karma*, *Bhakti*, *Jnana* and *Raja Yogas*. This is the most significant intellectual achievement and contribution to modern Hinduism. Therefore, the idea of synthesis of the four *Yogas* such as *Karma*, *Jnana*, *Bhakti*, *Raja* the vision of the Paramatman is obtained.

### **Elements of Religion:**

According to Vivekananda, every religion has three important components such as Philosophy, Mythology and Ritual which are all considered as main factors to construct any religion. Around the world, in every religion, those elements exist and the components of these elements makes religion as meaning full and if one element misses in any religion that religion will lose its nature. According to Swami Vivekananda, “Religion without Philosophy becomes superstition; Philosophy without Religion is atheism” Philosophy holds the basic doctrines of religious life and it deals with metaphysical

theories such as God, Soul, Rebirth, Heaven or Salvation and philosophy works as a form of ethics. Religion helps to achieve his goal and it offers a compact rational footing to the religious trust. It gives awareness to the followers of religion. A man cannot be religious without knowing the significance of the philosophical nature, so blindly following the religion will be meaningless.

Mythology is another important thing in every religion, it is considered as a concret form of religion from philosophical ideas. Generally, it is known as guide, holy books or religious writings by the leaders or early religious followers. Mythology will help man what he must do or do not. All the recognized religions have the mythological writings i.e. for Hindus the Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita and for Christianity - Bible for Islam - Quran. Rituals are the practical part of religious life. They teach man to be a religious man and how to do performances like ceremonies, sacrifices, *poojas* and worshipping methods. He says, “Rituals are the kindergarten of religion. They are necessary for the world as it is now; only we shall have to give people newer and fresher rituals. A party of thinkers must undertake to do this. Old rituals must be rejected, and new ones substituted.”<sup>19</sup> So, rituals give mental strength and inner happiness to the followers. On the other hand, religious rituals are considered as mere superstitious belief and practices by the rational thinkers, but the question is: there is nothing wrong in practicing the rituals unless they are pain full. Rituals create hope to the human beings. Performing sacrifices, *poojas* and ceremonies to God or Divinity should bless the people. Unwanted or meaningless rituals should be given away instead of

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<sup>19</sup>*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, Volume 5, p. 267.

scarifying food for God. It is preferable to offer goods, food and shelter for poor people in the name of religion.

### **Nature of God, Man and Soul:**

The nature of God, Man and Soul are the important entities to understand the religion. These three are closely related in most of the religions in the world and every religion discussed about them in their own way.

God is the central being in all religions except in some heterodox religions like Buddhism. The aim of all religions is to find out the God and surrender to him. Most of the religions believe that, God as the creator. The man is the only living being in the world with higher knowledge and senses. Even though man is like animal biologically, but he has extra knowledge. Because of his thinking mind, the Philosopher Aristotle says, Man is a rational animal. The nature of man explicates in all religions from the very past and all the religions describe the nature of the man according to their religious point of views.

**God:** To explore the nature of absolute reality has been the dominant objective of the human beings since very past. There are many interpretations of God in all the religions and the inquiry about the God is antiquity and that inquiry is still going on. Even modern science also has the curiosity to find out the God and its nature because many of the countries spending time and money to find the absolute reality. Science believes that, if the Universe created by someone, he can be called as God or ultimate reality. Scientists are having more interest to prove the ultimate reality through their scientific methodology like the attempt of finding God particles. The idea or

interpretation of God cannot be equal in all religions as it has been abundant. Mostly for the common people, that ultimate being is god, spiritual or orthodox people called it divine power. According to Vivekananda, the ultimate reality is Brahman apart from this nothing; he is the only being called by many names and the name Brahman is often mentioned in Vedas. Basically, Vivekananda was known as Vedantic Philosopher. According to him, God, absolute reality and Brahman are same and there is no distinction between each one of the name. According to Vishishtadvaita, Brahman has the qualities like human being such as love, compassion and ethics. This is called as an empirical point of view here the Brahman has become ishwara or god that is called saguna Brahman. Advaita philosophy says, there is no attribution for Brahman that is called nirguna Brahman and Vivekananda also accepted that concept so that he can be identified as Advaitin. Brahman is called eternal consciousness bliss or Sat- Chit- Ananda.

**Idol worship:** The idol worship is common in most of the religions around the world, except in Islam, the controversy persists about the worship of Islam's Kaaba. Idolatry is the worship of physical objects of any things like pictures, statue, and image as a God. Hinduism allows idol worship in its temples at and homes. In a Hindu temple, there are numerous idols of different Gods which are worshipping by the devotees and in Hindu mythologies, God or Goddesses have many roles. In Hindu religion, there is no necessity that idol should be resampled of any God or form of Gods and even devotees made idol by cow dung that is represents God *Vinayak*.



### **Swami Vivekananda on Idol worship;**

According to him, idol worship is essential in the beginning stage of all devotees and he says, “Superstition is a great enemy of man, but bigotry is worse. Why does a Christian go to church? Why is the cross holy? Why is the face turned toward the sky in prayer? Why are there so many images in the Catholic Church? Why are there so many images in the minds of Protestants when they pray? My brethren, we can do more think about anything without a mental image than we can live without breathing- By the law of association the material image calls up the mental idea and vice versa. Therefore, the Hindu uses an external symbol when he worships. It helps to keep his mind fixed on the Being to whom he prays. He knows as well as you do that the image is not God, is not omnipresent. Finer all, how much does omnipresence mean to almost the entire world? It stands merely as a word, a symbol. Has God superficial area? If not, when we repeat that word ‘omnipresent’, we think of the extended sky or of space – that is all”<sup>20</sup> . Vivekananda says, material or idol worship is the lowest level or stage lowest in the sense, not shoddiness or poor practices but it is the initials effort and ability. Further, he says, devotees do not stop within the stage he has to go to another level and struggling to rise elevated level, that is nothing but mental prayer and self-realizing. Through self-realization one can realize God because Vivekananda believed that, all humans beings are Divine in their nature and god possesses

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<sup>20</sup>*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata, Volume 1, p. 15

all-natural objects. Thus, practicing idol worship is not sin because it is not harming anyone, even though it is considered as superstitious.

### **Realizing the Idol worship:**

In 1988, Swami Vivekananda was invited by Maharaja Mangal Singh, they discussed many things about Hinduism particularly about the idol worship of Hindus. The maharaja asked the question to Swami Vivekananda; the idols you worship are nothing but a piece of clay, stones or metals? Vivekananda thought that, the question is a direct attack on Hindu belief and he replied to him, Hindus believes idols as a form of God and as a symbol, but the king was not satisfied by his answer and did not convince. Vivekananda decided to give a strong answer with an example, there was a painting hanging on the wall, and he knows that painting is the father of king and he asked the worker to take that painting down and he asked to spit on it. The king was so angry, and he said how dare, you say to spit on my father's paint. Vivekananda with a smile and looked at the king and asked, where is your father? it is the painting only not your father, just piece of paper and colour and by his logical explanation, that king was salience. Vivekananda explained to him when you looked at the picture, you remind your father like that Hindus believe their idols and reminded gods or Goddess. Thus, one can understand the power of idol worship of Hinduism.

### **The Concept of Man:**

The man is a living being like other animals and no difference from other animals or other living beings. But man is higher than animals, in respect of extra characters like rational thinking, sense and morality such kind of character makes different between animal and Man. Body and mind are

another important things distinguishing between animals and human beings even though animals having both body and mind, they cannot behave like humans because of the discredit mind. It is the uniqueness of human being, it is related to our sense, common-sense and moral behaviour so that if someone behave senselessly we use to scold them don't behave like animals. Moreover, all men are not same because everyone has different kind of character attitude, as Marx said: the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each separate.

According to Vivekananda, man has physical, as well as a spiritual body but most of the ancient thinkers and philosophers, did not consider body as an important one because they believed that the body is a trap for the soul and they strongly believed, to attain God or salvation, the soul must be divided from the body. To Vivekananda also the body is important thing like soul or mind to all human beings. He believes that, the soul is force that is driving the body and mind and all souls are interconnected. According to Vivekananda, there are three constituents in every individual human being such as the body, mind and soul or atman. He differentiates three constituents' according to their positions the body and mind both are impermanent entities. That man is called as the apparent man and the real man is self or atman. By his words, "The real Man, therefore, is one and infinite, the omnipresent spirit. And the apparent man is only a limitation of that Real man. In the sense, the mythologies are true that the apparent man, however great he may be, is only a dim reflection of the Real man who is beyond. The Real man, the spirit, being beyond cause and effect, not bound by time and space, must, therefore, be free. He was never bound and could

not be bound. The apparent man, the reflection, is limited by time and space and causation, and is, therefore, bound.”<sup>21</sup> Vivekananda refusing undignified approach to the physical body and he considered it as significant aspect of man and he upheld that the real nature of man is spiritual and also he did not disregard the physical aspect. Vivekananda says Atman or Soul is the core of every human being which distinguishes between man and the rest of animals and other living beings in the world. According to Vivekananda, each soul is potentially divine and when he speaks about the human being or body, he is the ultimate creation of the universe and man is higher than all animals. He believed that through the human body only one can through human body.

### **The Concept of Soul:**

Soul is one of the debatable entity all the times and all the fields since the very past it always gives room to dispute and mostly discuss about the nature of soul like, religion, various science, psychology and biology and so on. The debate on soul not only discussed in the recognized religion which exists in present time but also in ancient religion presented in Egypt, pagan and many of the tribal religions in world. The subject of soul is deeply discussed in Indian Philosophy other than western Philosophies like ancient, medieval or modern periods. As Max Muller said, “But if it seem strange to you that the old Indian philosophers should have known more about the soul than the Greek or Medieval or modern philosophers, let us remember that however much the telescopes for observing the stars of heaven have been improved, the observatories of the soul have remained much the same . . . the rest and

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<sup>21</sup>*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, Volume 1, p. 78

peace which are required for deep thought or for accurate observation of the movements of the soul, were more easily found in the silent forests of India than in the noisy streets of our so-called centres of civilization”<sup>22</sup>

Around the world most of the religions believe in the soul and its immortality. Many religions believe that, soul not only possesses the human body but also in all living beings particularly in Hinduism and Jainism. They strongly believed that, soul is the essence and it exists in all living beings. In Judaism, human soul is only immortal rest of other organic beings of souls are mortal. Thinkers and Philosopher Thomas Aquinas says, human soul only can be immortal. On the other hand, all the natural beings are all animated by soul that is called animism. So according to these views soul is not only the property of living beings but also of non-living beings like rock, rivers and so on. The common opinion on soul is, when the body destroys, or the function of the body comes to end the soul will away from the body and it lives on some form.

### ***Karma and re-birth:***

*Karma* and rebirth are one of the fundamental doctrines in many religions. The Indian Philosophical system accepted the concept of *Karma* and rebirth apart from *Carvaka* or materialism. The principle of Karma is deep rooted in most of the *Sanskrit* books, like Bhagavad-Gita, Ramayana and *puranas* and in most of the Bhakti literature. The term Karma is derived from the root word of *kir*, it means to do. Henceforth the etymological meaning of the term is work or action. Karma is the amount of the good and bad or both mixed

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<sup>22</sup>Max Muller, *Three Lectures on the Vedanta Philosophy*, London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1894, p. 7.

performance of the individuals in his life and the entire man's action leads to further rebirth, so karma and rebirth have interrelated to each other and it is considered as chain of birth and rebirth of man. It depends on the individual's actions which determines his rebirth in this regard there are many queries like. Have we lived before? Will we live after death? Such questions are widely asked in the Orient countries. It has been accepted by many people that the life of man is not only from the cradle to the grave, but for millions of years. Over the centuries, the dominant powers of the Western countries have blocked deep thinking about the reincarnation of the people there. But the thinkers who understand the history of the west believed that, the life is eternal and the transition from one body to the other.

A great deal of philosophers, authors, artists, scientists, and politicians have given this intense importance to this issue. The ancient Greeks, Socrates, Pythagoras and Plato have reintroduced reincarnation as an integral part of their teachings. Socrates said that, in the final part of his life, I am convinced that there is something really reincarnation and that I am born again after death. Pythagoras has firmly stated that, he can recall his advance life. Plato has written many books on reincarnation. He said that the pure soul has fallen out of the original base by the desire for the subject of reality and receives tears. The fallen souls are born in humanity first and the philosopher is the highest of men who struggle to gain superior knowledge. If his wisdom is complete, he may return to eternal life.

According to psychologist Carl Jung; my life often seemed to me like a story that has no beginning and no end. I had the feeling that, I was an historical fragment, an excerpt for which the preceding and succeeding text was

missing. I could well imagine that, I might have lived in former centuries and there encountered questions I was not yet able to answer; that I had been born again because I had not fulfilled the task given to me. Around the world there are many evidences to prove the rebirth scientifically and many of the researchers did and still doing the area, particularly Dr. Ian Stevenson from Canada, he studied about 3,000 children. He often found that much information about the predecessor was accurate. Children who are completely different from the habits and behaviours of the family that were born at that very young age were attracted to him. He waved around the world. He explored the information about the predecessor. Another important aspect of his analysis is the physical symbolism. The scars found in the body are much more impressive than the ones that resemble life. He also discovered that, these marks reveal about the early stories. No one could have mocked or denied him because he did a hypnotized approach towards science. The karma theory described by *Yajur Veda* “According to one’s deeds, according to one’s behaviour, so one becomes. The one who does good becomes good, the one who does evil becomes evil. One becomes virtuous by virtuous action and evil by evil action. That, to whom the heart is attached, toward this, the subtle body moves together with its action, of adherence. Attaining the goal of whatever actions, he performed on Earth; he goes on more from the world to this world of action” (*Yajur Veda, Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* 4.5-6)

“Through the ripening of the fruits of his actions he does not attain any rest, like a worm caught within a whirlpool. The desire for liberation arises in

human beings at the end of many births, through the ripening of their past virtuous conduct”. (*Yajur veda, Paingala Upanishad 2.22*)

According to Indian religion, there are three kinds of karma such as;

**Sancita or collected karma:** the deposited of hidden imprints of ones in the past that will fructify in a next life or rebirth.

**Prarabdha or fructify karma:** those past imprints will bear the fruit in the existing birth and that is determined one’s behaviour, characters and so on...

**Agami or prospective karma:** the imprint of present gathering karma or action of ones will be fructifying.

The aim of the law of karma is prominence, the necessity of human behaviour and it is related to morality and making moral ambiance. Every action has consequences so, one’s destiny made upon by his actions, thoughts and deeds simply saying it as kinds of cause and effect of ethical manners. General thought of religion, regarding the karma theory is the individual happiness and healthiness are the effects of his past good actions and the effects of bad action are suffering. “in the first place, the doctrine of karma extends the principle of causation to the sphere of human conduct and teaches that, as every event in the physical world is determined by its antecedents, so everything happens in the moral reaction is preordained”.<sup>23</sup>

### **Swami Vivekananda’s views on Karma and Rebirth**

Swami Vivekananda believed the conception of karma and rebirth and he says, diversity and inequality are existing in every society as evils and these all exist because of our karma. Why all the human beings are not same, and

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<sup>23</sup> M. Hiriyana, *The Essentials of Indian Philosophy*, Bombay: George Allen and Unwin India, Pvt 1973, p. 46.



everyone differs from each other's, he asserts, heredity cannot be a cause of diversities, because, he says, "Such a gigantic will as that of a Buddha or a Jesus could not be obtained in one life, for we know who their fathers were. It is not known that their fathers ever spoke a word for the good of mankind. Millions and millions of carpenters like Joseph had gone; millions are still living. Millions and millions of petty kings like Buddha's father had been in the world. If it was only a case of hereditary transmission, how do you account for this petty prince, who was not, perhaps, obeyed by his own servants, producing this son, whom half a world worships? How do you explain the gulf between the carpenter and his? Son, whom millions of human being's worships as God? It cannot be solved by the theory of heredity. The gigantic will which Buddha and Jesus threw over the world, whence did it come? Whence come this accumulation of power? It must have been there through ages and ages, continually growing bigger and bigger, until it burst on society in a Buddha or a Jesus, even rolling down to the present day".<sup>24</sup>

Thus, according to Swami Vivekananda, a man cannot become Buddha or Jesus until he did not do charitable deeds in his past life. "We are suffering from our own *Karma*. It is not the fault of God. What we do is our own fault, nothing else. Why should God be blamed?"<sup>25</sup>

But the questions arising as opponent of karma theory like, if the function of karma only admits the decision of the next one, the good and bad deeds of a

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<sup>24</sup>*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, Volume 1, p. 30-31

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid*, Vol, 6. p. 52.

single person's next life will be the result of the good and bad life of his early life. This idea may be somewhat reliable, but rather a whole community or a race or a state of affliction is the question of the karma rule. There are many things happening around the world that do not have the need to be the backbone of Karma only. For example, hundreds of people every day have been mobilized or driven out of their own country for various reasons. Such actions can be the source of war or repression for all such actions, what can be the role of karma for such events. Many people were killing during the war and by the in name of religious terrorism particularly in contemporary period and also through the natural disasters like, earthquake, tsunami and flood. Most of the people have been suffering from the problem of inequality and poverty also. So, the role of past karma seems to be impossible because nobody can go against the natural disaster, but people are killed by those issues. Just like all children are not having the same quality or characters from one father there is a possibility to get decease, or they can destroy by any reason like bomb, natural disaster or war so how could they all did the bad deed or karma in their past life. All these issues are quite reasonable, and they should be logically attended.

### **Religion or Spirituality:**

Generally, most of the people think that religion and spirituality are one there is an inseparable relationship between religion and spirituality. This is such a thought that people are natural because people who think that their religion is spiritual and religious. But in fact, both have absolutely differed. Most of the religions teach spirituality and that is why people think that spirituality is an inner part of religion. Although it seems that religion and spirituality depend

on one another, there is lot of difference between the two. For example, spirituality does not depend on any religion, it is considered as a personal individual's self-awareness and realization.

### **Basic description of Religion and Spirituality:**

Religion is the belief in man's faith, and it requires a creator. Where there is creator there should be rules, regulations, policies, and dos and don'ts things, whatever the specificity in any religion, followers must follow the rules of that religion. Most of the religions have been created by an individual's teachings for the sake of social groups. Any religion that has been created by an individual will include some rules and principles and cannot act against the religion. So, religion is against the individual's independence. And the religion keeps it restricted to those who belong to it. Most of the religions are committed to trusting or worshiping the God. They are subjected to restriction to speak or act against them. Some religions, determines the basic needs of man, such as food and clothing. In short, it is against man's rationality own rights and barriers.

Religion clearly illustrates how to build and proclaim a person's identity. Furthermore, it advocates the religious practices. Religious followers aware of the religion of God and the soul. That is why they deeply reflect the worldview through their religion. Such acts are losing their self-knowledge and blindly believe in the name of religion. It turns out to be true only when a single person becomes a part of it that is unbreakable in everyday life. It expresses itself through the inherent and transparent aspects of religion, prayer, worship, meditation, sacred study, or selfless service. Spirituality is

not a belief in the power of God or the supernatural power. It is a spiritual inquiry that requires the highest qualities such as love and kindness tolerance. Spirituality is an attempt to learn about the world and the world and the universe. It does not need any religious book or advice, but it will only be intense thinking and self-awareness. Religion teaches about fear and always control the people. If they do not, then religion reveals the consequences. But the spiritual effects make them sense and advises to people do not to worry about fear. Spirituality infers how to confront fear. It emphasizes that, do not worry about the consequences and do what is the right thing. Spiritualism teaches how to act in love without fear. It also shows how to control the fear and use it better. Religion tells us only what we need to believe and what is right. But spiritual truth can be found in our own personal endeavour and helps to understand fully. Spirituality helps us to communicate in a more harmonious way with those who are superior to us. That leads us to realize the truth.

There are different religions in the world and the followers are claiming their own religion as the only right one and other religions are false. Thus, any religion distinguishes from others. But spirituality finds the truth from different religions and tells the alienation between different religions. It focuses on divine power in every religion and does not recognize the differences between religions. In most of the religions, God or Gods is the foundation and those religions tell us the search of ultimate reality or God through the religious way, but spiritual wisdom helps to find our own way.

Religion has an imperative function in culturing the human life. Weather one believes or not, religions realm is unavoidable on humanity. Irrespective of

one's religious doctrine, he or she should respect other religion rather than cynical attitude towards it. Typically it is the society and the family that encultures the aspects of religion in man. But it will not be endowed with the prophecy of the value of religion; rather it provides only the signs and norms of the religion. Religion is imbibed and is not inculcated by force. Common people by and large is not concerned in explore and realizing the religion, they merely follows the religion which is assigned to him or her. Very infrequently people explores the real meaning of their or other religion, that too on the own interest. When this is the case it is auspicious to talk on the followings of Universal Religion.

Religion ordinarily affirmed to be the root cause of copious violence among the global masses. If we observe closely the hunger to power and asserting dominance once own religion over others are being the reason for most of the world conflicts and violent. Therefore it is need for humankind to understand the concept of 'universal religion', so as to prevent conflict with other religions. And also, religious leaders should realize their responsibility of leading their followers to the path of religious harmony, hence it is necessary for them too to understand the universal religion.

Selfishness is an inherent character of human being and it is the biggest challenge to identify with Universal religion, because the very tendency to accept other religion and their ritual behaviours are the basic quality of universal religion. Selfish attitude of human tends to thinks that one's own religious sentiments are the ultimate, others are not. Apart from selfishness, another important thing is: the competitive mentality between his own religions to others. But when good concepts are propounded in other religion,

there should be a tendency to assimilate it. Comparison is the biggest asset as well as it is the biggest enemy among human traits particularly in religious matters. For example, people always compare their religious God, prophets, leaders and holy books with that of other religion. Actually a healthy comparison is welcomed, which leads to religious harmony, but there is a negative aspect in this attitude. So, everyone must understand that all the religions and their symbols are true in their own aspects. Vivekananda says, “The Christian believes that God took the shape of a dove and came down to earth; to him this is history not mythology. The Hindu believes that God is manifested in the cow. Christians say that to believe so is mere mythology, and not history; that it is superstition. The Jews think that if an image is made in the form of a box or a chest, with an angel on either side, then it may be placed in the Holy of Holies, it is sacred to Jehovah. But if the image is made in the form of a beautiful man or woman, they say, “This is horrible idol; break it down” This is our unity in mythology! Again, if a man stands up and says, “My prophet did such and such wonderful things”. Other will say, “That is only superstition”. But at the same time, they say their own prophet did still more wonderful things, which they hold to be historical”<sup>26</sup>. He puts forth a basic question to the mankind that, if a man doesn’t know, his own religion, then how is he going to recognize others religion.

Vivekananda’s Universal Religion gives emphasis on the unity of all religion and their teachings. He says, the ultimate aim of all religions is to attain the God or understanding the reality through various path and stress on to the

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid , vol 2. P. 305.

famous connotation - all the water sources like streams, rivers, ultimately reach ocean that is the aim of universal religion.

The universal religion aims at finding divinity through religious harmony, and it strives to bring different religion to put together the good ideas from each religion. For Vivekananda, different religion chooses different to attain the same goal. Some choose the easiest way to reach the goal but for some other religion the way is to cross all the hardships, Jainism for example. Another important issue in conventional religions is that, a large section of common people has already delineate certain value, norms and customs, however none of them would be willing to adapt this new path as it would have to face dire consequences. For Hindu, the prescribed pathway is Vedanta, for Christians it is Bible, for Muslims in Quran and so on. Moreover, when a man chooses another pathway or other religion, he may face consequence from his own religious people. Vivekananda's if someone embrace others religion let them follow because every religion has same goal. So that society must be allowed them to follow others religion. Swami Vivekananda's Universal Religion should be understood by religious leaders. Religion is unavoidable and a very important entity and it performs a role of a tool to construct realm in the socio, political and economy. So, it could be emphasized that, one who understands the concept of Universal Religion can overcome the conflicts among religions and help in making of mankind.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **A CRITICAL APPROACH AND RE- ASSESSMENT OF UNIVERSAL RELIGION**

#### **Vivekananda's Views on the Need for Religious Harmony:**

Vivekananda emphasised on the spiritual nature of man, while reflecting on the concept of universal religion. He stated that, mankind of the world has been trying to look beyond the quest of his ultimate destiny or search for God. The construction of social organizations aims at fulfilling the unique needs of the man and their practices endeavour the humanness in society. Meanwhile, religion as a part of the institution represents the spiritual aspirations and struggles of humankind. Perhaps in reality, the institution of religion has reckoned with a major criticism of indulging in mutual criticisms, vilification and persecutions. This scenario of religion is found across all over the world at all times. The generations in the past have witnessed some religions in the world, inherently claimed universal crown over other religion and have engaged themselves in ruthless wars and bloodshed to achieve this end. This polarity on the tendency of hegemonizing the religion universally was well critiqued by Vivekananda where he observed that two mutually opposing aspects of religion, he explained in the following words: "There is nothing that has brought to man more blessings than religion, yet at the same time, there is nothing that has brought more horror than religion. Nothing has made more for peace and love than religion; nothing has engendered fiercer hatred than religion. Nothing has made the brotherhood of man more tangible than religion; nothing has bred more bitter enmity between man and man than



religion. Nothing has built more charitable institutions, more hospitals for men, and even for animals, than religion; nothing has deluged the world with more blood than religion.”<sup>1</sup>

Being a proponent of religion, Vivekananda deeply felt the importance of religion, as well its crucial role in the human life. To improve this contravening situation, he suggests that “we must understand all of those religions have proved their strength, their worth, and their necessity for mankind.”<sup>2</sup>

Vivekananda specifically emphasised on the equal status of all religions and religious plurality in human society. His contention on religious plurality was not just mere assertions rather questioned it empirically and enlightened its significance where he quotes “each religion, as it were, takes up one part of the great universal truth and spends its whole force in embodying and typifying that part of the great truth. It is, therefore, an addition and not exclusion.”<sup>3</sup> These statements have the stern contention on the view of equal status of all the religions. The diversity of religious views is because: every religion describes only the distinct phases of the same phenomenon. He illustrates it through the example of photography, where different angles provide different meanings of the same object. However, according to him these differences cannot be called contradictions, rather only shows the many-sidedness of a single unique entity. Therefore, according to him “we are

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<sup>1</sup>*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama Volume 2, p.360

<sup>2</sup>S. Tapasyananda, *The Philosophical and Religious Lectures of Swami Vivekananda*, Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 1984, p. 28.

<sup>3</sup>*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, Volume 2, p.296.

viewing truth, getting as much of it as circumstances will permit, colouring the truth with our own intellect and grasping it with our own mind. We can only know as much of truth as is related to us, as much of it as we are able to receive. This occasion sometimes even contradictory ideas; yet they all belong to the same universal truth”<sup>4</sup>

Every religion has its own ideals that are needed to the society. Vivekananda finds preaching of Islam as an excellent aim of the religion. It preaches the world brotherhood, therefore; this ideal may effectively be used to develop social harmony. In Hinduism, spirituality is its soul. Vivekananda pointed out that “In no other religion, in no other sacred books of the world will you find so much energy spent in defining the idea of God. They tried to define the idea of soul, so that no earthly touch might mar it. The spirit must be divine; and the spirit understood as spirit must not be made into a man. The same idea of unity, of the realization of God, the omnipresent, is preached throughout. They think it is all nonsense to say that he lives in heaven, and all that.”<sup>5</sup> Christianity too has similar ideals which are essentially accumulating the worldwide understanding of religion, Vivekananda thinned down to identify this concept of universal religion. Later he prescribed the ways to understand Universal Religion envying the humanity. He realized that, the Universal Religion cannot be established through of the prescribed world religions; rather it could be possible only by converting the followers of all other religions into it. Universal Religion, he believed, had limitations and

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<sup>4</sup>A. Sharma, *The Concept of Universal Religion in Modern Hindu Thought* London: Macmillan, 1998, p. 57.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid, p. 30.

assumed it as possible only when there is a conception of universalism in which there is a place for all religions suited to different types of humanity. Therefore, he gave due consideration to the phenomenon of diversity among the humanity in the world. There may be diverse types of people in the world with different mentalities, with different habits, rituals and beliefs. Each and every one has one's own place in the society. All these people are needed to the society. That was a fundamental assumption of his universal religion. He explained it in a following way: "Our watchword, there will be acceptance and not exclusion. Not only toleration, but acceptance. I accept all religions that were in the past and worship with them all; I worship God with every one of them, in whatever form they worship Him. I shall go to the mosque of the Mahommedan; I shall enter the Christian's church and kneel before the crucifix; I shall enter the Buddhists temple where I shall take refuge in the Buddha and in the law. I shall go into the forest and sit down in meditation with the Hindu who is trying to see the light that enlightens the heart of everyone." <sup>6</sup> Vivekananda continued: "As human mind broadens; its spiritual steps broaden too. The time has already come when a man cannot record a thought without its reaching all corners of the earth; by merely physical means we have come into touch with the entire world; so, the future religions of the world must become as universal and as wide. The religious ideals of the future must embrace all that exists in the world and is good and great, and at the same time, have infinite scope for future development." <sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid, p. 88.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid, p. 67.

### **Universal Religion in Plural Society:**

According to Swami Vivekananda, the conception on Universal Religion provides a direct realization on the truth of the spiritual world that forms the real essence of religion. The ultimate reality is transcendently experienced and is the ultimate objective of the nature of every religion. In other words, the penultimate truth in all religions realizes of God in the Soul, and this is universally acclaimed in the norms of every religion. Therefore, according to Vivekananda, 'if there is one Universal truth, in all religious practices, it is the realization of God. However, the ideas and practices may vary and differ. Further, he also commented on the oneness of all religions from the transcendental aspect of each religion. Perhaps the cause of conflict among religions would be because of the lack of mutual complementary understanding between each other. For Swami Vivekananda religion is a total concept. All the religions of the world together constitute one whole. For him, "There existed only one Eternal Religion of which all other religions were only variations. Each religion has a special beat, a unique trait and its own articulation of what is good. This uniqueness does not lie in the different buildings, languages, rituals, books. etc employed in various religions, but..... in the internal soul of every religion. Every religion has a Soul behind it, and that Soul may differ from the Soul of another religion." <sup>8</sup>

He continued: "my idea, therefore, is that all these religions are different forces in the economy of God, working for the good of mankind."<sup>9</sup> In this way

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid, p. 365.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid, p. 366.

the concept of universal religion is not just a concept, but it has a highly practical value too. Vivekananda, on assessing the need of universal religion, found the importance of the humanity and the sovereign of universal brotherhood to maintain religious harmony in society. Later, he tried to eliminate the forces of hatred and destruction from the organizational religion and emphasised on identifying the true religion with universal love. Religion as such should be equally accepted by all minds, it must be equally philosophic, equally mystic, equally emotional, and equally conducive to action. As a precondition, universal religion to be a reality, the nature of attitude in man should be perfect, and he suggested four methods of Yoga to achieve this purpose. He classified the nature of man into four categories, namely, the active type, the mystic type, the philosophic type, and the devotional type. Four kinds of Yogas were meant for four types of human being, and this practice will give strength to life with open mind. Vivekananda strongly believed that, the essence of all the religions is one. The proof of one religion depends on the proof of all the rest. Vivekananda explained it in this way: "For instance, if I have six fingers, and no one else has you may say that it is abnormal. The same reasoning may be applied to the argument that, only one religion is true, and others are false. One religion only like one set of six fingers in the world would be unnatural. We see, therefore, that if one religion true, all others must be true."<sup>10</sup>

The Ultimate One, according to him, is the very perfection of existence, the ideal reality. He said: "If you go below the surface, you find that unity between man and man, between races and races, high and low, rich and poor,

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid, p 153.

god and men, men and animals. If one goes deep enough all will be only variations of the One, and he who has attained to this conception of Oneness has no more delusion. What can delude him? He knows the reality of everything, the secret of everything. Where more misery for him? He has traced the reality of everything to the Lord, the Centre, the Unity of everything and that is Eternal Existence, Eternal Knowledge and Eternal Bliss.”<sup>11</sup> The basic premises behind Vivekananda’s concept of universal religion are the concept of universal equality of humankind. It provides the backbone to Vivekananda’s philosophy of religion. It is an idea which is very important and necessary for the modern global era. Its relevance for the modern cosmopolitan city life cannot be overestimated. The concept of religious pluralism is the most critical and important debate within the current thinkers in this field. Vivekananda’s credentials of the concept of universal religion have its application to the modern world.

By following Swami Vivekananda, there is only one resolution for this diverse and multi-religious world. It is to observe to the concept of one universal religion, which is not converting the believers of all other religions into one religion but tolerant to the concept of religious heterogeneity. It is the core of Swami Vivekananda’s dream to the world. This universal idea can be experienced not only by advocates of diverse religions but equally by non-believers for it is created on the idea of coherence of humanity and it is related to human awareness which is not a domination of any religion. This perfect worldwide vision can form the basis for passive co-existence of all in the earth.

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

About 80% of the people in the world today are religiously convinced and the number of religious believers is in increase in this modern age too. There are hundreds of religions today, some originated in South Asia and East Asia, the religions of Persia, the religions that include the beliefs of the African-American tribes, and the religious beliefs that prevailed in the past. Perhaps out of them, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Judaism continue to be seen in the order of the majority of religions. The top ten in the number are all born in Asia. Hinduism appeared in India between 4000 and 2500 BC. The Jewish region of the Middle East was formed during 200 BC and approximately around 1000 BC Zoroastrianism in Persia was formed. Buddhism evolved in India between the 560s and 490s, and at the same time the Shintoism religion in Japan. The Confucian religion in China was formed around 420 BC and historians believe that Christianity was found in AD 30, Islam in 622 AD, Sikh in 1500 AD and Baha'i Faith in the year 1863. Religious harmony was greatest task of human being in the modern world and the religion accompanied its task paving universal norms in its context. In terms of different religious practices, the religion inculcated the need for rising interactions in between religions and a robust tendency to its multiplicity in carrying a new chances and tasks to religious relatives. Interactions among diverse religions are becoming more frequent, which provides more chances for religions to demeanour common learning and reinforce assistance. Most of the countries have religious diversity and it is understood and experienced by the people. Religious suspicion rises because of religious divergence, annoying people's grief over new religious struggles. Everyone has the responsibility to carry out the religious harmony. Religious harmony and

mutual progress within and between individual religions are very important when there is cohesion of multiple religious spaces. Religious harmony is maintained in larger society which is realized through the dialogue-generated by the enhancement of mutual understanding and empathy. The experience of sharing common responsibilities of peace and justice on the preconditions of recognizing religious diversity and differences have become a common sense. Also, in understanding religion, it is important to approach the issues of faith and doctrines along with tolerance, enhanced coordination and cooperation between dissimilar values also within the religion.

**Religious harmony and social responsibilities:**

Religion can be considered as a part of civilization and has played crucial role in the development of society. Currently, the contemporary world is encountering many issues like conflicts, terrorism and social commotions, above all the issues related to religion must play optimistic role to eradicate all issues. Thereby, the followers of any religion must unite to maintain and hold the responsibility in performing virtuous deeds and contribute towards global peace, social constancy and well-being of people. Spirituality and morality alone doesn't resolve worldly problems rather social responsibilities by each individual promote concise efforts in resolving issues. To create the mutual understanding and respect among various groups of religion, the responsibility must be shared and they must work together. Religion is actively entangled with political, economic, social and many other areas. Religious leaders use it for their political purposes. Some societies use religion to inhibit the internal affairs of another and some group may involve in activities intended at disrupting nationwide unity and regional integrity under the pretext of



religion. An individual should not undermine others' rights and social constancy under the excellence of religion. Everyone must understand and should not disgrace other religious faith and damage public benefits. Every religion should defend the purity of faith and shows the original face of religion, to remove any chance of sinful doings by religious groups or persons. The world is blemished by sustained quarrels due to dogmatic motives and economic benefits and everyday conflicts on regional, resources and cultural issues. Religion should help encourage settlement and resolution arguments. Everyone should stop religious factors from becoming part of the arguments or struggles, as it will only make the additional compound issues and extra problematic to resolution. So, one should also fight and convict the use of religion as an excellent offer towards sacred the struggles. Religious extremism is one of the main causes and challenge to encourage religious harmony, even though religions speak about peace, non-violence and universal brotherhood, sometimes the individual or group of the people's religious attitude become extreme and it lead to religious tension however, the individual who respects all the religions but at the same time he may be very much obstinate towards his own religion.

**Swami Vivekananda refers religions as:**

“There are different religions in the way that human soul passes in the way of knowing God. No religion is dangerous or harmful. A religion becomes dangerous when it refuses to grow and stops building up. So, religions are a blessing for humanity.” In a country where multiple communities live, it is a great boon to the country. A variety of languages, many cultures and many religious rituals infers the cultural beauty of the country. Living alone or

mingled with other communities is the challenge. Contemporary scholars insist on a living equilibrium that communities face. To meet these challenges and to fulfil these objectives. It is important that to live together with other religious people there is no need to see contradiction between religions in this world. Therefore, every religion can put forward their own moral values, which cannot be cursed. In the multicultural communities, the values are secured through the best spiritual guidance through religion. The religious teachers may be any community; they will not be free from the responsibility of providing guidance and instruction for future community health with their religious and spiritual values. The need of time is to take the responsibility of current events that are necessary to provide the religious education for a healthy change in social level.

#### **Universal love and Religious Harmony:**

Every religion preaches the same truth of one God, who has the fundamental attribution such as kindness, compassion and universal love and brother hood. Christianity says, “God loves all people and Love one another. Just what as I have loved all of you, you also must love one and another” (John 15: 12) Islam preaches that, there is only one standard for being ethical. It’s being unselfish, do and be as good with universal love for everyone. Zoroastrianism says “One should love others as oneself. This is as the faith of man should be” Sikhism stressed, more than all else do I treasure love at heart, which makes me live an eternal life in this ordinary world. Bahaism teaches, “The purpose of the one true God manifesting Himself to our world is to summon all mankind to uphold truthfulness, sincerity, filial piety and trustworthiness.” Buddhism teaches in the *Infinite Life Sutra*, “Revere the saints and respect the decent

[people]. Be benevolent, compassionate, and universally loving.”<sup>12</sup> The core teachings from all religious leaders are about benevolence, compassion, and universal love. The claim of God is different in different religions. Judaism, Catholicism, and Christianity are monotheists and believe in single God. In Islam, the creator is Allah which doesn’t have prescribed form. In Buddhism, it is the true nature otherwise, the dharma of nature. In Taoism, it is called Tao who creates all phenomena and manipulates every phenomenon. Therefore, in all religion the nature and phenomena are from the same origin.

All the sacred texts of religions taught to learn from almighty. Religious leaders preach to love all beings equally, they provide learning to have “a mind that encompasses everything; a heart that reaches throughout the whole universe,” <sup>13</sup> to learn to be selfless, to learn to abandon evil and promote goodness, and learn to let go of greed and raise our spirituality while dedicating ourselves to helping and serving all beings so they can end pain and suffering, and attain happiness. If each religion could able to follow its own teachings, treat other religions equally, live in harmony, respect and care for each other, and cooperate, then this strong and positive force would surely be able to resolve all conflicts and promote world peace.

### **Religions Learning from Each Other:**

To live in harmony and cooperation, one should understand and learn from each other. Every one of us should have broadmindedness, love our religion and other religions too, and learn one’s own holy books and should know

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<sup>12</sup><http://www.ckunesco.com/harmony-of-religions-2>

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

about other religious faiths. Furthermore, one should realize that every religion is just like one family. Religious education is the important tool to establishing religious harmony in every societies and it can help the people to understand each religion. "Religious prayers are temporary answers but not a cure for our problems. The cure lies in moral education, which transforms the mindsets of the people and enables all to "abandon evil and promote goodness, change from being deviated to being decent, and correct one's mindset." <sup>14</sup> So, everyone must understand the religious teachings and establish their standards.

### **Preaching of Harmony in Islam:**

Generally, people have misconception about Islam. In recent years, the extremist and terrorist activities are widely politicized against Islam. In reality Islam never teaches violence, rather is popularized to misunderstand by other religious fantasists and misinterpreted by some Muslim leaders for their selfish motives. For example, the word 'Jihad' as most of us think is the war against the people belongs to other religion. Even Muslims do not understand properly the word 'Jihad' which is derived from the Arabic word 'Jahata' meaning 'endeavour'. Philosophically it means 'untiring struggle', 'deep effort' and 'hard work'. The term 'Jihad' mentions in the Quran has four different meanings. Such as: Jihad an-Nafs (one's own self) Jihad ash-Shaitan (Satan) Jihad al-Kuffar (the disbelievers) and al-Munafiqeen (the hypocrites) Jihad ahlu ath-Thulm (the people of injustice), al-Bida'ah (innovation) and al-Munkaraat (sin and evil)" Quran22:78, 25:52, 9:73 .)An Islamic government has the power to legitimize jihad. Individuals cannot do it independently.

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid

According to Islam even an Islamic state cannot spell out the claim of the jihad on another country. It decided all aspects of the conceptual, worldly and moral ethics before any deed. Islam sets several pre-conditions during war fares, do not attack women, civilians, children and clerics; Do not damage farmland; no trees or houses should be burnt and not to kill unarmed soldiers. it strongly believes god emphasizes these rulers to establish justice. A Jihad, in Islam one who struggles with his mind and struggles to win the mental lusts and fight for mental retardation. Moreover, Jihad is the key to utilize all the facilities, opportunities, skills and abilities that he has for the purpose and for the benefit of their lives and the community in which they live and also to destroy the evils. Jihad's aim is to get the satisfaction of God. It is better to fight with his own mind than to fight with the enemy. The prophet Mohammed has made it clear that, it is the big jihad. According to Islam, Humanity is the creator of the same Lord. The descendants of the same rank. So, all human beings are equal. "O mankind! We created you from a man and a woman. Then we made you as many communities, that you might know each other. In fact, you are more dignified in your Lord than most of us. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted. "(Quran 49:13) "A man will not become a Muslim unless his brother does what he wants." (Prophet, Book: Mosque Ahmad) "If you love the people on the earth, the God who is in the heaven will love you." (Prophecy, Book: Dirmidhi). Therefore, Islam says to love all people without religion. Islam allows criticism of the comments. But disgrace is not allowed. You can refuse comments. But commands to feel emotions. "Do not scold, if someone believes and those who pray other Gods, apart from Allah." Do not imitate! Islam has prohibited it because it will lead to violence and harm to

reconciliation. “There is no compulsion or constraint to divine norms.” (Quran2:256) Islam has ordered to protect the lives, property, faith, and dignity of non-Muslims. According to Prophet Muhammad, “if a Muslim he did injustice or expropriate of rights for the man, those who non-citizen of Islamic and his substance something forcibly taken by any Muslims, in the Lord of the court, I would argue that case against to the Muslim and behalf of the non-Muslim citizen.” (Abutavut) Islam says that justice is a must to all people. Islam has insisted that there are good things always, even though it is different in terms of policy. There have been no riots in the areas ruled by Muslims because of these teachings of Islam. Islam's specials teachings emerge in the creation of social reconciliation, even though Islam does not accept the idea of other religions. Buddhism is one of the major religion originated in India and spread worldwide, Buddha spend whole life for upliftment of human being from lower level to higher level, most of his teachings were towards the liberation of human beings and his attempt was to establish the notion of love and compassion universally. He taught his disciples to show concern and respect towards others religious faiths and beliefs in order to marinating mutual relationship with other. During the period time of Buddha, there were many unacceptable religious practises in Hinduism which he denied to support those practises at the same time he was not against the people who followed these practises.

### **Religious harmony in Buddhism:**

The aim of Buddhism is, everyone should lead a moral life without hurting anyone. It upholds the promotion of human potentials so as to uphold the human dignity. Buddha stresses his followers to embrace every one

irrespective of any religion, with love and compassion. He suggests to keep the mind disinfected and away from all the evils. The traces about the history of Buddhism in India, there have never been a single evidence of violence in Buddhism. But instead Buddhism suffered tremendous attacks from other religions especially from Hinduism. Buddhism did not consider other religions interference towards worldly development and peace. The main objective of Buddhism is: there is no class, sect, gender, poor and rich in spirituality. Anyone can follow Buddhism; there was no discrimination against humanism. Buddhism welcomes all people; The motto of Buddhism is to guide everyone towards a noble life without harming anyone, to cultivate humane qualities in order to maintain human dignity, to radiate all-embracing kindness without any discrimination, and to train the mind to avoid evil and to purify the mind to gain peace and happiness. Buddhism is a religion, that teaches people to 'live and let live' in the history of the world. There was no evidence to show that, Buddhists have interfered or infused any damage to any other religion in any part of the world for propagating their religion. Buddhists do not regard the existence of other religions as hindrance to the worldly progress and peace. This kind of attitude is contrast to the behaviour of some religious followers who ridiculed and condemn the practice and beliefs of others without bothering them and what they really mean beyond the external appearances. Condemning others out of ignorance is hardly the mark of uncivilized behaviour and is certainly out of place in this age where information on every subject is readily available. The Buddhist attitude is to allow others to follow their beliefs in peace, to recognize the rights of others to freedom of thought.

In Buddhism there are no religious laws, commandments and religious punishments but only

advices given by the Buddha without using any divine power. The Buddha repeatedly declared that, he was not interested in teaching people to reach heaven. His aim was to explain suffering, its causes, the extinction of suffering, and the path which leads to that extinction. This approach does not require Faith but Understanding and Effort. Therefore, in Buddhism there are no divinely ordained laws and there is also no concept of sin and punishment. The immediate goal in following the path is to develop a noble human being who understands the benefits of personal discipline and mental culture. Buddhists do not follow any religious principles not because of the fear of the Buddha, punishment or reward but by knowing and experiencing the negative effects of bad actions and positive result of good ones. When they follow this method as a natural way of life, they allow others to live peacefully and happily. Buddhism does not create fear and temptation for people to practice a religion because it does not believe in punishment in hell or reward in heaven. The Buddha's message to all people was to join the fold of universal brotherhood and to work in harmony for the welfare and happiness of mankind. He had no chosen people, and he did not regard himself as a chosen one. The Buddha's first missionaries were Arahantas-the Perfect and Holy ones. They were noble human beings, by the sheer effort of their renunciation and mental training had gained Perfection. Perfection we mean that, state when all delusion, greed and hatred has been eradicated from the mind and there is not even the slightest tendency to experience negative states like anger, jealousy, fear, worry, doubt, restlessness and so on. In short Arahantas



experienced 'divine' states not in heaven after their deaths but in this life itself. Before sending out the first Perfected disciples, he advised them in the following manner: "Go ye, O Bhikkhus, and wander forth for the gain of the many, for the welfare of the many, in compassion for the world: for the good, for the gain, for the welfare of gods and men. Proclaim, O monks, the sublime doctrine, preach ye a life of holiness. Perfect and pure".

Buddha was only concerned with showing the path to ultimate happiness and was never bothered about a religion in his name. He wanted to show the difference between good and evil and every individual to lead a happy, peaceful and righteous way of life. Ever since its origin, Buddhism never adored or compelled any one to convert from one religion to another. His idea of conversion was to introduce a righteous, noble and religious way of life. In fact, he said that the greatest miracle one could perform was to convert a bad and infected mind into a virtuous one. Similarly, he asserts that, the ideas are subjected to constant change and may become ridiculously out of date in the next day. Thereby, to be with the time and society, one must adapt to the changing ideas and changing circumstances.

Religious principles are intended for the whole of mankind. If any particular section of humanity does not follow the great virtues taught by religion –such as kindness, patience, tolerance and understanding, it would be difficult for others to coexist with each other to live peacefully. For some reason, religion has constantly been blamed for a great deal of humanity's problems in recent periods. It has been blamed for War, Racism, Discrimination of women and persecution. The reason is: because of the absurd clarity to distinguish between the religious principles taught by the founders and the interpretation

of these principles by certain religious leaders to further their own ends. Sometimes these unscrupulous people even turn against the followers of their own religion because they entertain different opinions from theirs. The important thing is: for the people in their own religions to speak up against wrong doings and misinterpretation especially if these interpretations condone terrorism and the slaughter of innocents. Often these religious leaders ally themselves to powerful political figures who have no hesitation to kill and incite hatred just to get what they want. It is quite natural for cunning and cruel people to take the advantage of any kind of virtue. But they should mind that those who fight and shed blood in the name of religion do not follow religious principles they do not serve the cause of humanity. They fight for the personal gains or power in the name of a religion. Those who truly practice a religion have no grounds to fight. They should settle their problems in a peaceful manner. The followers must know that a true religion never encourages any form of violence under any circumstances. At the same time, racial discrimination should not arise when we practice our respective religions. Buddhists can live and work with other religious followers without any discrimination. Although Buddhists were divided into different sects nearly 2000 years ago, so far, they never had any sectarian violence or discrimination amongst themselves in any part of the world. Buddhism is the only religion that didn't declare war to introduce religion. Each person has three natures: The Animal, the Human and the Divine. The purpose of religion is to help the human beings to realize their divine nature. Ever since the beginning of evolution, man crossed through various stages. First, he was concerned with the basic survival needs to find food, shelter and to ensure

that, there were children who would continue the line of descendants. But the nature of the human being was such that the satisfaction of mere survival need was not enough. Passing through various stages from creating a sense of belonging, seeking knowledge, developing the arts, he finally arrived at the ultimate questions about existence. Man's longing for answers to the three questions who I am, am I need and what I am doing here gave rise to various answers which eventually led to the development of religion. The purpose of every religion is to acquaint with the universe and man's place in that universe. Unfortunately, these noble aims were forgotten and religion became a jumble of rituals and superstitious practices in the hands of unscrupulous leaders who gained power over the people by exploiting their superstition and ignorance. The time has come for religion to serve its original purpose of providing answers to the problems regarding our existence. Government should not use religion to gain political power at the same time religion should not use political power to introduce religion. Different religions may have different beliefs and views regarding the beginning and end of life, as well as different interpretations regarding the nature of ultimate salvation.

But one should not bring such kind of attitude that creates conflict, confrontation, clashes misunderstanding. According to Swami Vivekananda, "The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth"<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Sharma. A, *The Concept of Universal Religion in Modern Hindu Thought*, Macmillan, London, 1998, p. 59.

There are many common virtues in all religions to put in to and practice, so that the people may lead a righteous, peaceful and cultured way of life. There is no need for anyone to belittle one another. If one does so, it would only pave the way for the anti-religious groups who are ready to ridicule and condemn all religions. One should not behave in such a way that, he must not show hostile attitude to co-religions. The Buddhists, gave due respect to other religious teachers. They did not restrict from visiting the places of worship and attending religious services, other than Buddhism. They can show their respect for other belief systems while maintaining the basic Buddhist principles. Buddhism encourages co-operation and understanding amongst various religious denominations. From the Buddhist point of view, religious labels are not the most important aspects for people to be considered religious, but any person leading a respectable and harmless way of life can be regarded as religious. The methods used to introduce the teachings of the Buddha are rational and reasonable. Buddha made his appeal through reason and experience. The teachings were presented with clear and impressive simplicity and yet kept free from religious and national narrowness and fanaticism. They aimed at clear and sober-minded people. It clears the doubts and removes superstitious beliefs. Thus, the teachings of the Buddha enlightened the hearts and minds the of the earnest seekers of Truth. The Buddhist attitude of tolerance and understanding convinced many great thinkers, philosophers, rationalists, free thinkers and even agnostics to appreciate Buddhism as a peaceful way of life devoid of fear and superstition. If the religious preachers

of today cannot join together to work in harmony with out discrimination or hostility towards one another, establishing peace would remain as a dream.

**Role of Non-Violence to promote Religious harmony and peace in Jainism:**

Normally, the term Peace refers and is an ethical issue that shows concern for humanity. In the modern strife-torn society, with all sorts of distrust, doubts and wars around and violence threatens to ruin the entire fabric of human civilization. The quest for peace, which is the very basic objective of Jainism, is significant and becomes important today. Humanity is living in the age of science and technology. The society has witnessed tremendous growth of knowledge due to information revolution. At the same time, it is the age of anxiety and mental tension, a period of value-crisis. Man has known much about the atoms but not about the values needed for the meaningful and peaceful life.

The concepts of Jainism gain significant value in the contemporary world and the need for it has become more pressing than ever before. In the present condition, either one has to practise peace through non-violence through the philosophy of Jainism. As today's world is in constant dread of war and communal disharmony, violence can only excite greater violence. Modern scientific and technological progress has created conditions in which man must live in peace or face destruction. Peace among the people of different races, caste and creed and between nations is the need of the hour. One of the ways to bring peace is a return to certain principles of religion. All religions advocate the path to good conduct and spiritual upliftment. Perhaps there is a basic question on how to accomplish peace? Neither it can be accomplished

by the state or by external agency; nor it has to be imposed from outside. It must grow from within the vision of humanity. One must rediscover the cultural heritage through the means of the tradition of religion.

This was the precise message of Lord Mahavir. His main concept was universal friendliness. He believed that, man purifies himself, by means of the deeds he does. The greater good he can do to others, the better man he becomes. There are certain ethical norms, which are identical and universal in all religions. However, in Jainism, morality is unique in which non- violence is not only religion but also a way of living. In the texts of Jain, a frequent question asked is, “What is Religion?” the answer given is that which inculcates kindness to all creatures is a Religion.” Further it says “Religion is that which sustains or maintains life, preserves it. It is characterized by non-violence, restraint and penance. It uplifts the individual to higher spiritual plane. Non-violence thus finds supreme position in Jain religion. The major tenets of Jainism are eternal and universal because of which it retains its relevance in the changing modern world.”

The doctrine of *Anekantvada* and non-violence are the integral parts of Jainism. The claim of forgiveness, reconciliation, love, non-violence and non-possession provides in depth values to the society. It reveals humanitarianism and pacifism. The basic tenets of Jainism can be summarized in two words- *Ahimsa* (Non-violence) and *Anekanta* (non-absolutism). These tenets form the principles of peaceful co-existence, based on the concept of respect for life. Non-absolutism signifies open-mindedness. It has been rightly observed that, if we accept non- violence as regulative principle of conduct and manifoldness of reality as the basis of our outlook,

barbarism and exploitation, war in any form can come to an end. The concept of non-violence in Jainism is not passive and negative.

The practice of non-violence will not only provide individual salvation but it can be constructed as an instrument of socio-cultural revolution. The positive values propagated by non-violence includes friendliness, forgiveness, compassion, tolerance and reconciliation. The eternal values preached by Lord Mahavira simply asserts that to seek eternity a person should be ready to transcend all religious barriers which acclaims universal relevance. Religions have always upheld the sanctity of life. They structured norms so as to reduce disdain activities against humanity. When other religions stressed non-violence as a way to spirituality and humanity, Jainism is more than a moral precept. It is considered as a way to the removal of sufferings of people. The Jain tradition equates non-violence with deity and therefore is described as the protector of the whole universe. Jainism respects the dignity and sacredness of human life. According to Jainism, respect for life implies rejection of communalism and not merely non-violence. As a way of life non-violence prompts an attitude of tolerance, non-hatred and harmlessness. It transforms the individual through moral and religious practices and also influences different aspects politically, socially and also through educational order. Jainism is essentially a religion, which is moralistic and spiritual. Its ethics is meant for the people every walk of life. Its social play and its spiritualism have cosmic significance in the context of global attention towards peace.

According to Jainism, non-violence proclaims the highest moral virtue and all other virtues springs from it. In wider connotation, it consecrates the

abandonment of the will to harm i.e. harmlessness. That is, it implies love, goodwill and friendliness and humanity. In *Tattvarthsutra* of Jainism, violence is explained as injure caused due to carelessness and actuated by passion like pride, anger etc. According to, the Jain scriptures, 'all misery springs up from violence. The doctrine of *Anekantvada* and non-violence are the principles of peaceful co-existence. Violence is the result of greed and lack of self-control. 'Non- violence is the crux of wisdom'. Fortunately, the seers who discovered the laws of non-violence in the midst of violence were great geniuses. Mahavir proclaimed that, there is no quality of soul subtler than non-violence and no virtue of spirit greater than reverence for life. Gandhi regarded it as not only a law of human species but also a rule of science as well.

Mahavira declared 'I have friendship with all enmity with no one'. Thus, the principle of non-violence naturally implies purity of thought, word and deed. It is a positive virtue implying love for all. It is against violence in the name of religion. It stands for environmental protection, vegetarianism, sympathetic understanding and peaceful coexistence. 'Small virtues can effect big changes' Jain vegetarianism is based on this principle. Food affects not merely body but also mind. Non- vegetarianism can cause cruelty and violence. Tranquility necessitates right kind of food; Vegetarianism is therefore a first step for spiritualism. But here the controversy regarding the Vegetarianism is, the Hitler was a pure vegetarian but killed many people in the name of religion. So, Vegetarianism is logically questing. Vegetarian people like some group of Indians also committing crimes and doing violence.



Jainism believes that anyone who would not harm an animal would be equally unwilling to shoot his fellowman. Vegetarianism will also help in ruling out violent thought. When one radiates loving kindness, joy and friendliness that multiply and come back to us. It is said that, violence starts in thought, and then it gets in speech and ultimately results in actions. In individual's mind harshness and cruelty continuity of violent action brings.

The deeper significance of non-violence consists in the elimination of wars, which troubled the mankind since the beginning of civilization. So, one has to accept non- violence as a regulative principle of our conduct. It has also social implications. The force of non-violence as a social factor is significant. It helps in reconstituting social relations. It imparts peace to us and at the same time offers a solution to interpersonal and social problems. So, it is basic to other values in reconstructing

### **Jaina Theory of Relativity:**

The doctrine of multiple vision is another important contribution of Jainism, to world thought. It is the extension principle of non-violence in the intellectual field. It is the logic of probability or relativism based on realism. It implies non-absolutism or liberalism. This theory is unparalleled in the history of philosophy. According to this doctrine, an object has an infinite number of characteristics. One cannot grasp all of them. Someone is uncle in relation to his nephew, father in relation to his son. So, truth is relative- relative to our standpoints. Hence, according to the doctrine of non-absolutism to understand truth completely, one must consider all its aspects.

Necessary corollary of this view is non-violence in speech and thought. One must respect other's points of view. If we insist on truth we must understand the beauty of compromise. This is the philosophy of relativism. One has to develop non-absolutistic standpoint- attitude on almost all problems and adopt this kind of outlook to realize truth in its varied aspects. It helps us to understand the views of others. It also helps to cultivate spirit of tolerance and understanding. This will increase good will and harmony. One has to practice the generosity of spirit and avoid fundamentalism. Thus, antagonism can be resolved not by quarrels but by communication and understanding. It is the principle of co-operation and co- existence. This means toleration, which is characteristic of Jaina Ideology. It is an ideal for successfully managing conflicts-personal or interpersonal, national or international. It is the doctrine of open-mindedness which is the expression of fundamental non-violent attitude. It has got wonderful power of assimilation. "Jainism with its theory of multiple -vision provides a framework through which qualities like tolerance and understanding. can be developed" by accepting this synoptic outlook in life, all quarrels will vanish. The Nation's foreign policy should be influenced by such and understanding. The real threat to world peace comes from the ideological conflicts which can be avoided.

#### **Mahatma Gandhi's views on Religious Harmony:**

Gandhi, being a religious person, says, "a man without religion is life without principles, and life without principles, is like a ship without a rudder." One can easily understand his religious profundity from the preceding verse. According to K. Seshagiri Rao, "Gandhi believed that education without the study of religions is incomplete. Religion, in its varied forms, is not only a legitimate

intellectual pursuit but a vital aspect of human culture and civilization. The study of religions, for Gandhi, was not a purely theoretical or academic matter; it was also a practical and existential necessity”<sup>16</sup>

Gandhi was always been inquisitive on the principles of other religions since his childhood. He says, “I believe in the fundamental Truth of all great religions of the world. And I believe that if only we could, all of us, read the scriptures of the different faiths from the standpoint of the followers of those faiths, we should find that they were at the bottom, all one and were all helpful to one another.” (Bombay Sarvodaya Mandal and Gandhi Research Foundation.)

In the contemporary period Gandhian religious philosophy and spiritual training has significant space, as he conceptualizes ‘spiritual growth in religion’ as the prime and essential element to realise and achieving ‘pluralism of religion’. He is also a believer of humanity. According to him it is the elementary entity of any religion. For him the whole world is his own country and serving mankind is his religion, irrespective of any boundaries. Gandhi’s world-renowned ideologies on religion and concept of religious harmony are also well acclaimed by the leaders of world religions. He strongly believed that, the God is one and different religions are paths to reach the same God. Gandhi was always anxious, that people pursue religious life without any concern neither purity nor even moral values like religious harmony.

#### **Sarvadharmā Samābhava:**

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<sup>16</sup>K. L. Rao, Seshagiri. *Mahatma Gandhi and Comparative Religion*. Motilala Banarsidass, 1990. p. 15.

Gandhi believed in Sarvadharmā samābhava - that all religions are equal. Gandhi insisted that, religion is a personal entity, which is a tool to uncover the ultimate truth. Gandhi précised that, all religions are in quest of truth in their own style. He differentiated the pursuit of religion from possession attitude Possession comes when one is egoistic on his own religion which results in quarrel with the rest of the religion, whereas pursuit of religion leads to religious harmony through tracking down the truth behind the other religions.

“After long study and experience, I have come to the conclusion that (1) all religions are true; (2) all religions have some errors in them; (3) all religions are almost as dear to me as my own Hinduism, in as much as all human beings should be as dear to me as one's own close relatives. My own veneration for other faiths is the same as that for my own faith.”(Basant Kumar Lal, Contemporary Indian Philosophy, 1974)

It is a fact that, there are several common factors amidst the religions like trusts, sentimentality, worship and contribution in common ceremonies. They are underpinning unity and harmony of people. All the religions have a tradition of socialising masses and controlling the society throughout the history. Every religious bodies like Temple, Mosque, church and Gurudwaras. have crucial role of uphold social norms in an individual and the society as well. Even rituals and festivals operate as mental excretion agent in every religion. These commonalities attributes to religious harmony transcending cultures. For Gandhi, Sarva dharmā Samābhava is not just a theoretical premise but a promising act of faith. He accomplished it industriously in his life and to blur the boundary between religions. Gandhi brought his own life

into play to illustrate how to live a creative religious life, i.e. he preached Sarvadharmā Samābhava by practicing it in his life. It has a significant role in obliterating over emphasize conjecture on practice of multi-religiosity in the context of the contemporary world. It may be appropriate to conclude by quoting another significant statement of Gandhi: “The need of the moment is not one religion but mutual respect and tolerance of the devotees of different religions. We want to reach not the dead level but unity in diversity. Any attempt to root out traditions, effects of heredity, climate and other surroundings is not only bound to fail but is a sacrilege. The soul of religion is one but it is encased in a multitude of forms. The latter will persist to the end of time. Wise men will ignore the outward crust and see the same soul living under a variety of crusts”. (Gandhi, Young India 1925)

#### **Gandhi on other religions:**

For Gandhi, words are meaningless if they are not demonstrated by actions. He passionately sought-after peoples’ belief system. He explored Bible and Quran on his early days and encountered with Christians in England and Muslims in South Africa, which helped him to gain spiritual maturity. His maturity in spirituality helped him to invite healthy interchange of ideas among various religion with due respect to the teachings of every individual religion. Gandhi’s dialogue with other religions has multiple elements, for instance; he believed that all religions leads to the ultimate truth or the God, where only the path differs. He anticipates that, every rudiment of any religion should strive for peace and brotherhood in the society by nourishing the inner spirituality of life and promoting a life of self-control, sacrifice, harmony, peace and understanding to create a heaven on earth. Though people call the

spirituality in different name as being 'Higher Self', 'God Self' or even 'Spirit', Gandhi described it as 'Inner Being', that is he believes the spirituality that exists in everyone. Gandhi put in the picture that, if a person identifies the spirituality which is the source of energy within himself or her, he or she will attain peace to strive to spread peace around him. Gandhi's foremost spiritual reservoir is the *Bhagavad-Gita* that cultured him the primacy of egoless accomplishment in the service of God. Gandhian thought is much influenced by *Bhagavad Gita*, it owes to the teachings of Islam, Christianity, Jainism, and Buddhism as well.

The life of Mahavira and Scriptures of Jainism inspired Gandhi to exercise and moralise Non-violence throughout his life. He believed that, non-violence emerges from a deep reverence for self and life of all beings. He also believed that, when one fire up cultivating a genuine respect for one's own body, mind, emotion and consciousness, then he or she will reach the ultimate truth of life. Gandhian thought is also liable to Buddhism for quite a lot of reasons. Gandhi is not an enthusiastic of ritualistic and institutionalised approaches to religions. He admired Buddhism for it's less ritualistic and deity dependent approach as compared to Hinduism. Gandhi viewed Buddhism in a more positive light as it materialised as a reform movement against the negative aspects of Hinduism like caste system and integrates it with the positive beliefs. He was attracted by the peace spreading and liberation temperament of the Buddhism philosophy. Gandhi was concerned with the individuals' inner purity and perfection, which made him fascinated in New Testament and wisdom of Jesus Christ. He aspired to moralise and spiritualise

the laws of the State. He as well wished to practice the Christian principle of 'Resist not Evil'.

Gandhian thought pondered deeply over all philosophies to figure out the converging point and the unique offerings of every religion to the world. Gandhi was not a big fan of 'Universal Scripture', just as he was not persuader of the idea that the major faiths should merge into single universal faith. His deep religious feelings became more prominent. His daily prayers were for inner light and guidance. He was also attracted by the teachings of Islam with regard to unity and brother-hood. At his prayer meetings verses from the Quran were invariably recited along with selections from the *Gita*.

Gandhi strongly believed that Sarvodaya is one of the major principles which are the back-bone of all religions. Gandhi defines Sarvodaya is nothing but the upliftment of the universal through the world solidarity or welfare of society. According to him, "Sarvodaya requires adherence to moral principles and moral ways of life."<sup>17</sup>

Gandhi never undervalued any religion and at the same time for no reason upheld any one religion in a privileged position. Though he asserted himself to be a Hindu, he always points out the finger at the caste system and untouchability in Hindu system and indeed he openly condemned it. Though he sought out universality in religions, he was never endorsed to the idea of granting position to any religion as 'Universal Religion'. He went to the extent by saying that "the religions with 'divine origin' in form of scriptures either through the sages or prophets like the *Vedas*, the *Quran*, the *Ten*

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<sup>17</sup>Barua, Manisha. *Religion and Gandhian Philosophy*, Akansha Publishing House, 2002,p.

*Commandments* or the *Bible* are not infallible; no doubt the Medium through which they revealed is not doubted but the media (i.e. human being themselves) through whom we have received these scriptures are doubted as humans are finite and can give us only a glimpse of the whole truth”. So, in his opinion a single religion cannot be a Universal Religion but, dialectics can be used to extract the best from all religions and be accepted.

### **Tagore views on Religious Harmony:**

Tagore’s humanistic outlook is evident in every aspect of his thoughts and it is reflected in the status of narrow anthropomorphism too. His humanistic attitude not only limits to nature and objects but pervades to God also. Very often, he raised human being higher to the status of God on occasion he brought God down to human being, in so far as divinity is said to be perceptible in the heart of human being. Tagore’s spirituality is dual in nature, it is God as well as human being at the same time. Tagore asserts that “if this faith is blamed for being anthropomorphic, then human being should also be blamed for being human”. Tagore found joy in perceiving everything in humanistic way, as he strongly believes that only the human mind can reveal the meaning and significance of things. He says, “It is almost altruism to say that the world is what we perceive it to be. We imagine that our mind is a mirror, that it isomer or less accurately reflecting what is happening outside us.” (Tagore, Personality, 1917)

Tagore’s vision on religion has similarity with humanism; yet the humanism cannot be perceived in the contemporary sense. Essentially, Tagore’s religion of human being believes in a personal God, and the God is intimately related to human beings so much so that he longs for their company. Such a



relationship is absurd in modern herald of humanism. Furthermore, Tagore's religion insists on social service as well as perceived by the modern thought of humanism. But it insisted on social service as the ideal of religion rather than God, whereas Tagore doesn't insist in materialistic way. He pursues God through social service and he never stopped seek God in the temples or through meditations. He says, "He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path-maker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in shower, and his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil!" (Tagore, Gitanjali 1913)

It is to be noted that, nowhere Tagore's religion suggested worshipping the human beings or human attribute. Though, Tagore speaks of love as a way of realisation of the Infinite but it is not demanded by his religion. According to Tagore the Supreme Being has created the universe out of love and so it is crucial for human beings to love everything in the nature. Besides, Tagore believes in human being's kinship with nature and feels a sort of exhilaration in the contemplation of beauty and sublimit of nature as showing human being's fundamental unity with the rest of creation. Lastly, Tagore's religion is based on 'the divinization of human being and humanization of God'. His work, *The Religion of Man*, and *Personality*, bear witness that Tagore has given significance value to the human beings and human values in his religion. He always pronounces that; the Infinite is eternally expressing itself through human beings. But his religion gives due importance to God and so his humanism can be said to be a form of religious humanism.

Tagore's religion is an aspect of human spirit. It does not construct on the base of God but embedded in human being. Therefore, his religion is a

poet's religion which, for him, is a principle of unity that binds us together; it is our essential quality, inherent in us. He sees religion as a tool to enable us to cultivate and express these virtues in us. Therefore, in Tagore's religion spirituality means realizing the code of unity and the endeavor to be true to itself. According to him religion trains our attitude and behaviour towards the Infinite in its human form. Religion does not dwell in knowledge or philosophy, but in the spirit of realizing one's personality, fulfilment and self-consciousness. It is to see the Infinite in the finite, to find God in all things. Religion is not the ultimate goal but it guides towards the liberation in the universal spirit within the vicinity humanity itself. Tagore insists that human beings and nature are interdependent and, for him, human beings are the most beautiful and highest manifestations of God. He further says that, they are the temples of the divine. This conception of Tagore is very similar to the biblical accounts of creation; however, Tagore does not believe in the biblical account of creation. He also advocates that though human beings are superior to other creations, they are not supposed to control the nature.

#### **Sri Aurobindo views on Religious Harmony:**

Sri Aurobindo's writings facilitate to comprehend the complexity of human nature and the need of different paths on their spiritual journey. Each religion has immured some fundamental aspects of Great Truth and each religion has significant contribution to the overall evolution of humanity. Heterogeneity is the inherent quality of The Supreme Being and Nature and hence diversity might be the feature of Truth. So, obviously there should be diverse paths, diverse religions and diverse teachers of the Truth showing different ways to the Truth and the diversity is still escalating endlessly. The

necessity for a healthy co-existence of multiple religions, might be intellectually satisfying and also liberating to recognize of diverse religions. Humanity's response to a diversity of religions has either involved a sense of disharmony and conflict, or tolerant; but often aimless, postmodern religio-moral relativism resulting in an ethical void. Sri Aurobindo revealed that, the truth of the Super mind will surely but gradually compel more and more sections of humanity strive towards a greater harmony between the diverse religions and spiritual paths. He also observed the signs of this awakening across the world. This may be practiced either through a world-religion which include the truth accentuated by various religions but coordinated in the light of a greater supramental truth that has not been a part of any religion so far, or through a-religious spirituality that transcends all religions. Aurobindo believes that, prior may be a beginning step to the later. But regardless, a diversity of paths and ways will be there.

According to him, "The domain of pure spiritual self-realization and self-expression need not be a single white monotone, there can be a great diversity in the fundamental unity; the supreme Self is one, but the souls of the Self are many, and as is the soul's formation of nature, so will be its spiritual self-expression. Diversity in oneness is the law of manifestation; the supramental unification and integration must harmonies these diversities, but to abolish them is not the intention of the spirit in Nature. ...in mental formulation the difference must remain until one can exceed mind altogether and in a highest consciousness integralise, unify and harmonies the many-sided truth of the Spirit." (The Life Divine, 1939).

Sri Aurobindo is against religious discrimination and views it as a social evil. For example, non-Hindus and even the so called lower caste Hindus are not allowed in the Hindu temples. He believed that these social evils are the products of misinterpretation of the religion. He stressed to revisit the original texts of the religion. Similarly, Sri Aurobindo keeps reminding, there is hope for unity to emerge from within the fold of the more exclusive and orthodox Islam. Because there exist tolerant, open and inclusive strains of Islam, it is those versions of Islam which will have to take the lead in such an endeavour. He strongly believed that, the change in the religious harmony comes from the masses with the practitioners of these religions who have the most non-dogmatic and inclusive view of their religions coming together and recognizing the necessity for a closer union and synthesis.

“The Mahomedan, the Hindu, the Buddhist and the Christian in India will not have to cease to be Mahomedan, Hindu, Buddhist, or Christian, in any sense of the term, for uniting into one great and puissant Indian nation. Devotion to one’s own ideals and institutions, with toleration and respect for the ideals and institutions of other sections of the community, and an ardent love and affection for the common civic life and ideal of all-these are what must be cultivated by us now, for the building up of the real Indian nation” (Bande Mataram, 1906.)

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **CONCLUSION**

The researcher analysed the above five chapters about the concept of Universal Religion through Swami Vivekananda's approach. The Contemporary world is influenced and affected by many evils; religion is becoming one of the major controversial issues in human society, it is one of the unavoidable entities in the day today life since ancient period to modern. Particularly in the modern period, most of the issues related to religion not only affect the individuals but also all the societies and also, all the countries of the world. So, the researcher tries to analyse how the concept of Universal Religion can be utilised to as method establish the peaceful society. To understand the universal religion, everyone should understand religion and its multidimensional aspects and should also know how it is functions in the undercurrent of the society. In the first chapter researcher discoursed about the history of religion and analysed the religion from the various points of views such as Anthropological, Psychological and Sociological. These are the important things to understand the religion and how it is functions in the society. Without understanding above concepts of Universal Religion will be misunderstood. This research further analysed science and religion. Basically religion is believed by most of the people as faith and divine oriented. But Swami Vivekananda says in his whole writings and speeches with regarded to religion; it is the Science, so in this chapter how religion is differed from science and how religion can be looked as science through Vivekananda's perspective and also how science was looked as religion in ancient days from

western and Indian perspective is analysed. And further the research continued to analyse the postmodern thought of religion because postmodernism is one of the propound theory among other theories in the modern period and also it is one the fascinated concept to deal with most of the fields and it could turn the direction of human mind in new dimension and also it gives room to new thought for scholars. So this is crucial to this research to analyse the religion with postmodern theory. Further, this research analyses the major religions of Indian and western countries because both the countries are holding different opinions on the religion, this analysis is important because universal religion is common for all the people around the world. This research tries to examine the relation of different Societies, Culture, and Religion and it proposes to analyse the construction of religion in the society and how it is accepted by masses and numerous people. Because, religion and culture are concerned as same entities by the people according to their traditional ambiance but in reality is both are not same because, cultural change depends up on modernisation and merging one culture with other but religion cannot change. It means every religion has certain codes, norms, rituals, philosophy and holy texts. Particularly in India people can embrace with other religion, but they are mostly not ready to change their religion. Another important analysis in this research is religious institution because religious institution has important role in formalizing and civilizing the human beings and moreover this research discusses about the two extreme powers of religions, such as unified and diverse force of every religion. This research tries to analyse the consequences of social life without religion because people are losing their faith on religion particularly in western societies. This research analyses religion as one of the

controlling mechanisms, it controls the people like what they should do and don't and if religion cannot control the people the whole world becomes confused and immoral and too much of freedom will be socially unhappy. Thus Swami Vivekananda says, when religion is apart from a human being, nothing remains, instead of brutes or barbarians. Of course, religion has an important role in culturing the human life. Its realm is inevitable on either way whether we speak as theism or as atheism, in some way its relation travels parallel along with the humanity till its end. Its virtue would be always there along with the humanity whether it is believed or not. Religious conversion is one of the burning issues in around the world. The researcher analyzed the Swami Vivekananda's religious conversion. The ultimate aim of Swami Vivekananda's universal religion is: one should accept all the religions as true and he says religious discrimination and religious fanaticism are very much jeopardise the society. Further he asserts, religious conversion is one kind of source of above jeopardise, Vivekananda was never against any of religious preaching. He welcomed all the religions and he wished, all people should know about all the religions and he believed this is the way to understand the universal religion but on the contrary when he speak about the religious conversion, it is one of the worst political business. However, during the Vivekananda's period, there were many Christian missionaries that came to India and preached Christianity, preaching religion in any place does not matter for him but he thought that when that preaching become a conversion it is really worst. When he addressed in the world religious conference at Chicago, he mentioned about Christian missionary's attitude on religious conversion in Indian nation, we welcome the Christian religion in our land and

we bow the Jesus as great soul we accept your whole principle but do not convert our people by exploiting their poverty. One can view all the mothers are like his mother but he can't change his own mother. The present research analyzed the consequences of religious conversions particularly in Indian society and further movements of Din I Ilahi, Brahmo Samaj and Bahai are discoursed in this thesis, because such movements also speak about the religious harmony and necessity of universal religion.

The researcher would like conclude that, Basically, Swami Vivekananda preached human kind with regard to the divinity in their nature. He struggled to make it manifested within the individuals in every moment of their lives by controlling the both the external and internal nature. It can only be done through the worship or psychic control or philosophy. This is essence of religion. The other aspects like doctrines or dogmas, rituals, books, temples or any other forms are secondary. The strong and powerful human nature is the outcome of the divinity. With regard to the divinity, there is no difference between two individuals. One should not believe that, he is weak. As the children of the almighty, all are the sparks of power, wisdom and infinite divines. The individual has to manifest them. By manifesting the divinity within the individual, is possible. Due to the ignorance, the individual used to feel low. The atman is same in every one. Man can stand on the glory of his own soul. It is infinite eternal and deathless. No instruments can pierce it, no air can dry it and no fire can burn it. It has no beginning and end. One must believe in this glorious soul. The will power generates out of it. Therefore, one should believe in oneself in achieving and attaining the freedom, which leads



to the Nirvana or eternal bliss. Even Vedanta teaches that, one must have faith in himself. It believes in the glory of one's soul and should be realized by all people. The self within the individuals is always shining. Due to the materialistic outlook people are being confined to the queer cage of flesh and bones. This is the root cause of the weakness. The conceptions of Vedanta must come out and to be put in to practice by the people of all professions. It is a fact that man is the creator of his own fortune and three things are necessary to make every individual great. They are:

1. Conviction of power of goodness.
2. Absence of Jealousy and suspicion.
3. Help all the people.

One must have faith on oneself and then in God. Losing faith in one's own self implies, losing faith on God. Swami Vivekananda expected every individual with the muscles of iron and nerves of steel and the mind of thunderbolt. Even though India has the Upanishads and boasted ancestral origin of sages, still they are weak with the limited ideas in the mind, the humbling of praying and weeping towards imaginary being superstitions. Prayers may not be answered. But the answers come from our own hearts. The individual is the creator of the universe. There is infinite power that has tremendous energy in every individual. No books, scriptures and no science can ever imagine the glory of the self that appears within man. Generally, any religion gives nothing new. It only takes off the obstacle and let the individuals sets free. One must remember that, humanity travels from truth to higher truth. In the contemporary period, secular knowledge only saves the life of the individual.

All the traditional religions believed that, one who won't have belief in God is an atheist. India's gift to the world is the spiritual light through various kinds of Yogas and techniques that are silent and gentle. They produce tremendous results. One should believe that, we are selected by the Lord to do the great things and we will do them. Through the attainment of spiritual knowledge, the older the individual grows everything seems to lie in manliness. With the support of truth, purity and unselfishness the individual is able to face the universe even with opposition.

It is the fact that religion is the manifestation of divinity already within the individual. One must have the courage in his mind and love in his heart. As long as one has love God and guru also faith in truth nothing can hurt him. According to Vivekananda, the prolonged practice of Brahmacharya will lead to the realization of God. The God will pardon a man who will use his reason and can't behave rather than a man who believes blindly. It is religion that gives infinite strength to the individual. Upanishads are the great sources of strength to religion. According to the Shastras the real surrender and reliance on God is indicated as the culmination of human achievement. But nowadays people speak of God as a sign of the outcome of great cowardliness. It is a fact that, all human beings are the children of God. He only will guide the individual who is really unselfish. The individual has to work unto death and believe in himself, generate the intense and constant fire that directs him on the right path. If we considered religion as atomic power we can use it as electrical sources, but if we exploit religion, it can destroy the whole human society because religion has two extreme faces such as one is build the society

and other is destroy the society. Universal religion is just like the hook to connect all the religions, how the train compartments are connected by hooks and humanity is an engine to pull all the religions and rationality must be a rail track. Every religion's aim is to reach the ultimate reality, as Swami Vivekananda said all the sources of water will have to reach the ocean.

Religion has been the most crucial factor for most of the human conflicts in the world. Religion has evolved among the humans with a purpose to culturally civilize the race. The purpose had been served in the onset of the evolution of the religions; it helped human being to elevate from lower level to higher. But at the same time religions - as institutions are travelling back in their reversal trajectory, causes factor for most of the violence in the world. Religion demotes human race back to their barbarian ages. Indeed, one cannot deny the key role of religion in promoting the social, moral and harmonious elements in human life and also those religions guided the masses to values based society and also to their enchanting lifestyle. It is possible only through the transformation of man from one level to the other. It is important to understand that, as humanity is itself in its formative stage, man made religion too is in its beginning stage towards perfection. Another note worthy fact is that, always human tendency tends to the complicate religion with superstitious dogmas and rituals, which certainly narrows down the human mind and rather than helping him or her towards the higher spiritual development.

Universal Religion explores the 'essential truth' which has gone astray in the wilderness of superstitions and myths. It aims at unearthing the great

potentialities in human beings and enables them to attain excellence and thereby integrate them in the development of humanity. Universal religion believes in inner perfection of the individuals, which aims the unity of the world. When a person is conscious of his or her own divinity, then they will be aware of the divinity of other fellow beings too. Universal religion preaches universal love, which surpasses all spheres of life and leads to the ideal goal of oneness of mankind. Swami Vivekananda's Universal Religion proffer unity in diversity. He identifies the importance of the functioning of each religion for the spiritual and social growth of mankind. Universal Religion is not only a product of amalgamation of religions, but also realisation of the ultimate truth prevails in every religion. He encouraged the harmonious nature of all the religions. The spirit of acceptance of religious plurality is evident in his own words: "The fact that all these old religions are living today proves that they must have kept that mission intact in spite of all their mistakes, in spite of all difficulties, in spite of all quarrels, in spite of all the incrustation of forms and figures, the heart of everyone of them is sound it is throbbing, beating, living heart. They have not lost, any one of them, the great mission they came for"<sup>1</sup>. Vivekananda's Universal religion asserts that, it is the responsibility of each follower of a faith to treat all other religions as equal, and to unite all good elements of other faiths into one's own faith.

Universal Religion of Vivekananda offers a new approach to resolve the conflicts between religions. He believes that social stability can be

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<sup>1</sup> M. N. Roy, *Science and Superstition*, Dehradun: The Indian Renaissance Association, 1940, p. 93.

accomplished through social unity among the major religions. The spirit of countries like India is based not on a particular religion but on harmony among all the religions. Vivekananda's rationalistic approach enables the masses to realise the God i.e. the ultimate truth; and stresses the masses to find the God that resides in every mankind. Universal Religion discloses the need for love and social harmony, the need for right conduct and proper performance of all duties, and the basic qualities of the ideal man. It enables us to reach to the points on which all religions agree and to build a new earth and heaven.

Undoubtedly the most important problem of modern age is human beings seems to belong to two world viz., the world of nature and the world of spirit. They are subjected to the limitations and the necessities of nature and at the same time he belongs to another realm of existence, i.e. the world of spirituality. Therefore to lead an eminent life, the rational aspect of man should be uplifted in the light of spirituality. Vivekananda's vision of the welfare of the humanity relies on the harmonious integration of the spiritual wisdom of the East and the material prosperity of the West. Human beings should free themselves from the blind technological dependency. They have to understand the complexity of their nature. Because, the relations between consciousness and brain are still a mystery, modern man is completely immersed in the world created by the science of inert matter which is outcome of an error of human reason and from the ignorance of his true self. He becomes a stranger in his own world he created. For this reason the different paths of different religions should provide the means to develop all the potentialities of human body and mind.

Each human being has unavoidable responsibility of steering towards the social harmony among individuals and nations. A new understanding is needed on the problems of the world to ascertain the spiritual awakening of mankind. The harmonious development of mankind is possible only by spiritual enrichment of the social, political and economic environment. The idea of Universal Religion considers faith in oneself, which is the only solution for all the problems in life. Compassion and empathy that emerges out from every individual alone can bring peace and brotherhood of mankind in the world. Weakness is one of the causes of all sufferings in the world. Man lies, steals, kills and commits other crimes due to weakness. Faith in one self enables one to overcome weakness and helps to regain the inherent strength of human being.

For the great enlightenment, refinement of one's mind is mandatory. The mental wellness is very much important to attain faith in oneself. Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Raja Yoga are the different spiritual practices for the refinement of the mind. When the mind is pure, it will be filled with the superlative energy. Vivekananda always endorse human beings to keep their attention fixed on the highest values. But the greatest satire here is that everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing oneself. Everyone is enthusiastic to transform the world without realising that the transformation should begin from self. Hence the real transformation must begin with the individual. Self-development and spiritual revolution within human being is the need of the hour. The perfection of the soul within man has the power to perfect the outer environment. The transformation of the soul will alone pacify the tribulations of life. Furthermore, whatever harmony exists in

the world today is the result of such a transformations emerged from within the individuals. It is too easy to imagine a new vision of humanity, but very difficult to practice. Reasoning and rational thinking alone save the mankind; it only helps the human being to a certain extent in marching towards the highest end.

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