

Religious Determinism: An Analysis

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Abstract

Human life has always been complicated due to his intervention and the role of the multiple factors. Those factors have also been an inevitable part of his life, which could neither be altered nor be ignored for determining the other courses of life. Those factors are economy, religion, political structures, culture, and regions of survival, traditional influences and social change. Religion is one such domain of human life which has been a very strong force behind human activities and human behaviour. From the primitive societies of the world to the most contemporary ones, it has never been an ignored or the sidelined, rather it has been leading the other domains in many cases and has been determining the other aspects of life and their tracks and routes. This article aims at establishing and exploring the concept 'Religious Determinism', resulting into shaping, designing and redesigning of the human life and its curriculum. The world's most popular religions and the world's most subjugated religions have always been news and on the surface of the global discussions. The reason is that religion in such cases has influenced and also affected the human life dominantly and in totality in many cases. Religious terrorism, religious violence, religious conflicts have often resulted into drastic consequences, which has never been compensated due to their harshest possible nature and impact.. The social processes like urbanization, globalization, westernization, modernization and sanskritization have surely brought about a big social change in all the aspects of human life including religion also but still the much part of religion is stuck to social static

explored and conceptualized by August Comte. The social sciences and the related research can for sure not give solution to all the social issues but the most crucial moral obligation on their part is undertaking a complete exploration of the issues so that a platform of resolution can be rendered to on the other ends.

Keywords: *Religious determinism; Objectivity; Social Legislation, Social Differentiation, Cultural Variation, Objectivity; Socialization, Religious Terrorism, Religious Violence.*

Introduction

Since the history of humanity and humanism, it has been experienced that the human beings have been reliant on religion. This reliance transcended any singular form of dependence and touched almost all angles of human life. Beginning from social, cultural, festivoious, economic, legal, political aspects of life it effected and rather dominated the psychological domain of human life too. And this movement can be noticed vice versa also, where psycho-religious factors have affected the other realms of human life. Referring to Hegal and Marx (Coser, 1982, Haralambos, 2008 and 2012; Chopra, 2013) where they explored Ideological Determinism and Economic Determinism respectively, it will not be wrong if ‘Religious Determinism’ is talked about. In a tradition based nation like India, ‘Religious Determinism’ is well reflected in political, social, cultural, familial and economic structures and sub structures. ‘Hinduism’ being the numeric majority has by chance given a status of minority to other existent religions of the land like Sikhism, Islam, Jainism, Buddhism and others too. The everyday incidents and discussion observed through media and other mode show how this phenomenon of minority and majority influence the political and administrative systems of the nation. This plays role of the platform meant for socio-cultural and other forms of behavior; and also formulates aptitude of people. The worldwide popular theories given by prominent thinkers like Karl Marx, August Comte, Emile Durkhiem, and others also have made it evident that religions all around the world, irrespective of a region’s economic or social profiling on the international level, has influenced human life to great extent. This influence has been explained as functional by some and dysfunctional by others. The religious conviction influences and in some cases affects the human’s

attitude, actions and perspectives. Conflict Perspective of Sociology states that religion has played dysfunctional role in society by making the masses more bearing for the pains and exploitation. This phenomenon of religion has snubbed the seeds of revolution in society where it was even necessary according to Marx. On the other hand the Functional Perspective propounded that religion and the faith of human beings in some or the other super organic or may say super natural power has led to fulfillment of the social needs like harmony, peaceful coexistence and solidarity. The other domain of thought that is 'nominalists' like Max Weber while referring to Protestant Ethics have expressed that Religion has led to growth and development of capitalism. Religious institutions have contributed to an impressive extent to the formulation human ideas, human nature and have largely shaped human behaviour. Religion is a universal social institution. It performs on the basis of the rules regulations found in the texts and also those which are framed by the followers of various eras. It can also be categorized into the Secondary Institutions which play a dominant role in the process of socialization of the human beings after and along with the Primary Institutions like family, kinship and marriage. Family, the smallest social institution is the biggest platform for religion to play and exist. Ritualism has roots in family and outcome in religion and ritualism is the soul of religion. Kinship has religion as a factor for strengthening bonds and gatherings. Religious events give purpose to kinship. As far as 'marriage' as a social institution is concerned, religions validate it with its very specific rules and code of conduct. Not only this, inter- religious marriages result into conversion in many cases, which further has a great ambit and scope of debate and discussion. However, it cannot be denied that religion plays a vital role in shaping up human choices and actions, which further has innumerable impacts.

Religion Morality: Mutuality with Religious violence and Terrorism

Morality is the closest synonym to righteousness and virtuousness (also expressed by Posner, 2002 and 2009). It directly talks of what is right and what is wrong with no legal principles at the base. The real bases are the religious virtues and principles. It has been experienced and found in almost all the societies of the world that the moral ethics are almost same or almost catering to the religious

ethics of the groups. This makes morality relatively applied, accepted and explained in different societies of the world and at times in the same region. Religion phrases the principles of morality in clear terms. The notions of religions and the virtues written in the religious texts or expressed by the religious men formally take a shape through the morals of the followers. Many religions through religious texts and other sources determine and propagate specific kind of behaviours as model behaviours. The followers and specially the fanatics in all the religions perform their social roles in accordance to those norms and values established once by the founders of the religions or the religious books and texts to be deemed fit for being the 'man of the religion'. Further these values, directions and religious guidelines become an inevitable part of their social, economic, cultural, political and behavioral life and it actually directs their life from one to all the angles of survival. But the real problem occurs when the 'interpretation' of these religious norms and guidelines is done! There enters a complete subjectivity which can either pave a way for strengthening of the actual purposes or on the contrary, it can be disastrous against the same and start with new threatening notions. This implies the phenomenon where the great confusion between Religion and Morality leads to religious violence and religious terrorism. When a group of people from one religion attacks, harms, kills, or tortures another group from another religion, this is religious violence. These attacks are justified in names of religious morality and religious norms by the fanatics relatively linked to all the involved religions. Even to the extent, killing of masses, innocent and other people has a rationale under this confusion between religion and morality. There is no law to resolve such interpretation; rather there is always a ready force to accept it socially and unitarily. Under this category not any one but all the religions of the world are included. Some are the offenders and others are the victims. Religious terrorism is an extreme form of such religious violence and religious conflicts; it may be labeled as the most disastrous form too due to complete absence of compensatory mechanisms on social levels. It is unsocial and also irresponsible on the part of those who label any one particular religion as a terrorist religion of the religion at the back of terrorism. For instance Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs have all been observed, accused and convicted for terrorism in one or the other instance. Where we talk of Ram Bhoomi issue of India, none amongst Hindus or Muslims did lesser than what can be termed as brutality and inhumanism. If we notice or read about the Punjab extremism era, Sikh groups

were involved in doing terrorism against all the possible religious communities. Hence the issue is not identifying the religious groups or labeling the particular religions as terrorism sources; the real concern is identifying the factors behind religious violence resulting into religious terrorism. Lot of research organizations and research groups are doing research on this theme to understand the phenomenon of religious violence and terrorism. Here comes the nexus between politics and religion, where exists a two way trafficking of the ideas and acts. On one side the religions existent in the land needs political support for flourishing and propagating, on the other hand religions play a vital role of vote bank for the political parties. This ethnic mode of transaction between the two is a big factor for religious rioting, religious violence and also religious terrorism on national levels and on also transcended levels. Talk of any biggest or smallest terrorist attack, one or the other religion is involved in it. The factors of course cannot be checked to the fullest but still need to be addressed.

Religion and Social Legislations

Law making, enactment and amendments are forms of art which need exclusive insight and focusing capacity o the involved minds. This has also been in a way said by (Stone 2012). All legislations in all nations are not social legislations, but there is no nation in the world in which laws do not encapsulate religious norms or values. Indian constitution and other laws of the land hold a large space for religion and religious values. The part three of the Indian constitution talks of the religious freedom and the rights of all the religious communities to propagate and popularize their religion while functioning through religious institution of any nature. In Pakistan ‘Shariat’ (Islamic Law) and other laws establish and revere the religious values of Islam and no law has been made in antagonism with these religious ethics. This phenomenon becomes more ocular in religiously pluralistic societies like India, where innumerable religions co-exist under common bodies of laws but being governed with caution and grace. Although such social legislations have not reaped the expected fruits always because the human nature dominated with the forces of ‘relative deprivation’ are indifferent and numb to the formal changes occurring thereon; but yet it cannot be denied that they really matter! Religion being the part and rather base of law making in some instances

makes it reflected that ethnic ways are respected and spaced. This is what the theories of Ethnomethodology and Phenomenology opine. Rigid meanings have been attached to religious values and virtues which makes it sure that the social change will happen in society but least in religion. That is why in the course of legal amendments, the laws based on religion/s are least or never amended. This is tough for the religious groups to amend the social or religious laws as for them those laws or directions are the base of righteousness. This is where the crucial component of 'minorities' is to be referred to. Minorities seek rights in all part of the world and minority status is allotted to such group when there is distinguishable situation where the group is observably different from the main stream of demography. In India the concept of minorities is generally or dominantly interpreted through caste structure, followed by class, gender, race and religion. The caste and religion based interpretation of minorities being the most popular, has been given a great space in the Indian constitution and also in the legislation enacted or proposed thereon. This is how religion directs or determines the tracks of law making and also forwards ample space for further amendments and cautions. It is very well accepted and understandable that law is objective not the social values. An attempt is made in social legislative domains to attain and adopt secularism and social neutrality as moral principles to guide the law making, which In fact helps too, but not to the fullest extent. Laws have been made and to a large extent they cover (in letter) the aspects of secularism but the real scene presents a vice versa picture in many domains as of now. Religious freedom is said to be one of the almost crucial aims of the governance in democratic nations, but it is observed with dearth in practice.

Religion and Human Rights

Human rights are the claims and the rights given to any human being which ought to be objectively enjoyed. Objectivity means the least or no interference of bias or prejudices; and here it implies the maximum possible levels of universalization amongst the population of the land; it means applicability of a concept on the largest possible part of the given population. Human rights and populations are two different topics or concerns but they are largely interrelated and interconnected. While making population policy and the related regulatory systems, human rights are taken as a crucial concern. In some cases, human rights become determinants of many legislations and legal provisions. On the other

hand, the thrust for human rights gets its genesis through the population; which further results into distinct exploration and interpretation of these rights. The debate on human rights is for sure traditionally established and has been consistent all through the decades human life has been lived in, but with the passage of time it has diversified in dimensions and application. Starting from focus on the basic rights like right to life, right to food, rights to income, and the like, now the shift to an exclusive range of rights is seen, which are the bi-products of the social processes of Globalization, Modernization, Westernization; and in Indian context Sanskritization also. There is no doubt in expressing that the social processes running in the society have a predominant role to play in the Human Rights regimes of relative societies. Here, we need to go in the detail of the meaning of these social processes to understand their mechanics with the human rights and the population. Globalization as a process has increased the levels of accessibility and viability between various parts of the world. This viability is not only physical or geographical, but it has social, psychological and cultural implications too (Mohanty, 2006; Ahuja, 2012). Along with the technological and structural alterations, the concepts of human freedom and liberty also get evolved and transformed. This social process implies social mobility in context of people, statuses, roles and also duties and rights. Westernization, 'the impact of the west on the eastern part of the world', directly influences the value paradigm of the subject nations, as it has been done in case of India too. The process of westernization has categorically influenced values and norms related to the social institution of family and marriage in India; along with influencing peoples' choices regarding the selection of spouses, choice of occupation and other such aspects; having a phenomenal linkage with the contemporary conceptualization of rights and liberties. Modernization, leading to remarkable developments in technology and communication, has drastically changed the living styles of people, which has now led to a risen demand and claim for right to privacy which in traditional India was never thought for. The process of Sanskritization implies the social change related to caste structures, hence predominantly applied on Indian society inside and outside India exclusively. Where upper caste had been deterring rights to many of the people belonging to lower castes, this process has rendered an observably remarkable

change. The lower castes were allowed to imitate the life styles including clothing, eating habits, festivity, religious and ritualistic orientation, etc which ever belonged to the upper castes only. This socially given sanction further resulted into today's changes regarding inter caste marriages, abolition of untouchability, rights against discrimination, right to earning livelihood, etc. In all, the social processes and the social procedures incorporated thereon are the strong determinants of the human rights regime. Between different regions and societies, the level of communication, interaction, information gaining and sharing and the like effect, influence and determine the Human Right domains and regimes therein. How people conceive the ideas and notions related to their rights largely depends upon the social structure they are dwelling and being socialized in; technically referring to 'cultural variability' and 'cultural relativism'. These terms imply that the culture and the cultural traits being practiced in all societies are distinct and vary from group to group, society to society, and region to region. That is the sure reason why all rights have not been recognized, accepted and applied equally in all the societies of the world. Anyhow, behind their cultural variation and social differentiation, there are still some 'universals' which feature all societies in common and they render a global pattern to interpret, understand, explain and apply the Human Rights through a globally accepted regime. Human Rights and Minorities, the religious ones in this case, are two inalienable topics which are to be studied in connection either being done as regional, national or international levels. The lower one moves in this hierarchy, the more authentic is the research in this context; referring back to what this paper referred to as 'universals' in the previous parts. Minorities seek rights in all part of the world and minority status is allotted to such group when there is distinguishable situation where the group is observably different from the main stream of demography. In India the concept of minorities is generally or dominantly interpreted through caste structure, followed by class, gender, race and religion. The caste and religion based interpretation of minorities being the most popular, has been given a great space in the Indian constitution and also in the legislation enacted or proposed thereon. Still after so many efforts the results are negligibly seen in context of religious harmony.

Conclusion

Any social science does not promise to render solution to such issues but surely provides an adequate understanding of the human's basic right issues linked largely to minorities in all dimensions. The rights which are uncountable in number but negligible in actual application must be interpreted relatively with these groups which live the dearth of rights. Prostitution is as crucial to be understood under similar framework for a liberal interpretation of the socio-cultural or legal needs of the present. On the whole 'dislike' of the majority for behaviour of the 'minority' is no way any logic for not providing or conferring the rights to the minorities. Social upheavals and discourses are to work consistently but those should for sure intervene 'but not' deter the required legal framework. However the fear of social reaction has to be understood in the anticipation and mechanisms are needed to be developed for maintaining harmonious coexistence of the confronting or conflicting groups and communities.

Glossary

(i) Relative Deprivation

The concept of Relative Deprivation was propounded by the American psychologist Strauffer and theoretically endorsed by Talcott Parsons. This states that one is more affected with what others have been given than what he himself has.

(ii) Objectivity

Objectivity means that there is the least or no interference of bias or prejudices; and it also implies the maximum possible levels of universalization amongst the given population of the land; it means applicability of a concept/finding/conclusion on the largest possible part of the given population.

(iii) Sankritization

The process of Sankritization implies the social change related to caste structures, hence predominantly applied on Indian society inside and outside India exclusively. Where upper caste had been deterring rights to many of the

people belonging to lower castes, this process has rendered an observably remarkable change. The lower castes were allowed to imitate the life styles including clothing, eating habits, festivity, religious and ritualistic orientation, etc which ever belonged to the upper castes only.

(iv) **Westernization**

It is the impact of the west on the eastern part of the world', which directly influences the value paradigm of the subject nations, as it has been done in case of India too. The process of westernization has categorically influenced values and norms related to the social institution of family and marriage in India; along with influencing peoples' choices regarding the selection of spouses, choice of occupation and other such aspects; having a phenomenal linkage with the contemporary conceptualization of rights and liberties.

(v) **Minorities**

Any group which is culturally, racially, ethnically distinct in society; it coexists but is subordinate to a more dominant group or to more dominant groups (referring to the empowered and over empowered groups of the society in context of rights). Interpreting through the sociological perspective, the concept of 'subordinance' is the base to understand minorities and their survival.

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