The Idea of Religion: Narratives, Ideologies, Misunderstandings and bridging the gap

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ABSTRACT

I feel perplexed, baffled, flummoxed and at the same time critical while I pen down this paper that focuses on Religion and its complicated yet systematic factors and varied notions. I wanted to begin by introducing, religion and it's varied narratives to the readers but I prefer something much more important should be critically analyzed before that.

I clearly remember, when my Prof. Dr. Santosh K. Singh quoted Joey Lawsin saying, **"The Duality of One is the Unity of Two"** thus, even though we fight for one

notion or idea but at the end it's all a connected web of variable thoughts, ideas and notions.

In the above quoted saying, it defines a situation in which the existence or identity of a thing (or situation) depends on the co-existence of at least two conditions which are opposite to each other and presupposing each other, within a field of tension.

Thus, here I want to convey the diversity that people bring in, in the name of Religion and how we mold religion in the most comfortable way possible.

INTRODUCTION

Religion can be considered as practices, behaviors, ethical beliefs, etc, as a social or cultural system that may relate humanity to the supernatural, transcendental or spiritual powers which they term as God. Religion is related with certain system such as polytheistic systems, pantheistic systems, and monotheistic systems. The monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam have their own sacred scripture. On the other side, polytheistic religion such as Hinduism and Buddhism, which believes in the multiple existence of gods, don't have the clear picture of scripture or non-scripture like the monotheistic religions have. People in a society tend to develop a sense of religious identity which is the collective membership of a group to a particular spiritual or cultural belief and thus follow a particular religion which at the core attributes to a person's self identity. A person uses this religious identity to look for some spiritual answers and to define oneself. Religious identity constitutes a key element in the formation, development and sustenance of a community.

The popularity of religion as a system of rituals and beliefs followed by various communities of the world brings up this question of its origin and evolution. Various thinkers tried to explain this origin and evolution of religion and animism and naturism came out to be the two main theories.

The theory of animism was given by *Edward B. Tylor* which means that objects, places and creatures can all possess a distinct spiritual essence. Tylor argues that the intellectual nature of a man, the fear of death and the imagination of afterlife is what gave rise to religion in the form of animism. Naturism theory of religion as believed by *F. Max Muller* is the belief in the

supernatural forces of the nature. Awed by the wonders of nature, man tried to sense the effect of it on one's emotions. There are various other theories about the origin of religion and the evidences show that it can be traced back to the age of Neanderthal man.

Max Weber is another sociologist who worked on religion and brought out the relationship between protestant ethics and spirit of capitalism. He noticed that in Europe and other parts of the world, most of the rich capitalistic people were protestant and hence he tried to make any correlation between the two of them. He checked it using the technique of ideal type. The first point of protestant ethics is the *'own glory'* stating that the god created the world for own glory and there's no priest who can mediate it. The second is the *'doctrine of predestination'* which means that the people have already been chosen for heaven and there's no way one can change it.

Third is the *'asceticism'* which brings the sense of self discipline to receive the glory of god. Last being the 'notion of calling' which tells that all work is sacred and there's nothing known as a small or a big deed, every work is done in the name of God. Weber considered the ideal type of capitalism as acquiring wealth, wealth is not something for enjoyment but for creating more wealth. Individualism is another feature of ideal capitalism which tells that when a person is self-dependent and works as an individual being, he tends to work hard and bring our new innovations

for the society. A major agenda of capitalism is to gain profit and the unlimited accumulation of profit by rational organization of work. There are some ethics of capitalism which says that time is money, wasting time is similar to wasting money; work is worship, working in the name of god; and worker is a means to an end. Weber found elective affinity between the two as the elements of protestant ethics had strong tendency to support capitalism. 'Predestination' says that the one who is already destined to go to heaven is the one who accumulates the most wealth hence, people started accumulating more and more wealth. 'Asceticism' which tells to be self-disciplines supported capitalism in the form of reinvestment and individualism which further led to more capitalism. 'Notion of calling' compliments the capital ethics of work is worship without much about what the work is and all of it leads to greater profit and wealth.

Exploring the Narrative: An Interview

The advent of ideologies, ethics, prophecies and narratives in this growing world has paved the way to easy changes in the ongoing system of nature and man-made fallacies. In this growing world full of variable mindsets we somehow tend to find religion or conditional change in religion a touchy topic.

In one of the lectures of our Prof. Dr. Santosh K Singh, he particularly stated that "To understand religion, we need to observe religion from a distance, where, at times, we may find 'religious umbrellas'

that protects it from external factors thus making it universal throughout its life."

Just focusing on the questions itself is not my motto here, I want and need to bring out a better understanding of religion as a whole and propagate a narrative that bridges the gap between the classical approach and the secular mindset of the current generation.

What I feel about the quintessence of religion is, 'Religion evolves less but grows more.'

There is always a big chance that different faith groups might change their beliefs, ideologies, and teachings etc. over time due to secular or cultural pressures. But we need to understand the fact that these changes are very sensitive to the audience and it might affect their sentiments knowing that their religion or belief had some error in its subjective knowledge and might ponder whether the current teachings are in error or not.

Adding my conscious sense to these narratives, let me bring in what my grandfather said as I interviewed him, he connects religion to 'Dharma' stating that each work you do is your religion, moreover your Dharma, from the moment you wake up to the time you go to bed, each and every activity you perform defines your religion thus religion is something which is intangible but appears to be the most tangible thing in the world, and this blows me off! While my grandmother sitting next to him stated that, Religion is not only something that has to be worshipped but something that should be preserved, perpetuated and sustained for coming generations.

Religion is stated to be very dynamic, for some it's a supportive component, for some spiritual belief and for some just a motivation to live on. Interviewing my grandparents further, I got to know they usually visit a worship place every day, and they have personal (small) temple inside the house, where no one is allowed to visit unless stated by them since it is considered a very holy and pure place to be in.

They even said that the challenge isn't about showing compassion and visiting worship place every day but to maintain it and work selflessly for it. Seeing these ideas of open mindsets, I gave them a situation to ponder upon; I asked them if you

get an option to donate some money, what will be your priority- for construction of sacred place or for poor quality Orphanages. At which they said, we will surely donate for the construction of holy place, since we need to keep our God happy. And these ideologies are the biggest bridge gap between the two generations. Even though we have the same religion in practice, still there will always be differences, since as I said, *Religion evolves too.*

We are very cognizant that, secularism is a very perceptive and sensitive topic to talk upon since subject matter like these are very subjective, thus the perception of seeing it or believing it in a particular direction makes it more difficult to understand.

Nevertheless, I moved with it, querying whether they believe in secularism and the

fact that there is a right to be free from religious rules and teachings, to which they aggressively replied, "There isn't a world without religion. Religion is present everywhere you can't separate yourself from it, you are born with it, and you die with it!"

Thus they abolish and contradict the law of secularism and believe religion to be eternal. Moving forward, I asked them a simple question, at what extent is Violence a positive component of religion, to which they laughed and said,

"Om Asato Maa Sad-Gamaya

Tamaso Maa Jyotir-Gamaya

Mrtyor-Maa Amrtam Gamaya

Om Shaantih Shaantih Shaantih"

Meaning:

Lead me from the unreal to the real

Lead from the darkness to the light

Lead me from death to immortality

Let there be peace, peace, peace

And I don't know if there is a better answer to this. Our religion conveys the message of peace for the whole human civilization and we are still fighting, killing, arguing about saving our god and our religion.

I had a good discussion about the same with my mother too, where I found she had quite similar ideologies like me, to which I concluded that a huge part of your self-belief and narratives arrive according to the people you live with. The society, culture and ambience around you play a huge role in bringing out a specific thought process within you.

To this, I asked my mother if she had any experience through which she got more close to her god or religion or spirituality and her experience shocked me.

She said, she used to teach in a school that was quite far from home, so the school had provided conveyance for the same. She had a habit of praying certain mantras as the journey continued to school, she is quite a religious person.

One day, while she was on the way she saw a portrayal of a goddess in the sky, the sky was all clear and there was a cluster of clouds that had combined to form a mystic look of a goddess and then she felt flowers pour on her from the sky, to which automatic tears rolled down her eyes as she witnessed this majestic attire of spiritual belief. She was stunned the whole day, I don't know why, but when she told this I found simplicity and purity in her words. That can't be an illusion.

People usually find themselves revolving around these unexplainable activities and thus I believe there is a mystery dimensional figure that is above us all.   In our Hindu cultural mythology, we find religion in each and everything whether living or non-living. Thus we respect the creating of everything irrespective of its role in our life. Every religion so to say, has their roles and rituals to their cultural practices to which I asked my mother, whether it is necessary to practice these and what benefit do one gets doing it? She answered saying that, rituals are something that is being carried forward

generation to generation and thus has to be something of a compulsory act and it's too late to question it now.

We just need to follow it as it says, we can't enter a holy place without being clean and that is a role we have to follow, even though you are a huge intellectual person still you can't question the unquestionable.

I believe that even though there are huge gaps and errors between generations we can still know the fact that certain norms and beliefs are universal and can't change, and if change can create a chaotic environment for us all. People who visit worship places more frequently, develop a closer relationship with God and spirituality, closer relationship with God are more likely to provide emotional support to others

and thus brings in a stronger sense of meaning in life, and thus I find no offence if someone beliefs in religion until and unless it's blind and illogical (that is again subjective and can create a good debate).

Here the current generation has the benefit to grasp in the good form the previous generations and produce a religion that is equally accessible, non-harmful and at the same time unbiased to us all.

THIS IS THE ACTUAL DHARMA!

Religion and Science: Comprehending Writers' Views

As I began my research regarding this paper, I came across many books and journals that

unfold the truth of Religion and Science and how did it evolve over time.

To begin with, lets discuss about T.K Oommen, where he worked for Christian religion and fought for the existence of religious beliefs and how religion connects people through their soul!

Professor T.K. Oommen, 62, is in the process of consuming a south Indian lunch, the aroma of which is enough to drive all thoughts of academia from one's mind.
But once through, the professor of sociology at Jawaharlal Nehru University proves that his 36 years in commanding the attention of insouciant MA students has not gone in vain.
Oommen's fascination with the professional world has led to the fourth in his series on careers - after doctors and nurses, social workers and lawyers, *The Christian Clergy in India, Volume I* (Sage) is for aspirants to the white robe.

T.K Oommen, further says that,

"Most people are utterly indifferent to religious practices. In fact, where I come from, we joke that a Christian goes to church only thrice in his life - at the time of his baptism, marriage, and death!"

T.K Oommen presumes that, "*there is no Science without Religion and vice versa!"*

Now lets talk about another author, i.e. Friedrich Nietzsche where he critically and boldly said certain big things that one should think about!

It's been a long time since Friedrich Nietzsche pronounced: "God is dead", giving truth seekers an aggregate cerebral pain that is kept going from the nineteenth century until today. It is, maybe, a standout amongst other known articulations in the entirety of reasoning, notable even to the individuals who have never gotten a duplicate of The Gay Science, the book from

which it starts. Be that as it may, do we know precisely what he implied? Or on the other hand maybe more critically, what it implies for us?

Nietzsche was a skeptic for his grown-up life and didn't imply that there was a God who had really kicked the bucket, rather that our concept of one had. After the Enlightenment, the possibility of a universe that was represented by physical laws and not by divine fortune was currently reality. Theory had demonstrated that administrations never again should have been sorted out around divine option to be real, yet rather by the assent or levelheadedness of the administered — that huge and predictable good speculations could exist without reference to God. This was a gigantic occasion. Europe never again required God as the hotspot for all profound quality, worth, or request known to man; theory and science could do that for us. This expanding secularization of thought in the West drove the logician to understand that in addition to the fact that god was dead that people had murdered him with their logical insurgency, their craving to all the more likely comprehend the world.

The death of God didn't strike Nietzsche as an entirely good thing. Without a God, the basic belief system of Western Europe was in jeopardy,

"When one gives up the Christian faith, one pulls the right to Christian morality out from under one's feet. This morality is by no means self-evident… Christianity is a system, a whole view of things thought out together. By breaking one main concept out of it, the faith in God, one breaks the whole."

Let's further go into this by looking into a book named, Conflicts between Religion and Science by John Williams Draper,

During the 1800s, the connection among religion and science turned into a genuine proper subject of talk, while before this nobody had set science in opposition to religion or the other way around, however periodic cooperations had happened in the past. More explicitly, it was around the mid-1800s that conversation of "science and religion" first emerged[8][9] on the grounds that before this time, science despite everything included good and powerful measurements, was not naturally connected to the logical technique, and the term researcher didn't rise until 1834. The researcher John William Draper (1811-1882) and the essayist Andrew Dickson White (1832-1918) were the most persuasive types of the contention theory among religion and science. Draper had been the speaker in the British Association meeting of 1860 which prompted the celebrated encounter between Bishop Samuel Wilberforce and Thomas Henry Huxley over Darwinism, and in America "the strict discussion over natural advancement arrived at its most basic stages in the late 1870s".

In the mid 1870s the American science-popularizer Edward Livingston Youmans welcomed Draper to compose a History of the Conflict among Religion and Science (1874), a book answering to contemporary issues in Roman Catholicism, for example, the convention of ecclesiastical faultlessness, and generally censuring what he professed to be against intellectualism in the Catholic tradition, yet additionally making reactions of Islam and of Protestantism. Draper's introduction abridges the contention proposal:

The historical backdrop of Science is definitely not a minor record of secluded disclosures; it is an account of the contention of two fighting forces, the extensive power of the human insight on one side, and the pressure emerging from traditional confidence and human interests on the other.

Religions of India by T.M Madan brings in the perspective of all religions combined that includes Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism, Chirtsianity, Sikhism, Islam, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism. These religions are found within the geographic boundaries of India, each

affecting people in some respect. Focusing on the sociological and anthropological aspects, this study attempts to elucidate the major approaches--evolutionary, structuralist, functionalist, cultural/analytical, phenomenological, and hermeneutic, while offering the reader a clear understanding of the religions' perspectives on time, space, knowledge, sacred persons, and reorientation of the sacred.

PERSPECTIVE

Religion is one of the numerous standards of social recognizable proof in India. It is getting progressively significant – albeit, all the time, what gives off an impression of being preparation on a religious premise can similarly as adequately, without a doubt all the more agreeably, be depicted as far as rank, class or regional affiliations. Vested interests may empower the reification of religions, and academics overseas, particularly in Religious Studies departments, may, unwittingly, give them support. This chapter examines the connection among standing and religion, especially on account of the least status gatherings. It proposes that both standing and religion mean altogether different things at various degrees of the chain of importance. It at that point continues to take a gander at the distinctive attributes of religious identities in India. The conversation is identified with more extensive discussions about ethnic and racial identities and issues. Should class or intrigue bunch membership and allegiances be organized over other cultural identities, regardless of whether attributed or gained? It is contended that it is mixed up to decrease any of these to another.

There are at least two perspectives for the origins of the caste system in ancient and medieval India, which focus on either ideological factors or on socio-economic factors.

- The first school centers around the ideological elements which are professed to drive the position framework and holds that standing is rooted in the four varnas. This perspective was especially basic among scholars of the British colonial era and was articulated by Dumont, who presumed that the framework was ideologically culminated several thousand years prior and has remained the primary social reality from that point forward. This school legitimizes its hypothesis essentially by refering to the ancient law book Manusmriti and dismisses economic, political or historical proof.

- The second way of thinking centers around socioeconomic factors and claims that those variables drive the standing framework. It accepts position to be rooted in the economic, political and material history of India. This school, which is regular among scholars of the post-colonial era, for example, Berreman, Marriott, and Dirks, portrays the rank framework as an ever-developing social reality that must be appropriately comprehended by the investigation of historical proof of real practice and the assessment of certain conditions in the economic, political and material history of India. This school has concentrated on the historical proof from ancient and medieval society in India, during the Muslim guideline between the twelfth and eighteenth hundreds of years, and the arrangements of colonial British standard from eighteenth century to the mid-twentieth century.

CONCLUSION

There is a famous quotation of Thomas Szasz, a psychiatrist:

" If you talk to God, you are praying; If God talks to you, you have schizophrenia. If the dead talk to you, you are a spiritualist; If you talk to the dead, you are a schizophrenic."

The world is full of narratives that justifies and satisfies the notion of a particular community, group or an individual. We find change in ideologies as we move across the world, for example, even though Hindu religion is considered to pure and precious and one of the oldest, it still had doubtful issues that need to be discussed, *Sati Pratha, Role of Women, caste system* etc. But its all subjective in nature thus we can only see and argue critically rather than taking a specific side and narrative. It's all a creation of massive history of conflicts of ideas, people and rights etc. This all has brought in massive fluctuations in *the idea of religion* and people perceive things in their own specific way, and as I said, it's all acceptable until it's blind or illogical. Moreover, we must not confuse religion with God, or technology with Science. Religion stands with relationship with god as technology does in relation to science. Both the conduct of religion and the pursuit of technology are capable of leading mankind into evil; but both can prompt great good.

These are two different belief systems. There is no reason in the world that the religious have to explain their faith on a scientific basis. It makes no sense. What is needed between science and religion is not a debate but a conversation, each one saying, you're here to stay, and I'm here to stay, so let's find out how our relationship can be of greatest benefit to this world.

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