

Chapter5: Concluding Remarks

In the Introduction to the present dissertation, an attempt has been made to highlight the causes as well as the impacts of religious conflicts in the life of human beings and society. It has been observed that religious conflicts may not be criteria of an ideal society. In this thesis, we have found that only probable solution to these religious conflicts may be achieved through religious co-existence. The discussions in each and every chapter were done aiming at a possible solution of aforementioned problem

So far as our inquiry into the origin of religion is concerned, it is observed that religion grew as a medium for human mind to know the reality in order to make their existence stable, permanent and meaningful in this troublesome world. In the hostile and challenging environment of primitive society people began to realize their own impermanence and state of vulnerability. They realized that ultimate fact of human existence is temporal and always open to or subjected to the harsh reality of death. Consequently, to make their existence more permanent, and sustainable in this troublesome, challenging environment, the native minds have spontaneously tried to explore, and approach his surroundings with the intention to know it. The primitive minds might have realized that the knowledge of their surroundings could help them to make their existence more permanent.

Human beings began to seek ardently the answers to the questions that bothered them with regard to the mysteries of life, like, its impermanence and

death. For this, they devised mechanism of institutions which provided or rather seemed to provide answers. Religion can be seen as one of the outcomes of such mechanisms. Hence, religion is a phenomenon which provides human existence a more stable and permanent basis in this world. But, there might have been lot of misinterpretation of the religious mechanism that it has been at times looked upon as negative. On the basis of our above observation we may say now, in this present context, that the notion of religion itself does not intend to do violence in human society. Rather it is a way to sustain our life in this world. Here a comment of Prof Pradyot Kumar Mukhopadhyay is worthy to be mentioned: “A religious man lives his life intensely, much more intensely than an ordinary man or even a socio-political activist. Such a life, even when it does not take a positive form of social service, makes man incapable of doing any harm to other man or to even animal or the environment. Authentically religious men know no violence and are living embodiment of peace and happiness.”^{xlvi} The knowledge about this ancient psychological basis behind the origin and development of religious phenomena may make us aware about other underlying factors behind a religious conflict. Such awareness among the mass may play an effective role in resolving the religious conflicts.

Here some of the Marxist thinkers may raise questions against such psychological basis and purpose of religion in human life and society. For them, religion has a very little role to play in sustaining the life of large number of people. Rather, according to them religion is a hegemonic tool of

sovereign class to manipulate productive force of labour class. For them, religion is nothing but a hegemonic discourse of sovereign class to control or to repress the voice of proletariat class. French Marxist Louis Althusser in his article 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)' has mentioned eight types of ideological state apparatuses, of which religious state apparatus is also an important one. For him, all the state apparatuses serve the same purpose for the ruling class. He writes, "All Ideological State Apparatuses, whatever they are, contribute to the same result: the reproduction of the relation of production, i.e. of capitalist relations of exploitation."^{cxlvii} So for him, as a religious ideological state apparatus, Church serves and secures the same purpose for the ruling class. Some people could say that for the smooth and better running of society the proper function of these different ideological state apparatuses seem necessary. One could even say that in order to build a harmonious society the behaviours and aspirations of the members of the society should be guided and governed by some principles. For many people, these ideological state apparatuses provide us such governing principles. The purpose and the function of different ideological state apparatuses can also be understood in this way. To some extent, the existence of different ideological apparatuses seems necessary for harmonious existence of a society. But whenever the function of these ideological state apparatuses are, they are solely directed to secure more benefits for the ruling class the problem starts. The Marxist thinker, Althusser critically and systematically points out that hegemonic function of the

religious state apparatuses in his above mentioned article. Althusser's view about the function of religious institution is not only applicable to the western world, but also to rest of the world.

It is worthy to mention that Bartrned Russell has also maintained same opinion regarding the function of Church in the human civilization. For him, Church is a medium through which certain group of powerful people restores their vested interest. In his article 'Has Religion Made Useful Contribution to Civilisation' he writes:

There is nothing accidental about this difference between a Church and its Founder. As soon as absolute truth is supposed to be contained in the sayings of a certain man, there is body of experts to interpret his sayings, and these experts infallibly acquire power, since they hold the key to truth. Like any other privileged caste, they use their power for their own advantage. They are, however, in one respect worse than any privileged caste, since it is their business to expound and unchanging truth, revealed once, for all in utter perfection, so that they become necessarily opponents of all intellectual moral progress.^{cxlviii}

It is true that in many cases notion of religion has been used by a certain group of people to satisfy their vested interested like power, authority etc.

These lead to certain fundamental questions – does the essence of religion solely consists in the functions or the objectives of religious institution? Or is religion simply a means of repression and consequently the prime cause of social violence?

However, it seems that religion is not all about hegemonic practices. Indeed religion from its inner aspect does not intend to suppress or repress the voice of human beings. Rather it is a way of expressing the freedom of mind, which has been discussed in the first chapter of this thesis. Furthermore, religion in itself does not intend to be associated with the idea of violence. Behind social violence various interrelated factors work together. Sometimes people manipulate the inner essence of religion to fulfill their interest. They use the notion of religion to hide their hidden intention. When such sort of vested interest arises under a particular socio-political environment, the conflict starts between religion and science, between different religious traditions, and between the individual freedom and authority of institution. Indeed religion itself is not the cause of social violence. In this regard a comment of Karen Armstrong is worthy to mention. In her book *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence*, she writes, “Obviously the two world wars were not fought on account of religion. When they discuss the reasons people go to war, military historians acknowledge that many interrelated social, material and ideological factors are involved, among the chief of them competition for scarce resources. Experts in political violence or terrorism also insist that people commit atrocities for a complex range of reasons. Yet so indelible is

the aggressive image of religious faith in our secular consciousness that we routinely load the violent sins of the twentieth century on the back of 'religion' and drive it out into the practical wilderness.^{xxlix}

An understanding and awareness about the fundamental purpose of religion may help us explore political and other reasons behind a religious conflict. And if we are able to identify the cause of religious conflicts then we will be also be able to stop such religious conflicts.

An understanding about the nature and function of universal religion as it has been discussed in the second chapter can help us in understanding and resolving religious conflicts. It has been discussed that universal religion does not mean any one absolute religion, which exists ultimately by submerging all the other religions. Universal religion can be defined as religious consciousness which is free from all the narrow boundaries caste, creed, race, etc.; it is a state of consciousness where human beings enjoy the primary place in any kind of religious discourse. Universal religious consciousness regards human beings as of utmost importance because it realizes that religion primarily is a human phenomenon. It is human beings who have developed this unique phenomenon to sustain their life, to make their existence more permanent in this troublesome world. Therefore, the life of human beings cannot be destroyed in the name of religion. Such understanding about the nature of universal religion may bind human beings in a conscious level through a single religious chain, which may be called the chain of humanity. In objective world, different religious traditions will continue to exist. The

existence of these different religious traditions will go simultaneously besides such universal religious consciousness. But people may have that state of universal religious consciousness by cultivating the basic tenets of universal religion within their living religious traditions. If we try to destroy or negate the idea of religion itself from the future world, then it would again create conflict into the human civilization. The notion of religion is embedded in the very nature of human civilization. Indeed it is hard to draw a line of separation between these two ideas; right from the very beginning of human civilization the idea of religion flowing into the mind of human beings. A comment of Prof. Pradyot Kumar Mukhopadhyay is worthy to mention in this regard. As he says, “Unless we admit that all religions first came into being with the founding of them by their respective founders or hold that every religion is necessarily a founded religion, it is most likely that the first member of a founded religion is a convert from another and earlier religion. Just as every human child is born in a linguistic community even if later his language is changed (may be too early in his life, in infancy) so also it is quite likely or even theoretically compelling to hold that every man (or at least almost all men) is born in certain religion. The Hindus do not believe that there was ever a time, at least in human history when, there was no religion.”^{cl} Thus, it is difficult, or rather impossible to draw a picture of a human civilization without the notion of religion. So any single attempt to destroy the existing notion of religion from human society will bring damage

to human life as well as human society. The awareness of such facts may be seen as a possible solution to religious conflicts.

The concern about the relative nature of religious truths may also be seen as possible solution to religious conflicts. It is mentioned in the first chapter as well as in the very beginning of this chapter that religion is a spontaneous approach of human mind to know the reality to ease their existence and living. Here “reality” can be defined as truth. In this context, “truth” may stand for any absolute truth which has different shades and there is no question of supremacy among the shades of truth. So in that context, truth may be seen or known differently to different eyes. Again, there is no question of supremacy among the ways. That means, there are different possible ways, present simultaneously to explore the different shades of truth. These different ways stand as evidence for diverse mental abilities of human mind and also stand for the cultural diversity of human society. Here, the ways are considered as cross product of both culture and mind. The influence of culture on minds of its inhabitants is an unavoidable fact. The cultural influences give a particular shape to the thought process of its inhabitants to cultivate their worldview. A question may be raised in this context regarding the authenticity of such social influences on the mind. Some of the thinkers argue that such social influences take the individuality from the individuals and turn them as mere subject to the culture. In such cases, questions of manipulation, repression of individual choices come into being. Such arguments and questions are pertinent. The answer of such questions can be

answered in a better way if we try to answer it from the perspective of basic need of religious consciousness, i.e. to know the reality in order make their existence more permanent in the world.

Under the light of the aforementioned basic religious psychological crisis, we may become able to point out the predominant influence of socio cultural environment over the religious endeavours of people. Consequently, the inner aspect of religion goes into surplus and various cultural, social rituals, code of conducts etc. take the primary place. In such a condition our awareness about the basic purpose of religion may help us to reveal the truth by deconstructing the predominate influence of socio-cultural environment.

On the basis of the above discussion we may say that our knowledge about the truth in the context of a particular religious tradition is relative in nature, it is true but from a particular point of view. Along with this fact one more thing is worthy to mention that besides the exclusive religious claims of a religious tradition, there are also certain common moral principles present, (which we have discussed in the fourth chapter of this thesis,) which can be seen as a platform of inter-religious dialogue, which further work as a religious conflict resolving element.

One thing can easily be found out from the entire discussion of this concluding chapter that our knowledge about the different psychological, socio-cultural basis and purpose of religion in human life and society may bring an awareness to the mass about the place and purpose of religion in

human life, and also help them to realize the value of human life in a religious context. Such awareness all together can be seen as possible to religious conflicts. Yet it is hard to mention that the search for a possible solution of religious conflicts is a never ending search. It will also bring in future the benefit of society. Nonetheless, it assumed that such debate needs a fresh unbiased approach to become successful or fruitful not only for the society as a whole but also for the individual human existence.