

CHAPTER – III

DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF MAN-RELIGION RELATIONSHIP

(i) Introduction

To make the concept of man and religion precise we are now going to discuss the classification of man in accordance to his religious temperament and the classification of man in accordance to his religious temperament and the classifications of different religions with this temperament.

(ii) Classification of man in terms of temperaments

The most satisfactory classification is given by Dr. William Sheldon¹ whose researches have led him to the conclusion that the most satisfactory system of classification is in terms of three types of temperaments, which he calls the viscerotonic, the somatonic and the cerebrotonic.

The ideal of universal brotherly love represents the rationalization, refinement and sublimation of the Viscerotonics. To the somatonic, religion, whatever they have in them is nothing but unity among the other members of the community. It is very different in the case with the cerebrotonic, who habitually lives in contact with his inner being and for whom the revelations of religion and psychiatry are not novel. For him, change of heart and life tends to come gradually. The unregenerate viscerotonic like luxury and nice things around him. When he becomes religious he gives up nice things to himself. Among cerebrotonics, hermitages and contemplative orders are too common. The great systems of spiritual philosophy, such as those of Shankara, Plotinus, Eckhart are the work of cerebrotonic minds. The great cerebrotonic contribution to religion is mysticism.

The religions of India are predominantly viscerotonic and cerebrotonic, religions of ritual and mysticism. The same seems to be true of the Taoism of China in its uncorrupted forms. Confucianism would seem to be predominantly viscerotonic – a religion of forms and ceremonials. Mohamedanism which in its primitive form is hard, militant and puritan is more Somatonic in nature

that any other religion in India and China. In Christianity we have religion of which the central core has always been cerebrotonic and Viscerotonic as it is a religion of contemplation and ritual. In the cases of Buddhism and Hinduism, these cerebrotonic and viscerotonic elements have always been associated with others of strongly somatotonic nature. The two key words of contemporary Western religion, namely, fellowship and social service are respectively viscerotonic and somatotonic. These two words have their full value which can be realised only when the contemplation of ultimate Reality gives meaning to the emotional warmth of fellowship and direction to service.

We now come to the question which of the three polar types is best fitted to unearth the truth about ultimate Reality? What best we can now say is that the desire and the aptitude for contemplation are cerebrotonic characteristics. The viscerotonic temperament is associated with what Sheldon has called endomorphic physique which has a tendency for love of comfort and luxury, and attachment for ceremonials. Tolerance is also another trait of this temperament. The Somatotonic temperament is associated with mesomorphic physique. Mesomorphos are physically of strong, active and athletic type.

Another form is frequently taken by temporal religions is apocalypticism – belief in an extraordinary cosmic events to take place in the not-too-distant future together with the practices deemed appropriate to this state of things. Here again intense preoccupation with the future time positively guarantees the apocalypticist against the possibility of a time less realisation of Eternal Reality. In certain respects all the humanistic pseudo religions, at present so popular, bear a close resemblance to the apocalyptic perversions of true religion. For in these pseudo religions also an intense pre-occupation with hypothetical events in future time takes the place of the genuinely religious concern with Reality.

(iii) Relation between Religion & Culture

Religion is tightly interwoven with many social phenomena. Culture of a particular Society is of much importance. So we need to discuss the relation between religion and culture. The present crisis to the modern men is that

they are living in a world in which tragedy is a must and the world is shivering with uncertainty and fear. At the same time, we have deep despair for peace and hatred for war. The industrial revolution makes room for a world society with world economy which will lead for a world order as we have a deep rooted desire for world-union. Religion is man's common spiritual struggle and aspiration. The advancement in civilization is equal to the gradual expansion of the boundaries of the group. Nationalism is not an inherent quality of the nature of men but an acquired quality. True patriotism will encompass the whole of humanity with the string of love. Radhakrishnan conceives that progress or growth means creative changes of mind and spirit. He thinks that regard for spiritual values and sympathy for the oppressed and the belief in the brotherhood of man can only save the modern civilisation. For Radhakrishnan ² the greatest tragedy of the modern life is that it is missing the soul. He hopes that faith will bring forth unity and the meaning of our existence. Dialectical materialism, which Marx propagates, is only a temporary truth as the raw material of nature are the objects which should acquire the power of the human mind to subserve the human ends. Both Hegel and Marx conceived the historical evolution to be dialectical but the difference between the two lays in Hegel's belief that an absolute mind is materialising itself in history whereas Marx conceived the historical events as primary and our ideas as secondary. Marx³ conceived in the inevitability of progress of the society but history depicts the picture of peril of social progress as it is not a continuous development through conflict as conceived by Marx. Love and friendship, courage and adventure will be the more potent power than struggle for power and self interest. Radhakrishnan feels that what we need in this present stage of civilisation is a spiritual upliftment. The result of the upliftment is deep unity towards the world order. This is possible only through faith in religion. Religion means practice of the discipline of the spirit and this disciplining of the spirit will deepen the solidarity of human society which will lead the world in the search of its soul. Society should provide opportunities to the individual for the upliftment of his soul and for the achievements of the ultimate values of his life. The dynamic process of religion makes room for the outstanding personalities to come and to take a fresh breath for the upliftment of the

mankind and to nourish fellow feeling. This is really the goal of religion which is universal in its outlook and is lurking for spiritual life. For this upliftment of the spirit of man, man must have the freedom to choose between good and evil though no individual in organised society can be completely free. Civilisation depends upon the free activity of the man who has the inward insight to proceed in the way to spiritual height. The aim of life is to attain a higher and intenser form of consciousness gifted with the freedom and the peace of understanding. The chief aim of religion is to remake and to refashion man. We must be reborn through religious discipline.

Humanity is struggling towards a new world where there will be a fresh turn of mind and heart to humanise itself. Scientific inventions turns the world into a close togetherness. The only task for us is to change the human nature. Religiously disciplined man can achieve that goal by which men will be acquainted with the reality and will shoulder the responsibility of human brotherhood. The task of religion is to create a world family where the members have the feeling of brotherhood. In India religion means Dharma, which is derived from the root 'Dhr' the meaning of which is to sustain, to uphold. If this is so then we must have to uphold our manhood with the bond of brotherhood.

The ideal society which is not too far from our reach must be better than the actual conditions of the life of man. No revolutionary change is possible. The world will change gradually towards the Divine plane. Our all efforts and longings are directed towards the attainment of this Divine plane. The principle of love will reign supreme and this love with its expansive nature will banish all the diversities of this world. Unity and oneness will find place in this domain of Divine plane. We should have the social imagination to actualise the principles of love and peace to form a new society where education is a necessity which will create a perfect society.

(iv) Relation between Economics and Religion

Religion is closely related with economics if religion is taken to mean 'dhr' which means sustenance. Man can not live alone. His life means his

relationship with his society. In this relationship between religion and economics, economics plays a vital role without which society can not exist. The progress of the society or state is determined by its progress in its economical condition which is to be religiously disciplined for the sustenance and maintenance of its people. Adam Smith has pointed to the instrumental importance of 'rules of conduct'. "These general rules of conduct, when they have been fixed in our mind by our habitual reflection, are of great use in correcting misrepresentation of self-love concerning what is fit and proper to be done in a particular situation" ⁴. For Amartya Sen, "There is a complex instrumental ethics involved in such social morality. In such problems as pursuing industrial relations, achieving productivity within the enterprise, and a variety of other economic exercises, this type of behaviour may well be important" ⁵. He thinks that economics to be welfare "can be substantially enriched by paying more attention to ethics" ⁶. For him, we should aim at social justice for eradicating economic disparities and for attaining economic opportunities. "Economic integration will contribute to national unity" ⁷. This unity of feeling and purpose will be possible through a sound system of education. "We need penetrating minds, creative ideals and a burning conscience" ⁸ for the wellbeing of economics. This burning conscience comes out of religiously disciplined nature of man which gives rise to the ethical structure of mind. So religion subserves a good deal for the wellbeing of economics.

(v) Relation between Politics and Religion

Politics, being an integral part of human society is closely related with religion. The Hindu and the Buddhist, the Jews and the Zoroastrians, the Christians and the Muslim religions at their best, teach the lesson of love and compassion and this teaching is too necessary for political order. This love "is the health of the soul hate is the disease of the soul we can live without hatred and envy" ⁹. For this, a new pattern of living is required which will unify the peoples of the world.

We are at the threshold of a new age which needs hard work and a new spirit of hope. To make ourselves functionary, to be fit for this new age, we

have to remake ourselves to make the whole political scene undisturbed and peaceful. This remaking needs self-cleansing and self-changing. This self-cleansing will be possible through reverence for life and respect for the others. If we practise the process of reverence for others and the process of self-control then the political scene of the world will be like the heaven which is cherished and nourished by Vedanta which exercises an incalculable influence on all over the world. As a humanising agency nothing is comparable to Vedanta as it views life as an activity and knowledge for action which has primarily a spiritual bearing. Now the task for us is to practise the above mentioned code of conduct for having a peaceful picture of the world.

(vi) Standard of Religion

The question is now : What is the yard stick which will judge the standard of religion?

In this modern age of science we can not take anything without an assessment of its standard. And it would not be an exception in the case of religion too. But the question which haunts us is – What is the measuring stick in all religions, and what is that which distinguishes the true one as true?

To find out an answer we need to distinguish first the religion which may be termed as natural religion from that of the reveal truth. Men come in touch with many forces of the phenomenal world of which they can not give any proper explanation. Many of the occurrences of the phenomenal world surpass our understanding. Men use to build up a system of rules of conduct and of worship towards what is visible or invisible. Natural religion, therefore, is bound to become different in different religious communities.

But natural religion falls far short of truth and righteousness. Natural religion resulting from man's own observations and investigations can not reveal the Supreme Spirit. Only a direct revelation of Him is capable to unearth the truth. An well-known sentence of Karl Marx is that "religion is the opium of the people" shows that he has neglected religion by comparing it with as drug. The true picture is, for Karl Marx, religion is the cry of the have-nots. Religion

is a psychical crutch for the helpless. For Marx, man makes religion. Religion does not make man and man's mental products are not of such a kind which survives out of the world. Man means man's world, state, his society. This state, this society produces religion of man. But universal observation depicts that religion is man's spiritual spirit; it is the root of his moral glamour; it is his final destination in which he finds his consolation and by which he forms universal foundation of his own being. Marx's final goal was to uproot the unworking machinery which stands as a stumbling block before man's progress. Religion is such a block which he wants to uproot. He is not in the list of those who are really in a deadly war against religion without knowing what religion is in the proper sense of the term. His theory nowhere leaves the humanitarian stand-point and it is free from super human colour of any type. Religion is universal as the search for truth is common to all men and this forms the urgent cry for religion. Religion wants to unveil the truth. And in this respect it is in the same boat with science as the latter also tries to unearth the truth. The world-over crisis is shared in common by the human race. And this sharing forms the common platform where the feeling of brotherhood comes out. Here lies man's true worship as all religions of the world nourish man's feeling of brotherhood which breaks the barrier of the map and the kinship of blood. Religion or no religion is a futile question to ask. Religion is the pulse beat of life as truth should be reflected in it. But the question which besets us is how to measure what is true religion and what is not. We have now to seek the measuring stick to measure all religions.

There are so many religions in the world each with a large group of followers such as Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism, Islam etc. In measuring the truth of any religion we can not depend upon natural religion. For it has been mentioned above that it falls far short of truth and righteousness. Only direct revelation can give us truth. Religion must stand at the alter of truth and righteousness. Each and every religion should be verified with these criterions.

Now if we look toward religion which exists in modern men, we find that a particular set of ideas pervades the whole culture of a particular time as sets

of general ideas get changed because of the incoming fresh experiences of men. These changes are sometimes rapid and sometimes slow.

The seventeenth century Christian era has seen the main works of Kepler, Galileo and Newton. Then the world picture has been changed. It is unnecessary to describe the changes as we know that medieval world picture was totally dominated by religion whereas the modern mind is dominated by science. The most important factor for the understanding of human thought is the understanding of the distinction between the teleological explanation and the mechanical explanation of the world. It is needless to mention that the teleological explanation attempts to explain this world in terms of purpose which is generally associated with Religion whereas mechanical explanation wants to explain this world in terms of mechanism which is commonly associated with science any explanation which does not introduce the concept of purpose can be termed as mechanical. In this sense of the term, though science is mechanical yet modern science shows a different picture. We have to remind ourselves of the fact that the characteristic of a religious attitude towards the world is teleological. The concept of a purpose behind the world scene was not the invention of Christianity as the ancient Hebrew religion clearly signifies this concept of purpose. The most famous ancient Greek Philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle developed the teleological concept. If we now look to religion which exists in the modern mind we find that the process of history is an unbroken stream of events, exhibiting continuity and change. In and through this process of change the modern mind is clearly distinguishable from the medieval mind and as a result the world-picture of modern man is dominated by science. Religion now must stand at the altar of verification. But at the same time we must admit that science has reached at that summit where its own theory of verification is of no avail. The quantum theory predicts that nothing can be ascertained by verification and religion must not be an exception to this.

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CHAPTER - III

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