

THE PANORAMA OF RELIGION VS HUMANISM: DHARMA DARSHANA VS JEEVAN DARSHANA

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ABSTRACT

Religious debates today are challenging the very peace and fraternity of society just because the people who actually practice religion are often misguided by those who actually don't practice any religion. I mean the political parties and politicians. The politics round the globe has hijacked and reinterpreted the basic concepts of religion. The religion was actually established to unite the society and to guide the people to follow a particular series of morals and ideals. But today the world of religion has turned upside down. The thread woven to unite the society has in fact chained the society. The burdens of proof to support the reinterpretation varies hugely and the term covers so many traditions and exceptions that there always seems to be a counter fact available to any evidence-based argument.

KEYWORDS: *Reinterpreted the Basic Concepts of Religion, Specific Lines of Religious Organizations, Cover for Political or Social Prejudice*

INTRODUCTION

It would be wrong to ignore the fact that debates on religious issues also have a tendency to go off the track and sometimes in the public debates often ends up blunt because of the reluctance of participants to criticize their own views. Streamlined discussions on the value of religion may lead to excellent training and enrichment on competitive debate topics. Debates on religion compel speakers not only to question their own views but to focus on the basic structure of rational arguments rather than correlating on frameworks of assumed knowledge as can often be the case in political debates.

Normally debates on religious topics run along the specific lines of religious organizations based on various moral issues and the groups affected by them. There is a frequent claim that different religion or to be more precise, the organizations that represent them have the final say as a result; the argument goes to political upheavals. Efforts to justify the same argument the other way around against secularism do not really work, as it is difficult to find an instance of acts comparable to religiously sponsored intolerance being committed as a direct result of the actions of secularism. Opposition often resorts to the use of illogical examples that themselves are the fallacy. A desperate opposition often alleges that secularist or communal or Sanatan dharma claims are in fact imposed faith of Colonist or Islamic clergy or RSS. My research paper is basically retrospection on defining the parameters of discussion on religious topics. It is in fact too easy to jump to conclusions on issues related to tolerance, charity, and bigotry and yet have plenty of doubts on both sides.

The debate on atheism and secularism, believers and non-believers has led to the differentiation between 'tolerant' and 'intolerant'. One comparison is frequently made particularly by theists and nationalists between faith and nationalism. Such debates are an inevitable part of the society but whether such a distinction is meaningful or relevant do fall within the purview of this debate. My research paper focusses entirely on religion and thereby tolerance in the basic concepts of the word 'religion'. In addition, it also focuses primarily on the Abrahamic religion purely on the basis that they represent the largest of the world's religious traditions.

What I found is that it's basic propaganda of all religions that they tend to divide humanity into 'us' and 'them' or 'believers' and 'non-believers'. However, the divisions of society perceived by religious believers do not stop there but have a tendency to reflect the social and moral views of an earlier and so-called far less progressive age. It also increases the gulf between those who practice other faiths or follow no faith or are agnostic. They have fought earlier and continue to fight even today when the society has turned more civilized, more rational and more literate. While justifying their political and moral positions by deliberately twisted interpretations of religious texts, the original text and the mainstream interpretations of major religions have become marginalized.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this research paper, I have used biographical and historical approach. My primary sources have been mostly books available in the Amity university library. I also collected data from the National archives of India.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Although in today's era the days of the crusades or jihad or conversion and the inquisition may seem to be gone but yet there are nations where religious disobedience is punished and sometimes even judicially. In many countries, the semi-official militias are given free hand to enforce the morals of a particular religious law. It is well to be observed that what tends to be the focus of such persecution is a lack of tolerance to an orthodox position for other faith. It is normally a well-planned cover for political or social prejudice. Charges of heresy or apostasy are easy to level and nearly impossible to disprove. Demands for religious observance and tolerance play out a major role in Indian elections and the views of religious leaders are sought on areas where they really have no relevant expertise at all. Those who rationally disagree on religious matters are promoted as haters of Almighty.

Religion has been there with human being since ancient times and it has been an inevitable part of everyone's life as well. The religion has been a pivot around which the mankind has evolved. Religion has been the single most influential thing before science actually took the lead. From the dark days of blind orthodox beliefs and superstitions to the modern world where the definition of religion is really weighed on a rational scale, many questions still rage the world. What do people think about Religion? Is it mandatory or just an obligation to be followed as a tradition of our ancestors in this modern world? How significant are religion and the very faith it instills in people? What is the role of religion in this modern world? Is it uniting or dividing society? Everyone must respond to these questions in a very constructive manner and there is no need to

impose one's religion over the other. This is in fact called 'Jeevan Darshana'.

My personal view which I want to express by this research paper is that Religion is a very essential part of one's life. It is one of the most influencing factors in one's life and that is proved by the mere fact that the atheists on the earth are simply outnumbered by those who follow some kind of religion or the other. So, I think the role of religion is to establish a harmonious and self-sufficient community with this world as a whole and the religion should be one which will be able to evolve and appreciate the development around it rather than getting stagnant and adamant about age-old customs and beliefs. A quote worth mentioning which puts religion and religiosity in its proper perspective. It says: 'Had there been no God, it may have been necessary to invent one.' Having evolved gradually, with distinctly superior mental faculties as compared to other animals on the planet, Man has gone much ahead dominating rest of the living things. A quick review of world history will convince anyone who has doubts about this. No doubt, History is full of innumerable dreadful wars; barbarism and cruelty in the name of religion but other than religion, imperialism and over ambitions of some emperors and dictators have also resulted in many wars. Yet, none of the religions worldwide actually preach hatred or violence. This is the paradox which I observed in working on my research paper. I will also attempt to trace the evolution of religion itself while drawing conclusions about its relevance to the present day context.

The word 'Religion' can be defined as having a few basic characteristics or parameters to be followed if one has accepted a particular belief or faith or inherited from their ancestors. These may be a belief in any particular form of supernatural beings and followers of some rituals focused on some sacred objects or follow a moral code which is to be believed and accepted as to be recommended by God. It also includes the building of religious feelings like the feeling of awe, feeling of mystery, sense of guilt, admire, which in fact tend to be aroused in the presence of sacred objects and during the practice of rituals and which are connected in idea with the Gods. This so-called definition has been derived from a body of thought on the subject which understandably is voluminous. The number of religions practiced round the globe speaks of the vastness of our planet when mankind was just stepping out of the dark ages. Climatic conditions peculiar to specific geographical zones have shaped religion. As per my research in every religion, man created God and in doing so replicated his own image. This is the actual 'Dharma Darshana'.

In Islam, this originated in the Middle Eastern deserts, water as a scarce. This natural resource is ritualistically used with great care. Thus, 'Wazu', a ritual, done with the most efficient and judicious use of water prior to prayer is elaborately explained in its scriptures. The Wazu act is a prescribed process which avoids wastage of water by actually re-using it. In Hindu mythology, on the other hand, water is used copiously. Having originated in rich tropical rainforests Hinduism prescribes unrestrained use of water in almost all rituals. The same is the case of Muslims being non-vegetarian. The matter of fact is that their religion does not teach violence or hatred as proposed by their counterparts but it's simply because Islam developed in the Middle East where land is not fertile and absence of Perennial River makes life tougher. An absence of rainfall and fertile land ends up in less or coarse grains not enough to feed the population. As a result, people turned to non-vegetarian food which was a staple food since the beginning of humankind. History is the proof that first humans were not grain producers but hunters. The first tools developed by humans were hunting tools. So this non-vegetarian tradition started to be followed by even those Muslims who resided in tropical rain forest areas. These are few of the numerous examples which

prove the evolution of any ritual attached to the origin of religion in any particular area. With time it becomes a tradition. This also proves that any tradition is not promoted by religious manuscripts but by the early followers as the demand of the day and gradually it becomes the unalienable part of that religion.

Now, the main question - Existence of God! Let us agree to his unquestioned existence but the question arises, how do we accept Him as Allah or Christ or Trimurti or a formless entity? Saguna or Nirguna? Sakar or Nirakar? If we go through a critical analysis of all the religious scriptures, we will find every religion's God to be the supreme. In this case, the basic logic can be put forward that who is supreme then? Doesn't it mean somewhere that either all are supreme or none. It may also be possible that the whole world is actually agnostic or tend to be the same. Everyone agrees that there ought to be just 'one' omnipresent and all-pervasive supreme authority to carry out divine duties with a consistency expected of just and caring God. Why then different religious sects squabble? If we all agree to his pious teachings, then what makes us go against each other at the slightest political provocation? Now the very question of my research paper comes up, that is, what the main objective of religions is? The same tool developed to unite the society in a common belief is not actually dividing the society or can the relevance of religion in today's rational world be questioned?

As per my research, the development of religion is a natural process. The early Neanderthal man may have been overawed by lightning, thunder or cyclone and would have interpreted it as a phenomenon indicating God's unhappiness over his works in his settlement. They would have started a means to pray those natural Gods. With passing time and generations the prayers and worship of natural Gods became a tradition and turned into rituals to be followed by a particular tribe. As human beings developed and got civilized, more and more work and research was done in the field of agriculture, art, architecture, science, and philosophy but surprisingly the research in the field of religion practically stopped. Civilized literate people tend to be silent on the point of religion or felt better not to question the religious traditions and rituals which had turned to 'faith'. The politicians picked up the religion as a means to achieve their goal and till date, it continues to be twisted, manipulated and misinterpreted for their own selfish political gains.

As more and more knowledge get organized and analysed, fear of the supernatural punishment decays. Today, rationalists think that we do not need 'God' to explain the natural processes. Perhaps, tomorrow many questions which are inexplicable to date and hence continue to validate the concept of divine superpower may get resolved. Today, blood is spilled in the name of religion and societies and countries have been separated. Not even a single country is free from religion-based terrorism, civil disturbance, and political unrest. Doesn't it seem that the religion does more harm to humankind than any other natural or man-made disaster?

So, whether humans have invented God or he actually does exist or his existence is yet to be defined properly are few burning issues before today's civilized, literate and yet ignorant society. For many, religion itself seems irrelevant in the present day context. Extravagant Temples, Mosques and Churches were built to promote one's religion and to develop faith in the human-invented 'religion'. By human invented religion, I mean that religion which was supposed to be followed by followers of a particular sect. That religion was and continues to be full of irrational rituals to strengthen the priestly class. This class often tried to misinterpret and reinterpret the articles of the religious manuscript in their favor. The best example is the divine theory of kingship. The real religion is free from any formal obligations and orthodox rituals. Unfortunately, most

of the people practicing any particular faith either do not take the pain to search the real humanitarian view of the religion or they tend to follow the belief of those who misguide them in the name of religion.

I believe that the very concept of the places of worship is designed to help in developing an aura and concentration on a particular prayer. Though these prayers and other ritualistic obeisance can be done from the privacy of one's home which sometimes people do not everyone gets satisfied. For most of the people, religious centers are places to show their utter faith on God to the society and sometimes they even believe in such worship as more and more people worship there which develops faith due to mass devotion to a deity. Sometimes, the worship becomes political propaganda for political leaders. The same practice was done by each religious sect thereby resulting in a number of worship centers which in turn segregated the pious places from each other. Segregation of worship places in large number today seems to only serve the purpose of instilling hatred and fear in the followers of other religions. Doesn't it look like the sub-conscious desire, the underlying agenda of the so-called 'theologists'?

If observed critically after going through all the available religious manuscripts, it can be said that philosophy and ethics, both are the off-shoots of religion and are undoubtedly more important subjects to regulate mankind's social mores. Religion, on the larger platform, helps to find a meaning to life which is certainly an important and relevant attempt. Teachings of all religion have almost passed the philosophical examination and present in a crystallized and organized body of recommendations normally called do's and don'ts. Religion helped mankind through the dark ages to unite them in a single unit. The basic purpose for which it was invented has been fulfilled but for today things are going wrong. The more the theologians try to teach people peace and fraternity, the more the gulf between different sects is increasing. The political gimmicks have established their hegemony over religious truth. Once the society was barbaric and religion was supposed to civilize them. Today, the very basics of religion i.e. Truth, Non-Violence and Compassion are parameters which are well known desirable traits. Social norms are well set and familial ties well understood. Do we still need religion?

Is fasting a religious practice? Mahatma Gandhi's understanding of fasting has fundamental differences with the ritualistic fasting practiced by devout Hindus or Dieticians advocate cut-back of certain ingredients in our food while prescribing supplements of certain others. Which one is more sensible? Are these more relevant than prohibited foods and permissible intakes prescribed by religion? It's all in the mind. It's all about purpose. As chanting shlokas may be a religious practice for most but for few it has been shown to have a positive effect on one's aura. Same is the case with many other rituals. The feeling one gets listening to these propositions is that pathetic support is being mustered to linger on the point of ignorance which makes the theologians stronger, much stronger than the religion itself.

Individually, most of us will agree that in today's era religion is unfolding collateral damage to the society. A government of all countries must come to a common consensus to accept religion as a private affair. Prayers at home privately may come up with two basic solutions. First, it will focus more on religious belief, faith and peace of mind. Second, political parties' interference will end which is the main reason behind all the hustle and bustle about caste, creed and sexual discrimination. Once done in the four walls of the house, it acknowledges the importance of enlightening the inner self where exactly we find what we seek. The religious centers like temple or mosque were established as a means to strongly root a particular faith in the individual by the presence of the aura and environment of the auspicious place. But today, the basic

concept for most of us has been changed. It has now become a means to announce our faith publically and acceptance of established mores. As a result, a trend started to give more credence and importance to the public face of a politically religious person thereby overlooking his real face which may have enough blemishes. This is the unfortunate truth or better to say the ultimate hypocrisy of society.

CONCLUSIONS

In concluding my research paper, I take the liberty in presenting my views straight forward without any vice or virtue. A state must pass constitutional bills to declare religion as something to be practiced within the confinement of individual or family. In any circumstances, the rituals and processions should not be performed in public. Political parties' must be strictly instructed to avoid religious and communal issues in elections. While doing my research, I came across an incident in the life of Gautam Buddha. It is mentioned in the pitakas. When Buddha was on the death bed and counting the last hours of his life, his disciples were assembled around him and sobbing. Anand was his close disciple. He asked Buddha, "Who will show us the path of Light now?" and Buddha replied in the last three words of his life, "Appo Deepo Bhava" and died. These words mean 'Atma Deepo Bhava' or 'Be a light unto yourself'. This clearly means one should not be dependent on any external institution for light i.e. 'Knowledge' other than himself. 'Tat Tvam Assi' in Hinduism propagates the same thought. When Shankaracharya put forward the philosophy of 'Aham Brahmasmi', he was very clear about religion as an institution to be followed on call of one's conscience but not mandatory. Bible says, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind", Rom 12:2. This 'Renewing of your mind' is itself a philosophy to be understood instead of stress on religion itself. 'There is no compulsion where the religion is concerned', Holy Quran, 2/256. It's clearly mentioned that Islam never compels anyone but to live by their own faith and belief and values. Guru Granth Saheb mentions "Awwal Allah Noor Upaya, Qudrat Keh Sub Banday Aik Noor Keh Sub Jag Upajiya, Kaun Bhale Ko Mandhe" which reflects the same message as rest. Every religious manuscript has the message to transform the whole human race into peace-loving living beings, only if the philosophy of life is to be given more importance than the philosophy of religion. 'Jeevan darshan' must be given priority over 'Dharma darshan' to eradicate the social mores. Instead of the panorama of religion, humanism must be the world religion which is unquestioned, globally recognized, accepted and relevant throughout the ages.

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