

# Religion and society

## ❖ Sociological theories of religion

The study of religion is a challenging enterprise which place quite special demands on the sociological imagination. In analyzing religious practices, we have to make sense of the many different beliefs and rituals found in the various human cultures. We must be sensitive to ideals that inspire profound conviction in believers, yet at the same time take balanced view of them. We have to confront ideas that seek the eternal, while recognizing that religious groups also promote quite mundane goals – such as acquiring finance or soliciting for followers. We should not only recognize the diversity of religious beliefs and modes of conduct, but also probe into the nature of religion as a general phenomenon.

**Sociologists define religion as a cultural system of commonly shared beliefs and rituals that provides a sense of ultimate meaning and purpose by creating an idea of reality that is sacred, all-encompassing and supernatural.** There are three key elements in this definition:

1. **Religion is a form of culture.** Culture consists of the shared beliefs, values, norms and ideas that create a common identity among a group of people. Religion shares all of these characteristics.
2. **Religion involves beliefs that take the form of ritualized practices.** All religions thus have a behavioral aspect – special activities in which believers take part and that identify them as members of the religious community.
3. **Perhaps most important, religion provides a sense of purpose – a feeling that life is ultimately meaningful.** It does so by explaining coherently and compellingly what transcends or overshadows everyday life, in ways that other aspects of culture (such as an educational system or a belief in democracy) typically cannot.

What is absent from the sociological definition of religion is as important as what is included: **nowhere is there mention of god. In common sense we often think of theism, a belief in one or more supernatural deities (the term originates from the Greek word for god), basic to religion, but this is not necessarily the case.**

Some religions, such as Buddhism, believe in the existence of spiritual forces rather than a particular god.

### ➤ How sociologists think about religion:

1. Sociologists are **not concerned with whether religious beliefs are true or false.** From a sociological perspective, **religions are regarded not as being decreed by god. But as being socially constructed by human beings.** As a result, sociologists put aside their personal beliefs when they study religion.
2. They are **concerned with the human rather than the divine aspects of religion.**  
**Sociologists ask;**
  - How is the religion organized?

- What are its principal beliefs and values?
- How is it related to the larger society?
- What explains its success or failure in recruiting and retaining believers?

3. Sociologists are especially **concerned with the social organization of religion**. Religions are among the most important institutions in society. **They are a primary source of the most deep-seated norms and values**. At the same time, **religions are typically practiced through an enormous variety of social forms (source of diversity in society)**. Within Christianity and Judaism, **for example**, religious practice often occurs in formal organizations, such as Asian religions as

4. Hinduism and Buddhism, where religious practices are likely to occur in the home or some other natural setting. **The sociology of religion is concerned with how different religious institutions and organizations actually function. In modern industrial society**, however, religions have become established in separate, often bureaucratic, organizations, and so sociologists focus on the organizations through which religions must operate in order to survive (**Hammond 1992**).

5. Sociologists **often view religions as a major source of social solidarity**. **To the extent that religions provide believers with a common set of norms and values**, they are an important source of social solidarity. Religious beliefs, rituals and bonds help to create a 'moral community' in which all members know how to behave towards one another (**Wuthnow 1988**). If a single religion dominates in society there is stability. If a society's members adhere to numerous competing religions difference may lead to destabilizing social conflicts. Recent **examples** of religious conflict within a society include struggles between Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims in India; clashes between Muslims and Christians in Bosnia and other parts of the former Yugoslavia; and 'hate crimes' against Jews, Muslims and other religious minorities in the United States.

6. Sociologists tend to explain **"the appeal of religion"** in terms of **"social forces rather than in terms of purely personal, spiritual or psychological factors"**. For many people, religious beliefs are a deeply personal experience, involving a strong sense of connection with forces that transcend everyday reality. Sociologists do not question the depth of such feelings and experiences, but they are unlikely to limit themselves to a purely spiritual explanation of religious commitment.

Some researchers argue that people often **'get religion' when their fundamental sense of a social order is threatened by economic hardship, loneliness, loss or grief, physical suffering, or poor health (Berger 1967)**; explaining the appeal of religious movements, sociologists are more likely to focus on the problems of the social order than on the psychological response of the individual.

### ➤ **Karl Marx's theory of religion:**

**Karl Marx**, the German scholar, has provided a **conflict perspective of religion**. Marx saw **religion as a reflection of society (not as an expression of "primitive" or psychological needs as other theorists of his time presented)**. **Unlike theorists like Durkheim** who emphasized the positive functions of religion, **Marx stressed the dysfunctions of religion as a social institution?** Whereas Durkheim saw religion as benefiting all segments of society by promoting social commitment, **Marx saw religion as serving the interests of the ruling class at the expense of the powerless masses.**

1. Marx argued that “**religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people**”.

2. Marx argued that “**just as a ‘painkiller’ masks the symptoms of disease, silencing the sick person into the illusory belief that he or she is well and hearty, ‘so religion masks the exploitation of workers, and lulling them into the false belief that existing social arrangements are just-or if not just, inescapable’**”.

3. Thus Marx argued that **religion as a social institution teaches that the individual’s position on earth will be rewarded in heaven. In so doing, religion obscures the exploitative tendencies hidden within the class structure and elite’s vested interest in the status quo.**

4. In this way, **religion becomes a tool in the hands of the ‘haves’ to exploit and oppress the ‘have-nots’.**

5. Marx perceived religion as **‘the personification of alienation’**: the self-estrangement people experience when they feel they have lost control over social institutions. The term ‘alienation’ was used by him to describe the modern worker’s experience of being nothing more than a ‘cog in a machine’. He **also employed this concept to describe what he saw as the dehumanizing effect of religion.** “the more the worker expends himself in work, the more powerful becomes the world of objects which he creates in the face of himself, the poorer he becomes in his inner life, the less he belongs to himself. **It is just the same as in religion. ‘The more of himself man attributes to god the less he has left in himself’** wrote Marx.

6. As the above quoted citations indicate **Marx’s denunciation and rejection of religion in society was total. He argued that only when people give up the illusory happiness of religion will they begin to demand real happiness.**

7. In furthering his attack on religion as an exploitative social institution in the clutches of the bourgeois class, he wrote: “the institution of religion disillusioned man so that he will think, act and fashion his reality as a man who has... regained his reason”. He predicted that in a classless society with a communistic form of economic order, religion would become irrelevant and unnecessary. Like the capitalist class itself, religion would die its natural death.

Thus, Karl Marx considered **religion as an uncalled for and manipulative institution forming an integral part of the exploitative superstructure.**

Both the religious and cultural institutions transform with the transformation of the economic foundation or the base. Religion and culture are the result of the existing power structure of society and religion would wither away once the class society revolutionizes itself into a classless society.

### ➤ **Functionalism and religious ritual:**

In contrast to **Marx, Emile Durkheim** spent a good part of his intellectual career studying religion. Concentrating particularly on religion in small-scale, traditional societies, Durkheim’s work, “**the elementary forms of the religious life**”, is the one of the most influential studies in the sociology of religion. **Durkheim does not connect religion primarily with social inequalities or power, but relates it to the overall**

**Nature of the institutions of a society.** He bases his work on a study of **totemism** as practiced by Australian aboriginal societies, and he argues that totemism represents religion in its most ‘elementary’ or simple form – hence the title of his book.

1. **A totem** was originally an animal or plant taken as having particular symbolic significance for a group. It is a sacred object, regarded with veneration and surrounded by various ritual activities. **Durkheim defines religion in terms of a distinction between the sacred and the**



**profane. Sacred objects and symbols**, he holds, are treated as apart from the routine aspects of existence, which are totemic animal or plant, except on special ceremonial occasions, is usually forbidden, and as a sacred object the totem is believed to have divine properties which separate it completely from other animals that might be hunted, or crops gathered and consumed.

**2. Why is the totem sacred? According to Durkheim, it is because it is the symbol of the group itself; it stands for the values central to the group or community.** The reverence which people feel for the totem actually derives from the respect they hold for central social values. **In religion, the object of worship is actually society itself.**

**3. Durkheim strongly emphasized that religions are never just a matter of belief. All religion involves regular ceremonial and ritual activities in which a group of believers meets together..... In collective ceremonies a sense of group solidarity is affirmed and heightened.** Ceremonials take individuals away from the concerns of profane social life into an elevated sphere, in which they feel in contact with higher forces, attributed to totems, divine influence or goods, are really the expression of the influence of the collectivity over the individual.

**4. Ceremony and ritual**, in Durkheim's view, **are essential to binding the members of groups not only in regular situations of worship, but also in the various life crises when major social transitions are experienced – for example, birth, marriage and death.** In virtually all societies, ritual and ceremonial procedures are observed on such occasions. Durkheim reasons that collective ceremonials reaffirm group solidarity at a time when people are forced to adjust to major changes in their lives. Funeral rituals demonstrate that the values of the group outlive the passing of particular individuals, and so provide a means for bereaved people to adjust to their altered circumstances. Mourning is not the spontaneous expression of grief or, at least, it is only so for those personally affected by the death. Mourning is a duty imposed by the group.

**5. In small traditional cultures**, Durkheim argued, **almost all aspects of life are permeated by religion.** Religious ceremonials both originate new ideas and categories of thought, and reaffirm existing values. **Religion is not just a series of sentiments and activities; it actually conditions the modes of thinking of individuals in traditional cultures.** Even the most basic categories of thought, including how time and space are thought of, were first framed in religious terms. The concept of 'time', for instance, was originally derived from counting the intervals involved in the religious ceremonials.

**6. With the development of modern societies, Durkheim believed, the influence of religion wanes. Scientific thinking increasingly replaces religious explanation, and ceremonial and ritual activities come to occupy only a small part of individuals' lives.** Durkheim agrees with Marx that traditional religion – that is, religion involving divine force or gods – is on the verge of disappearing. "the old gods are dead", Durkheim writes. Yet he says that **there is sense in which religion, in altered forms, is likely to continue.** Even modern societies depend for their cohesion on rituals that reaffirm their values; new ceremonial activities can thus be expected to emerge to replace the old. Durkheim is vague about what these might be, but it seems that he has in mind the celebration of humanist and political values such as freedom, equality and social cooperation.

**7. Many other social scientists, apart from Durkheim have analyzed religion in terms of what it does for the individual, community or society through its functions and dysfunctions.** Many of these social scientists are known to belong to the tradition of functionalist thought. A famous social anthropologist of early twentieth century, **Malinowski**, saw religion and magic as assisting the individual to cope with situations of stress or anxiety. Religious ritual, according to him, may enable the bereaved to reassert **their collective solidarity, to express their common norms and values upon which the proper functioning of the community depends.** Religion can also **supplement practical, empirical knowledge**, offering some sense of understanding and control in areas to which such knowledge does not extend.

8. **Radcliffe-brown** argues that religious ceremonies, for example in the form of communal dancing, **promoted unity and harmony and functioned to enhance social solidarity and the survival** of the society. **Religious beliefs** contained in myths and legends, he observes, **express the social values of the different objects which have a major influence on social life such** as food, weapons, day and night etc. They form the value consensus around which society is integrated.

9. Recently **functionalism** while retaining this notion that religion has a central role in maintaining social solidarity has rejected Durkheim's view that religious beliefs are merely symbolic representations of society. **Kingsley Davis** argues that **religious beliefs form the basis for socially valued goals and a justification of them. Religion provides a common focus for identity and an unlimited source of rewards and punishments for behaviour.**

10. **Functionalist theories of religion face a problem in the apparent decline in religious belief and participation.** What is viewed as secularization in other theories is seen as simply religious change in functionalist terms. Functionalist theorists argue that **religion takes different forms in apparently secular societies: it is more individualized, less tied to religious institutions.** The character of modern industrial capitalist society, particularly its rampant individualism, is thus seen to be expressed in the differentiated character of religion in a society like the USA. Although seemingly having little basis for integration, the celebration of individualism is itself an integrating feature of such diverse religious forms. Moreover, new and distinctive forms of religion may perform latent functions for the system by deflecting adherents from critical appraisal of their society and its distribution of rewards.

11. **In anti-religious societies such as some communist states this argument cannot hold, but here it is claimed that functional alternatives to traditional religion operate.** Other systems of belief such as communism itself fulfill the same role as religion elsewhere. National ceremonial, ritual celebration of communist victories, heroes, etc., meets the same need for collective rites, which reaffirm common sentiments and promote enhanced commitment to common goals.

12. Finally, **even in highly secularized western societies civil religion exists.** This consists in abstract beliefs and rituals, which relate society to ultimate things and provide a rationale for national history, a transcendental basis for national goals and purposes.

13. **Robert king Merton**, a twentieth century functionalist, introduced the concept of dysfunction. Talking about religion, for instance, **he pointed out the dysfunctional features of religion in a multi-religious society.** In such a society religion, instead of bringing about solidarity, could become the cause of disorganization and disunity.

14. Apart from Merton, many other social thinkers have highlighted the dysfunctions of religion. Karl Marx regarded **religion as a source of false consciousness among the proletariat, which prevents the 'class for itself' from developing.** It prevents them from developing their real powers and potentialities.

### ➤ **Max weber's theory of religion:**

Durkheim based his arguments on a very small range of examples, even though he claims his ideas apply to religion in general. **Max weber**, by contrast, **embarked on a massive study of religions worldwide. No scholar before or since has undertaken a task of such scope.** Most of his attention was concentrated on what he called the world religions – those that have attracted large numbers of believers and decisively affected the course of global history. **He made detailed studies of Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism and ancient Judaism and in the protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism** and elsewhere, he wrote extensively about the impact of Christianity on the history of the west. He did not, however, complete his projected study of Islam.

1. **Weber's** writings on religion differ from those of Durkheim in that they **concentrate on the**



**connection between religion and social change**, something to which Durkheim gave little attention. They contrast with the work of Marx because **weber argues that religion is not necessarily a conservative force; on the contrary, religiously inspired movements have often produced dramatic social transformations.** Thus Protestantism – was the source of the capitalistic outlook found in the modern west. **The early entrepreneurs were mostly Calvinists. Their drive to succeed, which helped initiate western economic development, was originally promoted by a desire to serve god. Material success was for them a sign of divine favour.**

2. **His discussion of the impact of Protestantism on the development of the west is part of a comprehensive attempt to understand the influence of religion on social and economic life in carrying cultures.** Analyzing the eastern religions, weber concluded that they provided insuperable barriers to the development of industrial capitalism, such as took place in the west. This is not because the non-western civilizations are backward; they have simply accepted values different from those which came to predominate in Europe. **In traditional china and India,** weber pointed out, there was at certain periods a significant development of commerce, manufacture and urbanism, but these did not generate the radical patterns of social change involved in the rise of industrial capitalism in the west. **Religion was a major influence in inhibiting such change.**

3. **For example, Hinduism** is what weber called on ‘other-worldly’ religion. That is to say, **its highest values stress escape from the toils of the material world to a higher plane of spiritual existence. The religious feelings and motivations produced by Hinduism do not focus on controlling or shaping the material world.** On the contrary, Hinduism see material reality as a veil hiding the true concerns to which humankind should be oriented. **Confucianism** also acted to direct effort away from economic development, as this came to be understood in the west, emphasizing harmony with the world rather than promoting active mastery of it. Although china was for a long while the most powerful and culturally most developed civilization in the world, its dominant religious values acted as a brake on a strong commitment to economic development for its own sake.

4. Weber regarded **Christianity** as a salvation religion, involving the belief that human beings can be ‘saved’ if they adopt the beliefs of the religion and follow its moral tenets. The notions of sin and of being rescued from sinfulness by god’s grace are important here. They generate a tension and an emotional dynamism essentially absent from the eastern religions. Salvation religions have a ‘revolutionary’ aspect. While the religions of the east cultivate an attitude of passivity in the believes towards the existing order, Christianity involves a constant struggle against sin, and hence can stimulate revolt against the existing order of things. Religious leaders – like Jesus – arise, who reinterpret existing doctrines in such a way as to challenge the prevailing power structure.

### ➤ **Critical assessment of the classical views:**

1. Marx, Durkheim and weber each identified some important general characteristics of religion, and in some ways their views complement one another. **Karl Marx seems to be right to claim that religion often has ideological implications, serving to justify the interests of ruling groups at the expense of others: there are innumerable instances of this in history.** Take as an example the influence of Christianity on the European colonialists’ efforts to subject other cultures of their rule. The missionaries who sought to convert ‘heathen’ peoples to Christian beliefs were no doubt sincere, yet the effect of their teachings was to reinforce the destruction of traditional cultures and the imposition of white domination. The various Christian denominations almost all tolerated, or endorsed, slavery in the United States and other parts of the world upto the nineteenth century. Doctrines were developed that claimed slavery was based on divine law, disobedient slaves being guilty of an offence against god as well as their masters.

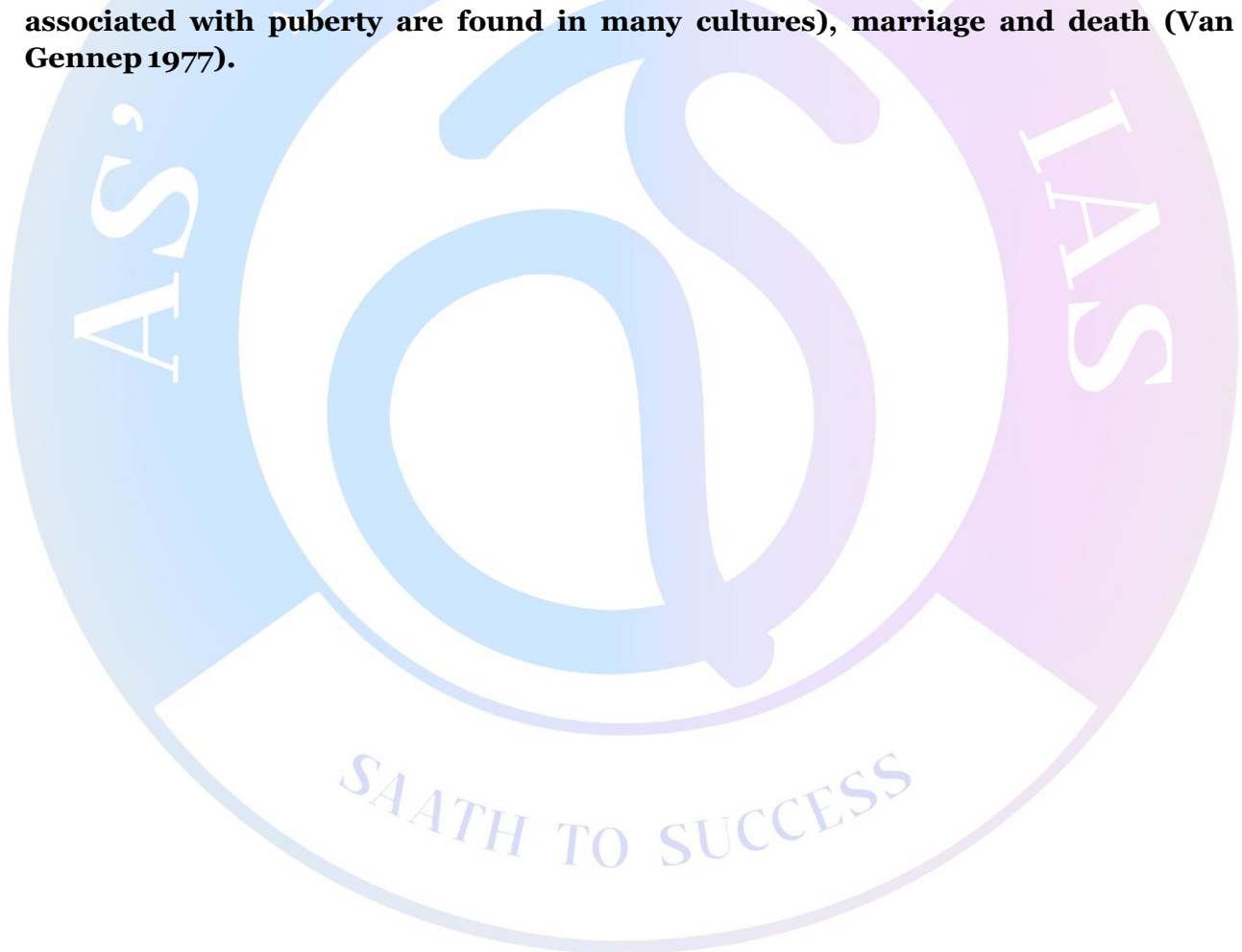
2. Yet **max weber was certainly correct to emphasize the unsettling, and often revolutionary, impact of religious ideals on pre- established social orders. For**

**example**, despite the churches' early support for slavery in the United States, many church leaders later played a key role in the fight to abolish it. Religious beliefs have promoted many social movements seeking to overthrow unjust system of authority, playing a prominent part, for instance, in the civil rights movements of the 1960s in the United States.

**3. Religion has also influence social change – often provoking much bloodshed –** through the armed clashes and wars fought for religious motives. **For example, Khalistan movement, ISIS etc.**

**4. These divisive influences of religion**, so prominent in history, find little mention in **Durkheim's work**. Durkheim emphasized above all the role of religion in promoting social cohesion. **Yet it is not difficult to redirect his ideas towards explaining religious division, conflict and change as well as solidarity.** After all, much of the strength of feeling which may be generated against other religious groups derives from the commitment to religious values generated within each community of believers.

**5. Among the most valuable aspects of Durkheim's writings is his stress on ritual and ceremony. All religions involve regular assemblies of believers, which ritual activities also mark the major transitions of life – birth, entry to adulthood (rituals associated with puberty are found in many cultures), marriage and death (Van Gennep 1977).**



# Types of Religious Practices: Animism, Monism, Pluralism, Sects, Cults.

## ➤ Animism:

**Animism refers to the belief/faith that not only humans, but non-human entities are spiritual beings, or at least embody some kind of life-principle.**

**Animism encompasses the beliefs that there is no separation between the spiritual and physical (or material) worlds, and souls or spirits exist, not only in humans, but also in all other animals, plants, and rocks, natural phenomena such as thunder, geographic features such as mountains or rivers, or other entities of the natural environment.**

- 1. Animism is particularly widely found in the religions of indigenous peoples, perhaps most interestingly in Shinto and sererism, and some forms of Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, pantheism, Christianity.**
- 2. Throughout European history, many philosophers such as Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, among others, contemplated the possibility that souls exist in animals, plants, and people. However, the currently accepted definition of animism was only developed in the 19th century by sir Edward b. Tylor, who created animism as “one of social anthropology’s earliest concepts”.**
- 3. According to Sir Edward b. Tylor, animism means the belief in spirits. E.B.Taylor in his famous book “primitive culture” developed “the thesis of animism” and subsequently he developed the distinction between “magic, religion and science”. In his thesis of animism he advocated that ‘anima’ means ‘spirit’. “Animism” refers to “a given form of religion in which man finds the presence of spirit in every object that surrounds him”.**
- 4. According to him, man’s ideas of spirits primarily originated from his dreams. In his dreams man, for the first time, encountered with his double. He realized that his double or duplicate is more dynamic and elastic than his own self. He further considered that his double, though resembled his body, it is far more superior in terms of quality from his body. He generalized further that the presence of soul in human body is responsible for the elasticity of images in dreams.**
- 5. Taking this fact into consideration ‘primitive mind’ considered that when man sleeps the ‘anima or soul’ moves out of the body of man ‘temporarily’ and when he is dead it leaves out the body ‘permanently’. Thereafter man generalized that “every embodiment, which is subjected to birth, growth and decay, is obviously associated with anima or spirit”. Hence, trees, rivers, mountains, which are greatly subjected to decay and expansion, were considered as the embodiments in which soul is present. Realizing this, “man started worshipping all these embodiments and that is how animism as a specific form of religions came into being”. According to Taylor, the most ancient form of animistic practice is manifested in terms of ancestor worship.**



6. Man realized that his **ancestors after their death convert into spirits or souls who may be “benevolent” or “malevolent”**. Realizing this, in order to convert these ‘spirits or souls’ as ‘protecting spirits’, man made them ‘periodic offerings’. In primitive communities this is known as ancestor cult and ghost worship.

7. **According to Taylor, the primitive man was not in a condition to distinguish between animate and inanimate objects.** Therefore, he conceived that like ‘life and soul’ associated with human body, they should be associated with every object both animate and inanimate. Realizing this he started worshipping rocks, trees, streams, everything surrounding him extending the notion of soul and spirit to all of them. Taylor argues that religion in the form of animism originated to satisfy man’s intellectual nature to meet his need to make sense of death, dreams and vision.

8. **In many animistic world views, the human being is often regarded as on a roughly equal footing with other animals, plants, and natural forces.** Therefore, it is morally imperative to treat these agents with respect. **In this world view**, humans are considered a part of nature, rather than superior to, or separate from it. In such societies, ritual is considered essential for survival, as it wins the favor of the spirits of one’s source of food, shelter, and fertility and wards off malevolent spirits. In more elaborate animistic religions, such as Shinto, there is a greater sense of a special character to humans that sets them apart from the general form of animals and objects, while retaining the necessity of ritual to ensure good luck, favorable harvests, and so on.

9. Most animistic belief systems hold that the spirit survives **physical death**. In some systems, the “**anima or spirit**” is believed to pass to an easier world of abundant land or ever-ripe crops, while in other systems, the spirit remains on earth as a ghost, often malignant. Still other systems combine these two beliefs, holding that the soul must journey to the world without becoming lost and thus wandering as a ghost. Funeral, mourning rituals, and ancestor worship performed by those surviving the deceased are often considered necessary for the successful completion of this journey.

10. **From the belief in the survival of the dead** arose the practice of offering food, lighting fires, etc., at the grave, at first, maybe, as an act of friendship or filial piety, later as an act of ancestor worship. The simple offering of food or shedding of blood at the grave develops into an elaborate system of sacrifice. Even where ancestor worship is not found, the desire to provide the dead with comforts in the future life may lead to the sacrifice of wives, slaves, animals, and so on, to the breaking or burning of objects at the grave or to the provision of the ferryman’s toll: a coin put in the mouth of the corpse to pay the traveling expenses of the soul.

11. But all is not finished with the passage of the soul to the land of the dead. **The soul may return to avenge its death by helping to discover the murderer, or to wreak vengeance for itself.** There is a widespread belief that those who die a violent death become malignant spirits and endanger the lives of those who come near the haunted spot. In Malay folklore, the woman who dies in childbirth becomes a pontianak, a vampire-like spirit who threatens the life of human beings. People resort to magical or religious means of repelling spiritual dangers from such malignant spirits. **It is not surprising to find that many peoples respect and even worship animals, often regarding them as relatives. It is clear that widespread respect was paid to animals as the abode of dead ancestors, and much of the cults to dangerous animals is traceable to this principle; though there is no need to attribute an animistic origin to it.**

➤ **Contemporary animist traditions:**

1. African traditional religions, a group of beliefs in various spirits of nature,
2. In the Canary Islands (Spain), aboriginal guanches professed an animistic religion.
3. Shinto, the traditional religion of Japan, is highly animistic. In Shinto, spirits of nature, or kami, are believed to exist everywhere, from the major (such as the goddess of the sun), which can be considered polytheistic, to the minor, which are more likely to be seen as a form of animism.
4. There are some Hindu groups which may be considered animist. The coastal Karnataka has a tradition of praying to spirits.
5. The new age movement commonly purports animism in the form of the existence of nature spirits and fairies.

## ➤ **Monism and pluralism:**

### ✓ **Monism:**

1. **Monism is a religious-philosophical worldview in which all of reality can be reduced to one “thing” or “substance.”** This view is **opposed to dualism** (in which all of reality is reducible to two substances, e.g., good and evil; light and darkness; form and matter; body and soul) **and pluralism** (all of reality is comprised of multiple substances). In all of these philosophical views, the word substance in a technical sense to mean “essence,” in other words, something in which properties adhere.

2. Many of the early, pre-Socratic philosophers tried to understand the underlying nature of the reality that surrounded them. **They wanted to determine what everything could be reduced to.** For **Thales (624–546 BC)**, the first principle of everything—that from which everything is derived—was water. For **Anaximenes (585–528 BC)** it was air. Two more well-known monists, **Heraclitus (535–475 BC)** and **Parmenides (fl. Early 5th century BC)**, attempted to ground reality in becoming (flux) and being (permanence), respectively. Heraclitus observed that all around him was in constant flux (or change); therefore, all reality was becoming—things changing from one form into another. His classic example was the observation that one can never step into the same river twice because the water is in constant motion. Parmenides, taking the opposite route of Heraclitus, said that ultimate reality can only reside in that which is unchanging; for him, that was absolute being. Moving from a metaphysical analysis to a more religious-spiritual outlook, **monism is the underlying worldview of those who hold to a form of pantheism. Pantheism is the worldview that god (not necessarily the Christian god) is the ultimate source of being, and that all of reality is a manifestation of this god.** Pantheism sees no real distinction between god and the universe. **Plotinus (ad 204–270)**, the father of Neo-Platonism, was a popular pantheist. His brand of metaphysics taught that ultimate being resided in the one. From a series of necessary emanations, out of the one, comes the divine mind (nous). The next level of emanations results in the world soul (psyche), and finally the material world (cosmos). Another famous philosophical pantheist was the 17th-century rationalist philosopher Baruch Spinoza.

3. **Monism can also be seen in the scientific realm** in those who subscribe to a naturalistic materialism. According to this view, **all reality is limited to the material world. There is no such thing as spirit, soul, or god. Only those things that can be perceived by the five senses are real.** This is the default position of many atheists (at least those who are consistent with their worldview). One can see what happens if one takes this view to its logical conclusion. If everything is essentially matter governed by physical laws, then such things as love, morality, justice, etc., go out the window. What do those things mean in a purely material world? They are basically feeble attempts to construct meaning in a universe that is cold and deterministic.

4. **All of these philosophies—whether monistic, dualistic, or pluralistic—are attempting to deal with the problem of universals (or the problem of the one and the many).** The problem of universals can be simply illustrated. Take the example of a chair. We can all conceptualize a chair in our minds and apply that concept to different instances of “chair.” All of these particular instances of the concept “chair” may differ—e.g., a simple wooden chair as compared to a fancy office chair with soft cushions and a lift mechanism—but they all share the essential characteristics of what constitutes “chair-ness.” The question that arises is what is more real: the concept of “chair” or the particular chairs we see in the world?

○ **Broadly speaking, the concept of monism refers to faith in one god, one body of ritual, one set of ideology and moral doctrines. During medieval period religion offered a foundation to the formation of political state.** It was believed that religious differences all over the world can only glorify the variations in political identity of the state. **For example** Roman Empire emerged as a Christian state. Middle East gave way to the rise of Islamic states what was known as post Egyptian civilization.

○ **However during 18th century slave trade, expansion of the territorial boundaries of the state because of warfare gave rise to the emergence of culturally pluralistic societies. However the major concern of the state was to transform multiculturalism into cultural uniformity.** Therefore the state patronized one religion, permitted missionaries to lure ethnic minorities to go for religious conversions. As a result multi ethnic groups because of coercion & persuasion became a part of artificially constructed **monistic societies**. These monistic societies glorified one sovereign ruler, one ideology, one culture developing intolerance to cultural distinctions.

○ 18th century Europe explains how cultural minorities were pushed into ghettos identified as **slave race, forced to join warfare and heavy fines were imposed in them on a refusal to commanders’ dictates.** That subsequently gave way to the rise of autocratic state striving for cultural unification.

○ **After the advent of industry, free trade, the culture of democracy in 19th century Europe it was essential that people cutting across the boundaries of nation-state should be developing harmonic relationship with each other. During 19th century Catholic Church, its orthodox values and nexus with state was severely challenged.** As a result new education system, free market, rational political structure made appearance and state which had a written guaranteeing no discrimination to the citizen of a society on the basis of their ethnic & religious identities.

### ✓ **Pluralism:**

Religious pluralism generally refers to the belief in two or more religious worldviews as being equally valid or acceptable. More than mere tolerance, religious pluralism accepts multiple paths to god or gods as a possibility and is usually contrasted with “exclusivism,” the idea that there is only one true religion or way to know god.

Here are four points to begin our thinking:



1. **First, pluralism is not diversity alone, but** the energetic engagement with diversity. Diversity can and has meant the creation of religious ghettos with little traffic between or among them. Today, religious diversity is a given, but pluralism is not a given; it is an achievement. Mere diversity without real encounter and relationship will yield increasing tensions in our societies.

2. **Second, pluralism is not just tolerance, but** the active seeking of understanding across lines of difference. Tolerance is a necessary public virtue, but it does not require Christians and Muslims, Hindus, Jews, and ardent secularists to know anything about one another. Tolerance is too thin a foundation for a world of religious difference and proximity. It does nothing to remove our ignorance of one another, and leaves in place the stereotype, the half-truth, the fears that underlie old patterns of division and violence. In the world in which we live today, our ignorance of one another will be increasingly costly.

3. **Third, pluralism is not relativism, but** the encounter of commitments. The new paradigm of pluralism does not require us to leave our identities and our commitments behind, for pluralism is the encounter of commitments. It means holding our deepest differences, even our religious differences, not in isolation, but in relationship to one another.

4. **Fourth, pluralism is based on dialogue. The language of pluralism is that of dialogue and encounter, give and take, criticism and self-criticism.** Dialogue means both speaking and listening, and that process reveals both common understandings and real differences. Dialogue does not mean everyone at the "table" will agree with one another. Pluralism involves the commitment to being at the table -- with one's commitments.

5. While religious pluralism has been in existence since at least the seventeenth century, **the concept has become more popular since the latter half of the twentieth century in Western Europe and North America. Specifically, the idea of religious ecumenism (religions working together as one) and the recently popularized interfaith movement have led to the increased acceptance of religious pluralism in popular culture.** Studies by the Barna Group and others have noted the growth of ideas related to religious pluralism in American culture in recent years. In many cases, even significant numbers of people identified as Christians believe there is more than one way to heaven.

6. **Pluralism is more than the sharing of certain values or agreement on some social issues.** Buddhists and Christians both agree that helping the poor is important, but such limited concord is not pluralism. Pluralism has to do with lending credence to competing truth claims and accepting diverse beliefs regarding God and salvation. **In addition, two or more religions can share some doctrinal beliefs yet remain fundamentally different as belief systems. For example, Muslims and Christians agree that there is only one God—yet both religions define God differently and hold many other irreconcilable beliefs.**

7. **The existence of religious pluralism depends on the existence of freedom of religion. Freedom of religion is when different religions of a particular region possess the same rights of worship and public expression.** Freedom of religion is consequently weakened when one religion is given rights or privileges denied to others, as in certain European countries where Roman Catholicism or regional forms of Protestantism have special status. Religious freedom has not existed at all in some communist countries where the state restricts or prevents the public expression of religious belief and may even actively persecute individual religions. Religious pluralism has existed in the Indian subcontinent since the rise of Buddhism around 500 BC and has widened in the course of several Muslim settlements (Delhi sultanate 1276-1526 AD and the Mughal empire 1526-1857 AD). In the 8th century, Zoroastrianism established in India as Zoroastrians fled from Persia to India in large numbers, where they were given refuge. The colonial phase ushered in by the British lasted until 1947 and furthered conversions to Christianity among low caste Hindus.

8. **The rise of religious pluralism in the modern West is closely associated with the Reformation and the Enlightenment.** Blackledge and Hunt in their book "From

uniculturalism to multiculturalism” advocate that **cultural pluralism** is foundation to the rise of a multi-cultural society. Multi culturalism according to him is a **European concept** that did not get much of approval from the African subcontinent where people preferred to go for ethnic diversity. Cultural uniformity is as a coercive manner was induced into socialist societies and most of the Islamic states of middle-east and the search for a homeland for Jews at Israel glorified the idea of creation of political state on the basis of mono cultural identities. **When Europe went for pluralism this idea did not receive a global endorsement. As a result monistic societies went for religious revivalism and consolidation emphasizing on religious education, religious laws are emerging as the civil laws of the state.** Hence a great ideological difference between monistic and pluralistic societies.

9. **In case of pluralistic societies, deprivation and inequality gave way to sectarian mobilizations.** In case of America blacks got unified as a challenge to the political doctrine of pluralism during early 19th century that gave rise to the integration of black immigrants from different parts of the world. Challenge to pluralism comes from sectarian mobilization from within and the glorification of monistic states from outside.

10. **Clifford Geertz** in his book “**Islam observed**” mentions his **case study of Indonesia**. He found out that their exposure to Spanish colonialism, Dutch colonialism and subsequently western values did not offer their commitment to Islamic values. **Therefore instead of multiculturalism cultural monoism made appearance in a big way in Indonesian society.** He asserts that search for monoism is a rebellion and revolution then being a myopic orientation to one’s own culture and religion. Islamic revivalism was foundation to their independence therefore cultural monoism came as a predominant force in Indonesia.

11. **R. Robinson** in her book “**sociology of religion in India**” advocates that Gandhi’s call for ramarajya was greatly driven by call for **implicit monism and explicit pluralism** because Gandhi wanted that Hindus and Muslims should stay together as equal partners to modern India. But he strongly believed that Hindu cultural values can offer a right direction to the people to go for a disciplined life. In a society where monism is close to heart but pluralism becomes the rule of law people driven by emotion will stay committed to religion. She believes that anti conversion movements, communal tensions in the country are the manifestation of glorified monism challenging to state’s commitment to pluralistic ideology.

12. **Amartya Sen** in his article “**secularism in India**” considers that India’s pluralism has always been a doctrine of the state that mostly fails to internalize because of illiteracy, rural living and commitment to tradition. He believes that these orientations can only be transformed with the expansion of modern education, rise of modern employment and expansion of urbanism to rural pockets of Indian society.

## ✓ **Sects and cults**

**A sect is a subgroup of a religious, political or philosophical belief system, usually an offshoot of a larger religious group. The word sect comes from the Latin secta, meaning an organized religious body or organization, oriented towards ‘a course of action or way of life’.**

1. **The chief feature of a religious sect is that it is a voluntary association. It is a small religious group that has branched off of a larger established religion.** Sects have **many beliefs and practices in common with the religion** but they have broken off from, but are **differentiated by a number of doctrinal differences.** Many sociologists use the word **sect**

**to refer to a religious group with a high degree of tension with the surrounding society, but whose beliefs are (within the context of that society) largely traditional.**

**2. A sect seeks to impose a rigid pattern of ideal conduct on its members but seeks toleration rather than change from the larger society. Sects are concerned with purity of doctrine and with the depth of genuineness of religious feeling.** As a result, demands are made upon the member to be an active participant, even a leader or missionary, as a warrant of his faith. The emphasis on **purity of belief** tends to create intolerance toward other groups and moves the sect toward critical assessment of the secular world in accordance with the ideals of the gospel.

### ✓ **Characteristics of sect:**

1. A sect is a relatively small religious group. It is an organized body of people developing a kind of religious consciousness and raising as a major critic to mainstream religion.
2. Sect is ideologically and operationally closed.
3. Its members are usually, though by no means always, drawn from the lower classes and the poor.
4. Sects often reject many of the norms and values of the wider society and replace them with beliefs and practices which sometimes appear strange to the non-believer.
5. Sects emerge as a critic to original religion.
6. Sect is initially leader focused but it may continue after leader's demise. As a result, sects are, in Peter Berger's words, 'in tension with the larger society and closed against it'.
7. Sects are insular groups which are largely closed to those who have not gone through the initiation procedures for membership.
8. Sects institute a strict pattern of behavior for members to follow and make strong claims on their loyalty.
9. Belonging to a sect is often the dominant factor in a member's life.
10. The organization of sects tends to be in terms of small face to face groups, without a hierarchy of paid officials and a bureaucratic structure.
11. Often worship is characterized by an intensity and open commitment which is lacking in mainstream religion.

### ✓ **Origin of sect:**

**1. Max Weber argues that sects are most likely to arise within groups which are marginal in society.** Members of groups outside the main stream of social life often feel they are not receiving either the prestige and/or the economic rewards they deserve. One solution to this problem is a sect based on what Weber calls a '**theodicy of disprivilege**' (a theodicy is a religious explanation and justification). Such sects contain an explanation for the disprivilege of their members and promise them a 'sense of honor' either in the afterlife or in a future 'new world' on earth.

**2. According to other sociologists, an explanation of the sects must account for the variety of social background represented in their membership. Sects are not confined to the lower strata of society. For example,** the Christian Science sect has a largely middle-class membership. The concept of relative deprivation can be applied to members of all social classes. Relative deprivation refers to subjectively perceived deprivation which people actually feel. In objective terms the poor are deprived more than the middle class. However, in subjective terms certain



members of the middle class may feel more deprivation than the poor. Relative deprivation applies to **the middle-class hippy in California** who rejects values of materialism and achievement and seeks fulfillment in transcendental meditation. It applies equally to **the unemployed black American who joins the Black Muslim**. Both experience deprivation in terms of their own particular viewpoints. Sects can therefore be seen as one possible response to relative deprivation.

**3. Sects tend to arise during a period of rapid social change.** In this situation traditional norms are disrupted, social relationships tend to lack consistent and coherent meaning and the traditional 'universe of meaning' is undermined. **Thus Bryan Wilson sees the rise of methodism as a response by the new urban working class to the 'chaos and uncertainty of life in the newly settled industrial areas'**. He argues that, 'newly emergent social groups are, at least in the context of a society in which the religious view of the world dominates, likely to need and to evolve new patterns of religious belief to accommodate themselves to their new situation'. **In a situation of change and uncertainty, the sects offers the support of a close-knit community organization, well defined and strongly sanctioned norms and values and a promise of salvation.** It provides a new and stable 'universe of meaning' which is legitimated by its religious beliefs.

### ✓ **Life span of sect:**

**1. According to sociologists sects are short lived. H. Richard Niebuhr argues that sects are necessarily short-lived for the following reasons:**

- The fervor and commitment of members cannot be sustained past the first generation;
- The social marginality and isolation of the group, which was a major factor in the formation of the sect, may disappear. Sects with an ascetic creed tend to accumulate wealth which affords them entry into the mainstream of society.

**2. The sect then either ceases to exist or develops into a denomination.** Its extreme teachings and rejection of the wider society no longer fit the social situation of its membership. If it changes into a denomination, its beliefs are modified to fit in with those of the mainstream of society; it develops a bureaucratic organization with a hierarchy of paid officials. This is the path taken by some sects. As the methodists rose in status during the nineteenth century, the strict disciplines of the sect and its opposition to the wider society were dropped, and it became a denomination. If large sects develop in response to major religions it may lead to conflict/religious intolerance and/or rise of a pluralistic society (because of tolerance).

### ✓ **The cult:**

**The concept of "cult" was introduced into sociology in 1932 by American sociologist Howard P. Becker as an expansion of German theologian Ernst Troeltsch's church-sect typology. Troeltsch's aim was to distinguish between three main types of religious behavior: churchly, sectarian and mystical.** Becker created four categories out of Troeltsch's first two by splitting church into "ecclesia" and "denomination", and sect into "sect" and "cult". Like Troeltsch's "mystical religion", Becker's cults were small religious groups lacking in organization and emphasizing the private nature of personal beliefs.

**1. Later formulations built on these characteristics while placing an additional emphasis on cults as deviant religious groups "deriving their inspiration from outside of the predominant religious culture".** This deviation is often thought to lead to a high degree of tension between the group and the more mainstream culture surrounding it, a characteristic shared with religious sects.

2. The term often highlights smaller religious movements or movements involving particularly intense religious devotion. **The cult is a voluntary organization open to all who wish to join or participate in it. According to Johnson, 'in general the cults are not strict except in financial matters'. Yet it tends to regulate its members as per its doctrine and system of rituals which are well defined. A cult emphasizes one doctrine (above all others) or it focuses upon a god or goddess with certain definite characteristics.**

### ✓ **Characteristics of cult:**

1. A cult, also has a high degree of tension with the surrounding society, but its beliefs are (within the context of that society) **new and innovative**. It may seek to **transform society but more often concentrate upon creating a satisfying group experience**.
2. Cults are **not reactionary or revolutionary but instead are revisionary. Cult does not stand opposite to religion**.
3. Cult is a **supplementation of religion than being a challenge to religion**.
4. Cult's **existence is greatly linked to life span of cult leader**. He or she is a charismatic person for his followers.
5. Cults are **engaged in catering to day-to-day problems of people**. Cult may have inherent contradictions but various questions posed by followers are addressed by charismatic cult leader.
6. **Over a period cult may develop into a sect** i.e. Calvinism to Protestantism.
7. In Indian society, according to **K.M. Pannikar** it was during Mughals rule that sectarian division among Brahmins was greatly glorified i.e. **Shaivism and vaisnavism**, because Hinduism was losing its great tradition because of loss of political patronage.
8. If there is distance between people and religion, people endorse various cults

### ✓ **Origin of cult:**

1. Sociologists still maintain that unlike sects, which are products of religious schism and therefore maintain continuity with traditional beliefs and practices, **"cults" arise spontaneously around novel beliefs and practices**.
2. The social reality of cult is essentially rooted in **heroic act**. This act is a system of worship, a complex of feeling and attitudes of symbol (gestures, words, rites and rituals) and primarily a relationship with sacred object and the world beyond. It involves **co-activity and a social boundary**. In it, the relationship between the deity and clergy is not negligible but secondary.
3. Cult seems to flourish in **metropolitan centres where culturally heterogeneous populations are thrown together and they widely feel the impact of most rapidly impinging social change**. It creates a situation of contingency and powerlessness and thus the problem of adjustment. The cult of meet that situation.

# Religion in Modern Society: Religion and Science, Secularization, Religious Revivalism, Fundamentalism

## ❖ Religion and science:

Religion does not need science and science does not need religion but man needs both. There are thinkers who believe that science & religion are incompatible with each other, whereas the other thinks otherwise. There are two major opinions regarding the relationship between science and religion-“religion and science are mutually conflicting” and “science and religion are not mutually opposing”.

### **Those who believe religion are not mutually opposing”. Say that**

1. Religion is based on faith and rituals whereas science depends on observation, experiments, verifications, proofs and facts.
2. Science deals with the known or the empirical world. But religion is concerned with the unknown or supernatural world.
3. For Sumner and Keller it is difficult to find any type of religion which has welcomed free enquiry.
4. Science insists that all phenomenon that is observed should not be accepted at face value. Its value and meaning can be discovered through experimentation. All factors (time, place, person, equipment) that can affect the result of such experiments are controlled in laboratory conditions.
- 5. Science differs from religion because it believes in neutrality and objectivity. Scientific method is claimed to have annulled the subjective biases. Science believes in precision and measurement which is not possible for religion.**
- 6. Science brings the unknown to the level of observable reality. Religion cannot bring god to the level to observable phenomena.** Scientific knowledge has more concrete application in the form of the technology which might help in manipulating nature. **Religion cannot establish such concrete and immediate result.**
- 7. Scientific knowledge and method are valid universally whereas principle of religious life differs from society to society.**
- 8. Kingsley Davis** advocates that religion withers like a leaf before a flame when the scientific attitude is brought to bear on it.

### **However those who say that science and religion are not opposing believe that:**

- 1. Science deals with what is known. It is potential knowledge based on sensory evidences. Religious beliefs refer to the world beyond the senses.**

**The knowledge which cannot be proved by the methods of science, cannot be disproved also.**

- 2. Religion is social reality. The persistence of religion throughout the ages is proof of its survival value. It has rendered undeniable services to the humanity and is still serving.** Religion like other institutions has its roots in certain human needs. Hence it was felt to be a necessity and continues to be a necessary thing. If religion is construed as nothing but belief in superhuman force or power it remains incompatible with science. If on the other hand it is understood as a kind of ethical philosophy serving the cause of humanity then the science and religion



are compatible.

**1. H.E. Barnes says that even if there exists conflict between fundamentals of religion and modern science none exists between the later and humanism because the humanists frankly base their religion upon the findings of the science.**

**2. Religion in its real sense is not conflicting with science. It is only the dogma or theology or the distorted version of religion that conflicts with science.** If the religion respects and accepts the values of science and if science recognizes and accepts the reality and necessity of religion then there could be no conflict between religion and science.

**3. Even if there is conflict between religion and science, the main cause of conflict is that boundary between the two is shifting what was unknown yesterday is known today. The scientific pursuit of empirical truth is opposed to religious pursuit of non-empirical truth.**

**4. Both are two facets of life. One touches soul while other indicates material advancement.** Religion gives peace to scientifically advanced and worried society. **Both try to pierce into the realm of unknown. Thus conflicts and compatibility of religion and science cannot be studied in an isolated manner** as development of science can provide base for the interpretation of ideas of religion. Science is a search for knowledge as well as method of solving problems.

**5. Both religion and science are forms of human understanding.** Both science and religion are human ways to relating themselves to reality.

**6. Both science and religion try to make explicit the world of unknown. Religion is more collectively oriented than science, but science too emphasizes team spirit and cooperation of scientific community.** Both science and religion claim access to truth.

**7. On many occasions in past as well as present, both science as well religion have acted against human kind.** Both religion and science prescribe qualification for their personnel.

**8. Max Weber too** considers religion as the root cause of rise of capitalism subsequent to industrialization and technological development.

SAATH TO SUCCESS

<b>Science</b>	<b>Religion</b>
Science is considered as inquisitive, deliberative	Religion is considered as imaginative and speculative
Science drives man to shape his own destiny	Religion push man towards fatalism
Science believes in precision and measurement	Religion has no such provisions
Science brings the unknown to the level of observable reality	Religion often depicts god as beyond reach of normal human beings
Science is liberating and enlightening and promotes questioning of everything	Religion binds individuals and promotes status quo and tradition
Science is based on rationality	Religion is based on the belief in sacred
Science promotes individual innovations, though team works are also there	Religion is more collectively oriented
Scientific knowledge and method are valid universally	Religious principles are accepted within a particular community only which believe in those principles

SAATH TO SUCCESS

### ❖ **Secularization:**

**Bryan Wilson** defines **secularization** as **'the process whereby religious thinking, practice and institutions lose social significance'**. Like all key

Concepts in sociology, **the concept of secularization** has been used in a variety of ways.

1. In other words **secularization is the process in which social institutions gain considerable autonomy and religious consciousness declines** whereby instead of being the pervasive, religion becomes “a department of the social order”. **Wilson gives three features of a secular society:**

- The prevalence of instrumental values
- The prevalence of rational procedures
- The prevalence of technological methods.

2. **Peter Berger** defines **secularization** as the “**process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols**”.

3. **Harvey cox** gave the following **key characteristics of secularization,**

- Urbanization
- Pragmatism
- This worldliness attitude
- Pluralism tolerance.

**In general secularization is indicative of the following changes:**

- Withdrawal of religion from social spheres like education, marriage etc.
- Development of pluralism in world views
- Emergence of rational and scientific view
- Development of critical consciousness.

### ❖ **Secularism:**

**Secularism** on the other hand, can be defined on the basis of three perspectives

- **People-centric,**
- **State-centric and**
- **India-centric (in the context of India)**

1. **People-centric** secularism emphasizes on the idea of separating religion from politics, economy, education, social life and culture.
2. **State-centric** secularism emphasis on the need to keep the state protector to all religions.
3. **India-centric** secularism underlines the importance of the unity of all people against communalism.

**Secularism being an ideology consists of the following five ideas:**

1. **It stresses on human autonomy.** It recognizes **individual to be master of his own life.** Human beings are responsible for their own destinies. It places faith on human rationale, rather than divine guidance.



2. **It asserts that separation of religion from states** and stresses that family relations, education, morality, knowledge and values are also free from clutches of religion.
3. **It puts stress on reason and inquiry.**
4. **Secularism welcomes pluralism and religious toleration.** Pluralism of religion is supported by an attitude of tolerance towards other religions.
5. **It is not anti-religion.**

### ❖ ***Secularism: European experience:***

**Secularism was the main goal of reformation and the renaissance that took place in Europe in 15th and 16th centuries. Martin Luther**, the principal initiator of the protestant reformation, had advocated that it is the right of individual to understand the words of god without taking the guidance of the church.

1. Reformation was basically a religious movement which later on becomes reactionary. Two important features or effects of reformation were:
  - It did not produce more toleration and religious liberty.
  - Illiterate masses i.e. popular masses were unaware of the reformation process religion continued to be a mainstay of talk.
2. The renaissance advocated rational thinking and challenged the theological uses of cosmos. To make this idea reachable to people, mass education, free press and social movement were used. **Charles Bradlaugh**, the great secularist, believed that extensive propaganda played crucial role in ensuring secularization.

### ❖ **Secularization process:**

**Secularization for its development required social milieu. It can be further elaborated in the following way:**

1. **In the context of feudal lords and bourgeoisie:** in England and the Netherlands, the conflict between feudal lords and bourgeoisie started in eighteenth century. Feudal lords led a lavish life. They made huge donation to religious institutions and these institutions prayed to god for lord's well-being. Bourgeoisie in order to attack feudal lords took the help of scientific and rational outlook. As a result of which, feudal privileges based on heredity, oppression on the basis of sovereignty the "divine rights" of feudal lords to rule was challenged on rational grounds.
2. **In the content of the capitalist class and the wage-earners:** Disraeli divided the capitalist society into two nations viz. The wage earners and the capitalists. The wage-earners were devoid of means of ownership of production. After being paid a subsistence wage, these workers were alienated from the fruits of their labor. They welcomed religion in order to tolerate such a harsh situation. Capitalists also made use of religion to bullet their brutal deeds. They also used religion to pacify violent wage earners. However, in the emerging modern nation states, democracy was proclaimed in England, France etc. The right of freedom of conscience was granted to them which happened to pass through three stages.
  - In first stage people struggled for religious tolerance
  - In second stage religious freedom of conscience was asserted.
  - In third stage genuine freedom of conscience was accomplished.

### ❖ **Secularization and other institutions:**

1. The Church of England is subordinate to the British sovereign. French government shows no preference for any religious group and prohibits clerics from teaching in the public schools.
2. Monaco, where Catholics comprised 92% of the population in 2000, has implemented the most anti-clergy legislation in the west.
3. Church property belongs to the state.
4. Worship services outside the church were forbidden.
5. The government can open any place of worship and determine the number of clerics in it.
6. The clergy cannot vote, participate in politics.
7. The church cannot own radio and television stations.

**Studies of secularization have been classified in terms of some of the many ways in which process has been conceptualized and measured.**

### ❖ **The decline in organized religious participation:**

1. Some researchers have seen **religious institutions and activity associated with them as the key element in religious behavior**. From this viewpoint they have measured **the importance of religion in society** in terms of factors such as church attendance and marriages performed in church. From such measures they argue that secularization is occurring in most western societies. **Wilson** argues that, **'the decline in organized religious participation indicates the way in which the churches are losing direct influence over the ideas and activities of man'**.
2. However **the decline in participation in institutional religion** can be interpreted in a number of ways. **David Martin** argues that in Victorian times, church attendance was more strongly motivated by non-religious factors such as middle-class respectability. Today, church attendance is no longer an indication of respectability for many members of the middle class. Thus, their absence from church may have nothing to do with a change in their religious beliefs. **Robert n. Bella** argues that the decline in institutional religion cannot be taken as an indication of a decline in religious belief and commitment. Religion today may simply be expressed in a different way. **Bella argues that there has been a move from collective worship to privatized worship and from clerical to individual interpretation of doctrine**. He claims that, 'the assumption in most of the major protestant denominations is that the church member can be considered responsible for himself'. While there is little dispute that participation in institutional religion has declined over the past century in most European countries, there is considerable disagreement over the interpretation of this process.

### ❖ **Disengagement and differentiation:**

1. **A disengagement of the religious organizations from the wider society** is seen as secularization. **Compared to its role in medieval Europe, The church in contemporary western society has undergone a process of disengagement**. In the middle ages, there was a union of church and state. Today, apart from the right of bishops to sit in the British House of Lords, the church is hardly represented in government. **Ecclesiastical control of education and social welfare has been superseded by secular organizations under state control**. **Church patronage of the arts & Architecture** was reflected by the fact that most art in the Middle Ages was based on religious themes. Today secular themes predominate.
2. **Bryan Wilson** argues that the **Church of England today provides little more than**

**traditional ritual** to dramatize important turning points in the life cycle, namely, birth marriage and death. He sees its **disengagement from the wider society as evidence of secularization**. An alternative to the view that disengagement equals secularization is provided by

3. **Talcott parsons** agrees that **the church as an institution has lost many of its former functions. He argues that the evolution of society involves a process of structural differentiation**. Various parts of the social system become more specialized and so perform fewer functions.

4. **However, the differentiation of the units of the social system does not necessarily lessen their importance. Parsons argues that religious beliefs still give meaning and significance to life**. Churches are still the fount of religious ethics and values. As religious institutions become increasingly specialized, parsons maintains that their ethics and values become increasingly generalized. In American society they have become the basis for more general social values. Thus many of the values of American society are at once Christian and American. This has resulted in the 'endowment of secular life with a new order of religious legitimation'.

### ❖ Religious pluralism:

1. Some researchers imply that the **truly religious society has one faith and one church**. This picture is influenced by the situation in some small scale, nonliterate societies, such as the Australian aborigines, where the community is a religious community. **In terms of Durkheim's view of religion, the community is the church**. Medieval European societies provide a similar picture. **There the established church ministered to the whole society. But now a multiplicity of denominations and sects** has replaced common faith and the established church. In particular, it has been argued that a range of competing religious institutions has reduced the power of religion in society.

2. **Bryan Wilson** argues that if **there are a number of denominations in society, each with its own version of the truth, they can at best only reflect and legitimate the beliefs of a section of the population. In this way, 'religious values cease now to be community values'**. Religion no longer expresses and reinforces the values of society as a whole and so ceases to perform its traditional function of promoting social solidarity.

3. **Berger and Luck Mann** make a similar point. Instead of one religious institution with a single, unchallenged view of the supernatural, there are now many with divergent views. **Berger** argue that the emergence of denominations weakens the influence of religion. No longer is a single 'universe of meaning' provided for all members of society. The continuing proliferation of sects has been interpreted by some researchers in much the same way as the spread of denominations. **It has been seen as a further fragmentation of institutional religion and therefore as evidence of the weakening hold of religion over society**.

4. **Peter Berger** sees the **continuing vitality of sects as evidence of a secular society**. He argues that belief in the supernatural can only survive in a sectarian form in a secular society. In order to maintain a strong religious belief and commitment, individuals must cut themselves off from the secularizing influences of the wider society, and seek out the support of others of like mind. The sect, with its close-knit community organization, provides a context where this is possible. From this viewpoint, the sect is the last refuge of the supernatural in a secular society. **Sects are therefore evidence of secularization**.

5. **Bryan Wilson** takes a similar view maintaining that **sects are 'a feature of societies experiencing secularization, and they may be seen as a response to a situation in which religious values have lost social preeminence'**. Sects are therefore the last outpost of religion in societies where religious beliefs and values have little consequence.

6. **Bryan Wilson** is particularly scathing in **his dismissal of the religious movements of**



**the young in the west, such as Krishna consciousness, which emerged during the 1960s in the USA. He regards them as ‘almost irrelevant’ to society as a whole claiming that, ‘they add nothing towards the culture by which a society might live’.** By comparison, methodism, in its early days as sects, provided standards and values for the new urban working class, which helped to integrate its. Members within the wider society. In addition, its beliefs ‘steadily diffused through a much wider body of the population’. The new religious movements show no such promise. Their members live in their own enclosed, encapsulated little worlds. There they emphasize ‘hedonism, the validity of present pleasure, the abandonment of restraint and the ethic of “do your own thing”’.

**7. Wilson is scornful of their ‘exotic novelty’ which he believes offers little more than self-indulgence, titillation and short lived thrills. He believes that movements which seek for truth in Asian religions and emphasize the exploration of the inner self, for example Krishna consciousness, can give little to western society. They simply ‘offer another way of life for the self-selected few rather than an alternative culture for mankind’.** Rather than contributing to a new moral reintegration of society, they simply provide a religious setting for ‘dropouts’. They do not halt the continuing process of secularization and are ‘likely to be no more than transient and volatile gestures of defiance’ in the face of a secular society.

### ❖ **The secularization of religious institutions:**

**1. To Herzberg, ‘authentic religion’ means an emphasis on the supernatural, a deep inner conviction of the reality of supernatural power, a serious commitment to religious teachings, a strong element of theological doctrine and a refusal to compromise religious beliefs and values with those of the wider society. This is just what Herzberg does not find in the established denominations in America? He claims that, ‘denominational pluralism, on the American plan means thorough-going secularization’. The major denominations have increasingly emphasized this world as opposed to the other world, they have moved away from traditional doctrine and concern with the supernatural, and they have compromised their religious beliefs to fit in with the wider society.** Because of this, they have become more like the secular society in which they are set.

**2. Despite this relatively high level of participation in religious institutions, Herzberg argues that it is directed by secular rather than religious concerns. Herzberg claims that the major denominations in America have undergone a process of secularization. They increasingly reflect the American way of life rather than the word of god. For the typical churchgoer, religion is ‘something that reassures him about the essential rightness of everything American, his nature, his and himself’.** But from Herzberg’s viewpoint, this has little to do with the real meaning of religion.

**3. Berger and Luckmann are in general agreement with Herzberg’s thesis. Luckmann argues that denominations were forced to undergo a ‘process of internal secularization’ in order to survive and prosper in a secular society.** If they retained their traditional teachings, their beliefs would no longer have a ‘plausibility structure’ in a changed society. They would appear irrational, irrelevant or contradictory in a new social setting. Denominations have adapted to society and their teachings have, therefore, remained ‘plausible’. However, this has required a sacrifice of considerable religious content.

**4. Peter Berger likens American religious institutions to commodities sold in the market place. A successful sales campaign means that “the “supernatural” elements are pushed into the background, while the institution is “sold” under the label of values congenial to secularized consciousness’.** Denominations have succeeded in attracting full houses ‘by modifying their product in accordance with consumer demands’ that is the demands of a secular society. This accounts for the differences in participation in organized religion between

Europe and America. In Europe, religious institutions have remained largely unchanged in the context of changing societies. The result is empty churches. In the USA, religious institutions have adapted to a changing society and the result is full churches.

5. **Herzberg's views on American religion** have been criticized by **Seymour M. Lipset**. He argues that there is some evidence to suggest that evangelical Christianity is growing at a faster rate than the traditional denominations. The debate on the secularization of religious institutions rests ultimately on the observer's judgment of 'authentic religion'. **Herzberg's** view may reveal as much if not more about his beliefs and values than it does about the nature of the religion in the USA.

There is little question among sociologists that considered as a long-term trend, religion in the traditional church has declined in most western countries – with the notable exception of the USA. The influence of religion has diminished much as nineteenth – century sociologists predicted it would.

➤ **Has the appeal of religion lost its grasp with the deepening of modernity? Such a conclusion would be questionable for a number of reasons:**

1. **First**, the present position of religion in Britain and other western countries is much more complex than supporters of the secularization thesis suggest. **Religious and spiritual belief remain powerful and motivating forces in many people's lives, even if they do not choose to worship formally through the framework of the traditional church.** Some scholars have suggested that there has been a move towards 'believing without belonging' (Davie)

– People maintain a belief in god or a higher force, but practice and develop their faith outside institutionalized forms of religion.

2. **Second**, secularization cannot be measured according to membership in main stream Trinitarian church by the communist leadership. This enthusiastic support for religion around the globe is, unfortunately, mirrored by religiously inspired conflicts as well. Just as religion can be a source of solace and support, it has also been and continues to be at the origin of intense social struggles and conflicts.

- **One can point to evidence both in favor of and against the idea of secularization. It seems clear that secularization** as a concept is most useful in explaining changes that are occurring within the traditional religion today- both in terms of the declining power and influence and in regard to internal secularizing processes affecting, for example, the role of women and gays. Modernizing forces in society at large are being felt within many traditional religious institutions.

- **Above all**, however, religion in the late modern world should be evaluated against a backdrop of rapid change, instability and diversity. **Even if traditional forms of religion are receding to a degree, religion still remains a critical force in our social world.** The appeal of religion, in its traditional and novel forms, is likely to be long- lasting. Religion provides many people with insights into complex question about life and meaning that cannot be answered satisfactorily with rationalist perspectives.

### ❖ **Religious revivalism (& secularization):**

1. **Religious revivalism** is term applied to mass movements which are based upon intense religious upheaval. **Periodic religious revivals which seek to restore commitment and attachment to the group** are a regular observable feature of religious traditions.

2. **Revivalism** happened in 18th century in western society among methodists. In India Arya samaj is one of the most important revivalist movements which were based on

**shudhi movement.** It aimed at converting Hindus back to the fold who had converted to other religions. This had profound impact on Hindu especially lower caste Hindus. They sought to other religions to improve their social status. They also gave equality to women especially in education.

3. One view shared by early sociological thinkers was that traditional religion would become more and more marginal to the modern world. Marx, Durkheim and Weber all believed that a process of secularization was bound to occur as societies modernized and became more reliant on science and technology to control and explain the social world.

**Secularization describes the process whereby religion loses its influence over the various spheres of social life.**

1. The debate over the secularization thesis is one of the most complex areas in the sociology of religion. In the most basic terms, there is disagreement between **supporters of the secularization thesis who agree with sociology's founding fathers and see religion as diminishing in power and importance in the modern world and opponents of the concept, who argue that religion remains a significant force, albeit often in new and unfamiliar forms.**

2. **The enduring popularity of new religious movements** presents a challenge to the secularization thesis. Opponents of the thesis point to the diversity and dynamism of new religious movements and argue that religion and spirituality remains a central facet of modern life.

3. **As traditional religions lose their hold, religion is not disappearing, but is being channeled in new directions. Not all scholars agree, however. Proponents of the idea of secularization point out that these movements remain peripheral to society as a whole even if they make a profound impact on the lives of their individual followers. New religious movements are fragmented and relatively unorganized; they also suffer from high turnover rates as people are attracted to a movement for some time and then move on to something new. Compared to a serious religious commitment, they argue, participation in a new religious movement appears little more than a hobby lifestyle choice.**

4. **Revivalism of Catholicism in case of America, glorified hindutva ideology in case of India are emerging as the major challenges to the pluralistic doctrine of modern society. Therefore Rodney Stark** rightly points out that religion is not only providing a source for integration. It is instrumental for the social division as well. Taking this view point into consideration one can offer a critic to **cometian argument** that in modern society use of science will continue for the decline of religion. In reality religion is a universal force, it appears in different forms in the history of human society differently influencing topolitical, social & cultural life of man in a multidimensional manner.

5. **In contemporary context** the rise of religious consciousness or the growth of religious revivalism is offering a major challenge to the pluralistic secular & egalitarian character of the civil society.

### ➤ **Causes of religious revivalism:**

1. New insecurities and alienation that arise out of migration and urbanization in a globalized world are driving more people to religion as a way of establishing their identities and validating their experiences

2. There is a revival of institutional religions across the world. In different parts of the world religion has become more visible, both in its institutional form and as an assertion of identity. This increasing prominence of religion and new forms of religious formations can be located in the social



psychology of communities and people who are undergoing socio-economic and cultural transitions.

3. One of these transitions is the unprecedented migration of communities and the increasing perception that there is socio-cultural and economic inequality across the world. There is an increasing sense of multiple layers and a process of alienation emerging out of multiple levels of 'dislocations' of the self, community and identity. The increasing trends of urbanization, of migrations within and beyond country borders, consumerism and the aggressive construction of images in the context of globalization of the media, have created a new sense of individual and collective insecurity and alienation.

4. However, the relative visibility of institutional religion may be due also to the increasing role of the 'image' industry, rather than true conversion or transformation of people from one faith to another. Religion has many manifestations and we often tend to confuse institutionalized religion with other aspects of religion (personal experience, belief, theology etc.).

5. The revival of institutionalized religion is partly due to the high visibility it has gained in the media explosion of the last ten years. As institutionalized religions are historically strong in terms of institutionalized resources (money, network, people, structures etc.) they can make greater use of the new media, particularly television, to acquire more visibility. The number of genuine Christians (in terms of personal experience of a preferred personal faith) might not have increased, but certainly TV marketing of faith has increased manifold. And the new visibility of 'images' can create new delusions and illusions of an accentuated religion without the necessary 'spiritual' transformation in the lives of people.

6. Then there are new insecurities arising out of social, economic and political transitions and the consequent feeling of alienation they engender. For example, there is enough evidence that those who belong to migrant communities tend to be more religious. The reasons could be partly sociological and cultural. The same way I feel happy to meet an Indian or south Asian in Oslo, a Sudanese would like to meet fellow Sudanese. The nodal points of such an identity network often tend to be religious venues. So, Tamil people residing abroad may come to know each other in a temple, Bangladeshis in a Bengali mosque etc. This is to do with relative marginalization (in terms of space, cultural comfort zone etc.) of migrant communities.

7. There are also economic and social insecurities that arise out of the tension of losing a job or being alone in a multicultural environment. These too add to the quest for a 'sense of belonging', and 'identity' gets accentuated when one feels marginalized in a given context. So many of the first generation of Malayalam migrants often feel more strongly about 'being a Malayalam' than those who live in Kerala. Hence the proliferation of Malayalam organizations in the gulf countries and elsewhere (and many literary awards and Malayalam blogs etc.). This also often takes a religious/denominational (caste, creed etc.) dimension among newly urbanized or migrant communities.

8. There is a new sense of alienation due to increased 'individuation', and the consequent feeling of being lonely and insecure. This has an age-related dimension —when one is too young (increased anxiety about jobs) and when one is into middle age (the fear of losing a job, falling sick etc.).

9. This sense of insecurity has something to do with the new consumerism and globalization of the economy, where expectations about oneself (as a consumer who would like to 'possess' certain comforts) and the consequent insecurity that emanates from the new 'hire and fire' culture of globalization creates new insecurity. So here too one often finds more young people and those who cross middle age tending to seek solace in new spiritual markets of various sorts — from Deepak Chopra to the tele-marketing of pop-gurus of various sorts.

10. In the case of countries and communities where there is a social disintegration of erstwhile collective institutional structures (e.g. tribal communities in Africa, or joint families, or the old neighborhood parish or temple) there is scope for new network-based identity formation. It is in such a space that networked religion and cell-churches grew exponentially. This process of social disintegration of erstwhile structures and the process of 'collective spaces of sharing' also happened

due to the unprecedented trend of urbanization and the movement/migration of people across countries and the world. So the shifts from joint families to post-nuclear families and tribal collectivism also created new forms of individuation and multiple forms of dislocation and resultant alienation.

11. It is in this context that institutionalized religions get transformed into 'spiritual' or 'solace' or 'feel-good' modules of customized products in the spiritual marketplace. This network mode of marketing helps to get consumers hooked on psycho-pills of well-packaged and customised religion of various sorts. In the context of Christianity, the charismatic movement and its network forms 'customized', 'personalized' and 'flexible' modules of packaged and commodified 'spiritualism' which is lapped up by a new market of relatively more 'lonely' and insecure people. That is one of the reasons why prosperity gospel is doing so well in relatively poor African communities in Africa as well as America. Prosperity gospels and 'healing' ministries and 'miracle' crusades all work on the new insecurities among people and communities who are in a state of transition.

12. We are in the midst of an unprecedented transition in the history of the world and in terms of sociological and cultural shifts. In such phases of transition insecurities and alienation take on new forms – social, economic and political. This also creates a new sense of inequality. At an individual level, the most convenient thing is to find one's own sense of 'belonging' by identifying with communities who have a shared sense of belonging. Such belonging can be based on colour, creed or religion. The biggest and oldest institutionalized structure of belonging happens to be institutionalized religion. Adapted to the new technology, media, and globalized network, institutionalized religion thus 'services' its new 'clients' by using the same old pill but with new modes of delivery.

13. Then there is also a new sense of political insecurity that emanates from 'accentuated identities' (majority and minority) that create a sense of insecurity (for example when young Australians find it difficult to find jobs, they may feel that Indians are stealing their jobs and then Indians begin to mobilize on the basis of being Indians).

14. Such accentuated identities often become defensive in the minority context. So, a young Muslim in Europe or UK may feel more 'Muslim' than the Muslim in Dubai. Christians in Europe may feel 'less Christian' than the Christians in India or China. The ongoing war in Afghanistan and Iraq, or the new political tensions with Iran or North Korea, are all a residual accentuation of the post-cold war period of the new geo-politics. And here, too, recent history is replayed in multiple forms of colonialism and imperialism.

15. Post-cold war politics moved from 'ideological' war to 'identity'-based contestations in many cases. The political economy of such identities gets accentuated among migrant communities. When identity, in its soft or hard form, tends to be the sub-text of macro and micro politics, ordinary people often fall back on the most convenient and accessible network of identity. So there is an increasing assertion of 'Muslim' identity even among those Muslims who have a rather moderate or liberal approach to religion. There is an assertion of 'Hindu' identity where Hindus are in a minority. Such assertions of identity are often cultural defense mechanisms that emanate from social and cultural insecurities and a sense of alienation.

## ❖ **Fundamentalism:**

Fundamentalism stresses the infallibility of a scripture (e.g. The Bible, the Granths, the Gita or the Quran) in all matters of faith and doctrine. The believers accept it as a literal historical record. The result is that sometimes a militant stand is taken by the followers, often preceded or followed by a desire for a separate homeland. At times, this too is taken as a prophecy in the scriptures.

1. Fundamentalism separates a certain community from the mainstream. However, society, by its various arms (the police, army and so on), attempts to suppress or eliminate the



fundamentalist. This is especially so when they begin acting outside of the law. Communalism is associated with eruption of violence and riots these conflagrations may not have any particular aim or goal (apart from communal ascendancy or supremacy).

2. Fundamentalism however is an organized all-encompassing movement which aims to promotion of society goals especially in the light of religious enshrinements. Operational strategy includes peaceful as well as war-like uses and movements.

3. **Social anthropologist Lionel Caplan (1987)** defines fundamentalism as a belief in the timelessness of sacred writings and a belief that such writings apply to all kinds of environments. In its popular usage, the term fundamentalism is applied to a wide array of religious groups around the world.

4. **The most important characteristic of fundamentalists** is their belief that a relationship with god, Allah, or some other supernatural force provides answers to personal and social problems. In addition, fundamentalists often wish to “bring the wider culture back to its religious roots.”

5. Fundamentalists usually conceive of history as a “process of decline from an original ideal state,” which includes the “betrayal of fundamental principles”.

6. Fundamentalists do not distinguish between what is sacred and what is profane in their day-to-day lives. Religious principles govern all areas.

7. It is not surprising then, that during times of rapid change, many people look for and find answers and calm in religion. Fundamentalism is perhaps the clearest example of this phenomenon. Yet, increasingly, religious responses to change are occurring in new and unfamiliar forms: new religious movements, cults, sects and ‘new age’ activities. While these groups may not ‘look like’ forms of religion on the surface, many critics of the secularization hypothesis believe that they represent transformations of religious belief in the face of profound social change.

8. **The strength of religious fundamentalism is another indication that secularization has not triumphed in the modern world.** The term fundamentalism can be applied in many different contexts to describe strict adherence to a set of principles or beliefs. Religious fundamentalism describes the approach taken by religious groups which call for the literal interpretation of basic scriptures or texts and believe that the doctrines which emerge from such readings should be applied to all aspects of social, economic and political life.

9. **Religious fundamentalists believe that only new view – their own – of the world is possible and that this view is the correct one: there is no room for ambiguity or multiple interpretations.** Within religious fundamentalist movements, access to the exact meanings of scriptures is restricted to a set of privileged ‘interpreters’ – such as priests, clergy or other religious leaders. This gives these leaders a great amount of authority – not only in religious matters, but in secular ones as well. Religious fundamentalists have become powerful political figures in opposition movements, within mainstream political parties (including in the United States) and as heads of state (for example in Iran).

10. **Religious fundamentalism is a relatively new phenomenon – it is only in the last two to three decades that term has entered common usage.** It has arisen largely in response to globalization. As the forces of modernization progressively undermine traditional elements of the social world – such as the nuclear family and the domination of women by men fundamentalism has arisen in defense of tradition.

### ❖ Aspects of fundamentalism:

1. **Fundamentalism as a concept was first used in 1910-1915 when anonymous authors published 12 volumes of literature called them ‘the fundamentals’.** In the early 20s the print media used this word with reference to conservative protestant group in North America.



These groups were concerned about liberal interpretations of the bible. **Alarmed by liberal interpretations the conservative insisted on some “fundamentals” of faith. These included belief in the virgin birth divinity, the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ and the infallibility of the scripture.** As mentioned these and other fundamentals were published in 12 pamphlets called the fundamentals between 1910-1915. **Thus began the specialized usage of the concept of “fundamentalism”.** Thus a fundamental movement is one which takes infallibility of a scripture as a basic issue and as a guide to life. Some fundamentalists add that there is no need to even interpret the scripture as meaning in it is self-evident. This often amounts to intolerance of any form of disagreement or dissent. This there is an apprehension that fundamentalists are narrow, and bigoted.

**2. T.N. Madan (1993) has pointed out that the word fundamentalism has gained wide currency in the contemporary world. According to him it refers to a variety of norms, values attitudes which either judge the fundamentalist or condemn them outright. This word is sometimes erroneously used in place of communalism. In fact the word fundamentalism has become a blanket term. That is to say that various fundamental movements across the world are actually not identical but differ in various ways. But they are linked by a ‘family’ resemblance.**

**3. Fundamentalist movements are of a collective character. They are often led by charismatic leaders who are usually men.** Thus the 1979 Iranian movement was led by ayatollah Khomeini, and the Sikh fundamentalist upsurge by Sant Bhindranwale (Madan). **Fundamentalist leaders need not be religious leaders.** Thus Maulana Maududi, founder of the Jamati Islami in India was a journalist. K.B. Hedgewar, founder of the rashtriya sewak sangh was a physician.

**4. The fundamentalists are a practical people and try to purge the way of life all impurities (religiously speaking).** They reject all corrupt lifestyles. An example of this is swami dayanands critique of the traditional, superstition filled way of life. Thus maududi criticized the present Muslim way of life as ‘ignorant’ and Bhindranwale talked of the ‘fallen’ Sikhs who shave off their beards, out their hair and do not observe the traditional Sikh way of life. **Thus fundamental movements are not only about religious and practices, but lifestyles generally.**

**5. Thus fundamentalist movements are reactive and response to what the person involved-the leaders and participants, consider a crisis.** The crisis calls for urgent remedies. The basic programme is presented as a return to the original tradition. That is to say to the contemporarily redefined fundamentals. Which cover the present-day needs. This usually involves a selective retrieval of tradition. The case of Dayanand illustrates this very well. He tried to evolve a semitized Hinduism in response to the challenge for conversion by Christian missionaries. He claimed that the Vedas were the only true form of Hinduism and his call was back to the Vedas. In Iran Khomeini developed an Islamic state based on the guardianship of jurists. Again Bhindranwale gave a selective emphasis to Guru Gobind Singh’s teaching rather than those of his immediate successors. Assertion of spiritual authority and criticizing the culture are two aspects of fundamentalism. A third crucial element is that of the pursuit of political power.

**6. The pursuit of political power is very important aspect of fundamentalism, for without it we would be presented with a case for revivalism.** The samajists were ardent nationalists in north India, and the movement had its political overtones. Again the RSS which has been described as cultural organization has had close links with political parties and contemporarily with the sangh parivar. This covers both cultural and political aspects of Hindu nationalism. This explains why fundamentalist movements often turn violent, and the ideology of secularism is rejected. They are totalitarian and do not tolerate dissent. However these movements also

perform a particular role in modern society which cannot be ignored. Thus an objective intellectual analysis should consider fundamentalism as a distinctive category. It is not theocracy or backward communalism.

**7. Politics, religion and education vs. fundamentalism:** the fundamentalists criticize the idea of separation of religion from politics and state. They say god is omnipotent and political rule comes under his domain, how can then the state be outside religious realm? **They insist on religious control on education important in schools and colleges.** The fundamentalists advocate boycott of modern state-run schools where teaching is not through traditional religious system. **The Muslim fundamentalists demand that all laws must be derived from the Koran and the Sunnah.** They suggest harsh punishments like amputation of hands and feet, public flogging etc. For crime done. **The American fundamentalists** suggest death penalty for murder adultery sodomy, rape, homosexuality, kidnapping, etc. **Fundamentalism is anti-science and denies the validity of human knowledge which is outside the religious realm.**

**8. Equality of religions vs. Fundamentalism:** the fundamentalists do not believe in the equality of all religions. They say how on false religions be treated as equal to the true religion. On the similar line, they oppose the concept of the unity of all religions. They are opposed to reason, rationalism, humanism and secularism. The fundamentalists are also opposed to the idea of sovereignty, democracy and constitutional government.

#### ❖ **Fundamentalism in relation to communalism:**

Communalism can best be described in the context of Indian scenario. Communalism developed in India through three stages:

- 1. First stage:** it began during the last quarter of 19th century. It was put forward that followers of a religion not only have religion in common but also political, economic, social and cultural interests. It led to the notion that in India, Hindu, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians form distinct communities and hence Indian nation is made up of these communities.
- 2. Second stage:** it began during the start of 20th century. The communists argued that followers of a religion have different economic and political interests to those of other religions. At the same time some liberal communalists argued that different religious people also have some common economic and political interests.
- 3. Third stage:** in this stage, the notion which permeated was that Hindu and Muslim could never live together. They can never form one nation. Actually, what was good for Hindus was bad for Muslims, what was good for Muslims was bad for Hindus and so on.

#### ❖ **Similarities between fundamentalism and communalism:**

1. Both attack the concept of separation of religion from politics and the state.
2. Both oppose unity of all religions.
3. Both advocate control over education.
4. Both believe in restoration of the past values and greatness.
5. Both share the notion that founding of religion led to the achievement of near-human perfection.
6. Both oppose secularism:

#### ➤ **Differences of perception:**

In a multi-religious society, a fundamentalist tends to be communal while communalists are not fundamentalists. As, in India, the Hindu mahasabha, the RSS, the BJP, the akali dal, etc. are communal

parties but are not fundamentalists.

1. Fundamentalists seriously urge for the actual revival of the pristine past whereas communalists though appeal, they are more focused on modern world.
2. Fundamentalists are deeply religious and put their entire ideology on religion whereas communalists use religion just to give political power.
3. Fundamentalists want to Christianize or Islamize or hinduige the whole world. Communalists just want to communalize their own society.

## ➤ **Fundamentalism in the global context:**

### **1. Fundamentalism in Iran :**

- In the 19th century in Iran, pahalvi dynasty was founded and with the help of Britishers, colonel Rajja Khan was made the king. Iran being on oil rich country attracted Britishers as they needed oil. For the purpose of exploitation of this resource, they employed their own men which erected dissatisfaction among Iranian masses. Meanwhile, America also joined and triangular co-operation developed with the support of British and America, king khan, started modernizing the state in which madrassa's and maqatab were put under the control of central administration.
- All such actions caused great disenchantment among many Iranian. To protect their interest they took shelter in the religious places. Under the guidance of Ayyatullah Khomeini, their collective action dethroned king khan and a new set up was created in which religion got a special place marking the beginning of Fundamentalism.

**2. In America:** Non-religious right movement in America: protestant fundamentalism: the motto of this movement was to spread the importance of protestant religion and to stop modern practices as they were highly vulgar. They were causing harm to national values and mobility. Their slogan was "bring back America again". This shows American fundamentalism.

### **3. Taliban regime:**

Afghanistan could be cited as the most recent example of fundamentalism. A lot of hardships were inflicted upon women. Entire regime was politically, economically and socially crippled only religion existed.

### **4. Pakistan:**

Fundamentalism kept on surfacing time to time in Pakistan but the some was to a large extent counterpoised by democratic government.

## **Conclusion**

The phenomenon of fundamentalism is not confined to one religion but is freely and widely found among Christians, Muslims, Jains, Hindu and Sikhs. Fundamentalists asks for return to the fundamental tenets of a religion, to its original formulations and meanings that were given to the religion in its first text. No interpretation is allowed. Any interpretation made should be wiped out. These texts are god's own words. Therefore, they are circular, unambiguous and changeless. For example, for Christian fundamentalists old and new testaments are god's own words, for Muslim fundamentalist Karan and Sunnah, for Hindus the Vedas, for Sikh the gurbabni. Infact, the fundamentalists regard any interpretation of such text as blasphemous act. Fundamentalists considers that the life should be governed by the religion as written in the tests. Gary north, one of the American fundamentalist said that bible contains solutions to all problems a person faces today in his/her daily. According to Abdul-Jawed Yasin, religion is the divine way drawn by god for man to solve his economic affairs, social affairs, political affairs, legislative affairs, psychological affairs, internal



affairs, external affairs and any other affair that it may have. A Muslim fundamentalist say “god’s final religion contains all the legislation required”.



# Religious communities in India

1. India is a pluralistic country. India is a land of unity in diversity therefore, people of every religion and language live in every part of the country hence, the Hindus, and the majority community in India is a minority community in some states.

2. **Government of India has notified 5 communities, Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists, Christians and Zoroastrians** as religious minorities at the national level. As per the census, population of the minority groups constitutes 17.17% of the total population of the country. On account of this the concept of minority has to be studied with great care. Here, we will discuss various aspects of this problem in brief.

3. **The international encyclopedia of social sciences** defines minority as a group of people differentiated from others in the same society of race, nationality, religion or language, who think of themselves as differentiated group with negative connotation. The constitution of India uses the term minority but nowhere defines it. The Supreme Court and various high courts have depended on the statistical criterion. Any community that does not constitute 50 per cent in a state is called a minority.

4. Almost all countries recognize religious and linguistic minorities. In any country religions groups may now be divided into linguistic groups and vice-versa. This phenomenon is known as cross cutting cleavage. Accordingly, a person may be a member of a religious minority yet of a linguistic majority or vice-versa. How such a person would behave depends on his or her interest from issue to issue. Minority groups are united by certain common features. They often organize themselves into a coherent group to demand such privileges from the state that will help to promote their religion, culture and language, so that they may stay alive and maintain their identity, not get absorbed by the majority.

5. **“A minority is a category of people singled out for unequal and inferior treatment simply because they are identified as belonging to that category.”**

6. Minority group refers to “any recognizable racial religious, or ethnic group in a community that suffers from some disadvantage due to prejudice or discrimination.

7. Jagnath Pothy has also listed out the defining features/properties of minority group. In his opinion, the minorities are:

- Subordinate in some way to the majority.
- Distinguishing from the majority on the basis of physical or cultural features.
- Collectively being regarded and treated as different and inferior on the basis of these features, and
- Excluded from the full participation in the life of the society.
- He further says, discrimination, prejudice and exclusion by the dominant group and self-segregation by the subordinate or minority constitute the basis for minority identification.
- The wish to preserve distinctive features of one's social and cultural life is an essential feature of a minority community. As a consequence there are always groups which are different from other groups in terms of language, religion etc. The dominant group tries to assimilate the minority groups. This attitude of the majority group generates a greater consciousness among the members of minority community. For preserving their separate identity.

8. Speaking about the concept of 'minority' in the Indian context, it can be said that the term has not been properly defined anywhere in the Indian constitution. But 'minority status' has been conferred on many groups.

9. According to the article 29 of the constitution any group living within the jurisdiction of India is entitled to preserve and promote its own language, script or literature and culture.

10. Article 30 states that a minority group "whether based on religion or language shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice."

**11. The preamble of the Indian constitution guarantees for all of its citizens justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. There is no discrimination against the minorities on any ground whatsoever.**

Minority is a term difficult to define with any degree of precision. It may refer to a relatively small group of people dominated by a majority. Population size is not the only feature of minority status. If a group is discriminated on the basis of religion, race or culture it can be considered a minority.

### ➤ Religious communities

1. India is a multi-lingual and a multi-religious country. Indian society is pluralistic in character from the religious and other point of view. Since a very long time people belonging to various religious communities have been living together in this nation. According to the 1931 census there were ten religious groups in India. These were Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Jews and other tribal and non-tribal religious groups. The census of 1961 listed only seven religious categories; Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and other religions and persuasions.

2. Though majority of the people living in this land are Hindus [79.80%], people belonging to other religious communities such as Muslims [14.23%], Christians [2.32%], and Sikhs [1.72%], Buddhists [0.70%], Jains [0.37%] and others [0.24%] are also living along with the Hindus by enjoying on par similar rights and opportunities. By virtue of their numerical strength the Hindus constitute the majority while the rest of the religious communities come under what is known as 'religious minorities'.

3. Hindus are much below 50 per cent in the west coastal area where Muslim and Christian population is largely concentrated. Hindus are also less numerous in Punjab where they are a minority accounting for 2-10% population at the district level in the tribal areas of the north east with a Christian dominant population, the proportion of the Hindu population ranges between 5-20%.

**4. Religion is really a complex phenomenon in India. For example, elements of Sanskrit and tribal religion are found in a mixed form at various levels. So is the interaction between the 'great', the 'little' tradition.** Integration of Sanskrit Hindu religion and tribal religion is also found. The Santhals, for example, observe several high caste festivals. This is also the case with the lower and 'untouchable' castes. Some tribals worship Shiva. M.N. Srinivas writes: "different tribes are Sanskritized in different degrees, and different sections of the same tribe may not be uniformly Sanskritized"

**5. Conversion to Christianity and Islam has been a controversial issue over the past couple of decades.** It is said that the members of depressed classes and tribals have converted to Christianity, Islam and Sikhism in various parts of the country; particularly in the 1920s and also after independence.

**6. A good number of tribals have accepted Hindu rituals and religious practices in Bihar, Bengal, Assam and other areas.** Thousands of Harijans have converted to Buddhism in Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra. Induced or forced conversion is certainly against the constitution of India and the law of the land there may be several factors responsible for change of religion; but it is certain that a number of people have changed religion to get free from religious orthodoxy.



**7. It has been reported that minority religions show a greater percentage of literacy than the majority religions.** Parsis, Jains, Jews and Christians have shown this pattern. With the exception of Christians, these communities are also more engaged in trade and business than Hindus and Muslims. A study reveals that the Parsis, Jews and Jains are “advanced” in business, though not diversified. Hindus and Muslims have a diversified occupational pattern because of their large numbers and spread all over the country. The minority groups are found in specific regions, sub-regions and cities, and therefore find themselves in an advantageous position. Syrian Christians, moplas, Parsis and some other groups have been benefited because of their strategic location in Kerala and Maharashtra.

## ❖ Secularism in India

1. As the area of scientific knowledge and technology widens, the area of religion shrinks. Some of its functions are taken over by other agencies. This process of shrinkage of religious beliefs and functions and emergence of wider use of science and technology is called secularization.
2. The process of secularism starts when institutions of society, in different functional areas, resist subservience to established religion and gain a measure of autonomy. In the process, the institutions and functionaries of religion lose their control over several fields of social activity such as politics and diplomacy, economics and trade, education and medicine and so on. This marks the ascendancy of civil authority. A total religious worldview, in which the entire framework of action has a religious orientation, undergoes a thorough modification.
3. A secular and modern society is not against religion as such, but it has to fight superstition and intolerance as well as bigotry and obscurantism. Separate religious identities are permissible so long as they do not question the legitimacy of larger national boundaries.
4. If religion does not bar the emergence of national consensus on goals of social action, does not inhibit national integration, and does not obstruct the adaptation of the larger society to the fact-changing world, the secular society will leave it undisturbed. Under these conditions diversity is to be welcomed. Areas of personal belief that are not inconsistent with the larger needs of society, will be upheld and protected by society.
5. But beliefs and practices that bring about discord and disharmony between different religious groups will require resolute action. Inter-religious harmony and consensus for progress would be an acceptable and attractive slogan to a secular society oriented to modernity. The meaning of secularism has been interpreted differently in different countries according to their prevailing traditions and culture. Like in India, secularism for Gandhi did not mean a religiosity but the spirit of religious tolerance which he postulated on the basis of a universalistic ethic of Hinduism itself.
6. In free India, secularism has survived despite its many difficulties. The Congress (INC) which came into power as a political party under the leadership of Nehru consistently advocated the need for India becoming a secular state.
7. Its constitution guarantees individual and collective freedom of religion and lays down that there should be no state discrimination on the ground of religion in public employment and education; it further provides that state as such must be neutral to religious goals and should not levy taxes for religious purposes or encourage religious teachings in educational institutions wholly financed by the state. Thus, constitution of India offers us a normative structure of secularism and democracy.
8. The Hindu community right from the beginning of the British rule took a more liberal attitude and more tolerance towards various social legislations which abolished many of its pseudo-religious customs by law. After independence, many legislations regarding reforms in customs of marriage, untouchability, inheritance etc., have been accepted without much opposition.
9. This may partly be explained by the universalistic nature of Hindu religion itself, but it is mainly due

to the emergence of an enlightened elite in the Hindu society with rational commitment to nationalism. The case of other major Indian community, the Muslims, has been fundamentally different this creates, misbalance the processes of secularism in India.

### ❖ Factors affecting secularism in India:

1. **State's intervention:** other inconsistency, in the process of secularism in India, has been the regular interventions of state in the religious matters, this particularly holds in case of management of temples and religious institutions, such as monasteries and monastic heads. Enactment in this sphere existed from the British times; for instance, in Bengal in 1810 and in madras in 1817 regulations were passed for regular administration of temple endowments by the government in 1960 GOI appointed a Hindu religious endowments commission to examine the administration of Hindu religious endowments and suggest to improve their management. Following the report in 1962, legislations have been enacted in many states like Assam, up, Punjab for the management of temple endowment and steps have also beentaken to rationalize the methods of learning and training of Hindu priests through theological colleges and encouragement of Sanskrit teachings.

2. **Role of political organizations:** in the political spheres too, many political parties and groups have continued to voice communal point of view on contemporary issues (like, Hindu sabha, ram rajya parishad VHP, shiv sena, Muslim league etc.). Some of them have even increased their political influence in many parts of the country by conducting violent movements against the killing of cows and by throwing them controversial issues like mandirand masjid and by intervoting the meaning of hindutva etc. Since secularism complies with universalities world-view, these contemporary movements in India do not harmonise with its value system.

3. **Common civil code:** art 44 of the constitution of India talks about common civil code, butso far it is not enforceable in the court of law. In civil matters, there are different laws for Hindus and Muslims because of different codes, in reference to marriage, divorce, inheritance, maintenance etc. Muslim personal board wants non-interference in this matter. Moreover the legislature and Supreme Court both have opposite views on it, which is visible in the famous Shah Bano case. The absent of common civil code weakens the tolerance levelwhich eventually opposes secularism.

4. **The issue of identity (ethnicity):** after independence, Sikh community apprehended erosion of their cultural identity owing to lack of proper representation in all spheres. Therefore they demanded a separate state. This process ended in hindu-sikh riot which grievously impacted secularism in India. Almost the same process is going on in Jammu andKashmir to diminish the level of secularism.

### ❖ How to maintain Secularism

#### 1. Role of state governments :

- Stern actions were taken against some organizations in Ajothya issue, especiallybajrang dal was banned
- In 1999, up religious places bill was passed in which it was ensured to put the religiousplaces under the control of the concerned district magistrate. However, owing to president's veto power it could not become an act.
- In 2001, up government banned simi because it was believed the simi was spreadingterrorism along with fundamentalism.
- After the bomb blasts in Mumbai on 11th July Maharashtra government banned simi.

2. **Role of the courts:** all citizens of India have got right of religion through art 25 in which propagation of religion is inherent, but it is limited on the following grounds-public order,public morality and public health. The following decisions of the courts in this regard are noteworthy here :

- Stainislas v/s M.P.: court (S.C.) Decided that propagation of religion does not include forced conversion. Conversion under temptation comes under it, the court pleaded,because it badly affects the public order and morality. Such activities would opposeseccularism.
- Mohd Hanif Qureshi v/s Bihar state: in this case it was pleaded that cow-slaughterhas not been considered a compulsory custom in Islam on baqreed thus it can be stopped by law in the interest of public order.
- In shah bano case, the Supreme Court ordered maintenance in the interest of publichealth.
- The courts have been tough against the wrong opponents of conversion. For example,Dara Singh and his accomplices were awarded life-imprisonment in stines-murder case.

3. **Role of civil society :** people comprising civil society make others awared about secularism through articles, reports, social activities, debates, conventions etc., which is highly beneficial and important for example, at many occasions there has been a debate on art 44 nationally.However, with the help of unbiased opinions of the people a consensus could be created through voting.

4. **Role of coexistence:** in his study in south India, M.N. Srinivas found that a strong tolerance between Hindus and Muslims has created a proper adjustment and so coexistence. They cooperate each other not only in the matters of economy but also in cultural and religious matter. That is why they keep on exchanging religious elements mutually which has narrowed down the social distance between them. Such kind of activities would definitelyeliminate the problem of communalism and fundamentalism from India if it is equally applied to other places as well.

### **Conclusion:**

Despite these problems secularism has been accepted widely as the national policy in India. As Donald e. Smith says, "It is meaningful to speak of India as a secular state, despite the existence of the problems.....India is a secular state in the same sense in which one can say that India is a democracy. Despite various undemocratic features of Indian politics andgovernment, parliamentary democracy is functioning and with considerable vigour.

Similarly, the secular state; is clearly embodied in the constitution, and it is being implemented in a substantial measure."

SAATH TO SUCCESS



# Problems of Religious Minorities in India

1. In spite of the provisions of the constitutional equality, religious minorities in India often experience some problems among which the following may be noted.
2. Prejudice and discrimination: prejudice and discrimination are found in any situation of hostility between racial and ethnic groups and divergent religious communities.
3. Prejudice refers to a 'prejudged' attitude towards members of another group. These groups are regarded with hostility simply because they belong to a particular group, and they are assumed to have the undesirable qualities that are supposed to be characteristic of the group as a whole.
4. Discrimination, on the other hand refers to an action against other people on the grounds of their group membership. It involves the refusal to grant members of another group the opportunities that would be granted to similarly qualified members of one's group.
5. Speaking in the Indian context, discrimination especially in providing opportunities to people of different communities is, not at all in practice. The preamble of the constitution itself declares that all people irrespective of their caste, class, color, creed sex, region or religion will be provided with equal rights and opportunities. Articles 15 (I) and 15(2) prohibit discrimination on grounds of religion.
6. Article 25 promises the right to profess, propagate and practice religion. It is clear that there is no legal bar for any religious community in India to make use of the opportunities [educational economic, etc.] Extended to the people. It is true that some religious communities [for example, Muslims] have not able to avail themselves of the opportunities on par with other communities. This situation does not reflect any discrimination. It only reveals that such communities are lagging behind in the competitive race.
7. As far as prejudices are concerned prejudices and stereotyped thinking are common features of a complex society. India is not an exception to this. Commonly used statements such as "Hindus are cowards and Muslims are rowdies and Christians are converters", etc., reflect the prevalent religious prejudices.
8. Common people who are gullible in nature never bother to find out the truth behind these statements, but are simply carried away by them. Such prejudices further widen the social distance among the religious communities. This problem still persists in India.
9. In general lack of distributive justice, differential accessibility to resources and cultural differences have been considered the main causes of inter-religious (minority) problems.

## ➤ Muslim

1. **Economic disparity:** leads to owner disparity like educational attitudinal and cultural disparities. During the period of industrial growth, the symbol of economic progress was the growth of cotton mills. In India cotton mills increased from 74 to 206 between 1883 and 1904 of all these only one mill owner was a Muslim, the rest were Hindus, Parsis, and Englishmen.
2. **Least beneficiaries of post-independence industries:** their upper class depended upon feudal mode of production and after independence became weaker and weaker as the Indian bourgeoisie emerged stronger. Both in UP and AP where the Muslim feudal classes were strong, they faced economic ruination with abolition of nizam's estate on the one hand and on the other, change in mode of production.
3. **Personal law:** Indian Muslims have deep distrust of those who try to tamper with it art 44 of

Indian constitution (common civil code) reads, "The state shall endeavor to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India." While Muslim leadership considers the state's non-interference in the community's personal law as the touchstone of Indian secularism. All India Muslim political convention passed a resolution in Dec 1970. The parliament had no right to interfere in the personal law-based on Quran and sunnat

4. **Urdu language:** increasing neglect Urdu is not even a second regional language. Further, Muslims argue that a mere legal recognition without adequate educational facilities for its speakers would create a dilemma. It's largely associated with one particular religion of India, Islam.

#### ➤ **Counter-argument:**

1. Everyone knows that people speak the language of the particular area in which they live. It has nothing to do with religion. The Bengali Muslim speaks Bengali, the madras Muslim speaks Tamil, Sindhi Muslim speaks Sindhi.
2. No special effort has been made to fulfil the needs of education and ranking of the major portion of Muslim population which belongs to the lower strata of society.
3. Muslims complain that in the text-books an over weightage is given to the Hindu mythological cultural and historical features.

#### ➤ **Sikhs**

Political problem: almost monopoly, the ideal of secularism was in saddle. The question was "how could the Sikhs retain their distinct and separate identity in a state nominally pledged to secularism but in actual practice increasingly Hindu?"

#### **Sikhs formed three important concessions for their constituency:**

(a) Service formula, (b) the parity formula, (c) the sachar formula

- Established numerical proportions of Hindus and Sikhs in the bureaucracy of the Punjab govt
- Number of Sikhs and Hindus in the ministry would be equal
- Provides details for the teaching of Punjabi and hindi in different areas of the Punjab.

After akali dal had won three post-independence elections within the then felt he had sufficient support to demand Punjabi sabha or a separate state or linguistic basis.

#### ➤ **Christian**

1. A number of up villages the economic status of Christians declined after their cooperative failed (united church of north Indian survey, 1968).
2. A Lucknow study showed, after independence, Christians of that city had the lowest per capita income of the ten communities.
3. Christian leaders report that the proportion of govt workers from the Christian community in civil service jobs is actually less than 2% of their population.

#### ➤ **Parsis**

The real problem confronting the community is not political but demographic- one of the steadily

declining numbers. In 1981 census it was recorded that there was a decline of 20,000 in 10 years.

### ❖ Possible reasons:

Inbreeding, reduction of fertility rate, late marriages, and out of community marriages. Moreover, the Marwaris in Assam, Bengal and Bihar are a minority, but they control trade and business in these states. They are treated as 'outsiders' and 'exploiters', 'sons of the soil' movement have been reported in Assam, Bengal Orissa and Karnataka, and subsequently Marwaris were looted, killed in Bolengir (Orissa). One of the serious implications of these movements is that people cannot move freely from one state or region to other state or regions.

### ❖ Other common problems of minorities

1. Problem of preserving distinct social and cultural life:
2. Problem of providing protection :
3. Problem of communal tensions and riots:
4. Problems related to language:
5. Problems related to religion:
6. Problems related to family and marriage.
7. Problems related to general life.
8. Problems of anomy.

### ➤ A Fact File of Minorities

1. Majority of Muslims live in the cities and almost all Jains live in cities, whereas the Sikhs, Buddhists and Christians live in village and towns.
2. The rate of procreation is the highest among the Muslims followed by Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and Christians in the same order. Christians have the lowest rate of reproduction.
3. A demographic study of the minorities shows that the ratio of women is less than men in almost all the religious communities, except Christians where the women are more than men. This ratio is the lowest among the Sikhs.
4. All main minorities try to retain their identity. Each one of them has a particular way of worship, different customs, traditions - diversity is visible in their day-to-day practical lives.
5. The religious diversity, plurality of Indian society has been creating situation of conflict from time to time. It is one of the main problems in present times as well and communal riots, fundamentalism and separatist tendencies are shaking the foundations of the Indian society.
6. After independence India has been acknowledged as a secular state. The constitution clearly states that all religions are equal and the followers of each religion have equal rights. No citizen of India shall be discriminated against on the basis of religions, caste, race or gender.
7. On the practical level govt has not been able to keep aloof from various religious matters and conflicts. Some leaders of religious communities have openly declared their religion is comprehensive and includes the social, religious and political aspects in its fold. Thus, they cannot keep politics out of it.



8. As per **K.L. Sharma** literacy rate among the Parsis, Jains, Jews and Christians is higher than others. With the exception of the Christians all of them are involved in trade and business.

In spite of all these diversities there is an underlying unity in the Indian society. In fact, religion has been our greatest treasure. The differences are linguistic and superficial. A deeper study of religions reveals the underlying oneness in them. As a matter of fact, the declaration of secularism is an acceptance of that intrinsic universality of all religions, especially of the Indian origin. The need of the hour is to realize the religiousness of all religions more than the outer layer of rituals and traditions, as spirituality, which is the predominant feature of Indian society, is above religions and communities.

There are so many examples in the Indian history related to minority communities who have made their significant contributions in the field of social cultural and political development. During the freedom movement minority groups were very active in their participation. Some of the examples of their participation are as follows:

1. Politically they have occupied the posts ranging from the president of the world's largest democracy to the chief justice of the supreme court of India.
2. Punjab, land of Sikhs, is the foremost producer of wheat as well as rice and they have made green revolution a great success.
3. In the field of cultural activities minorities have made their significant contributions. Urdu language is an excellent example of cultural tradition of Hinduism and Islam.
4. Many Muslims, Christians and the members of other minorities have also made their remarkable contribution to literature in other Indian languages. They have also contributed to classical music, dance and films etc.
5. By the efforts of minority communities, science, journalism and sports have become richer in India.
6. In the industrialization of the country, Parsis have played their splendid roles.
7. In this way, minority communities have made their best in promoting national integrity and co operations.

### ❖ **Minorities and Marginalization**

1. The constitution provides safeguards to religious and linguistic minorities as part of our fundamental rights. The term minority is most commonly used to refer to communities that are numerically small in relation to the rest of the population. However, it is a concept that goes well beyond numbers. It encompasses issues of power, access to resources and has social and cultural dimensions.
2. The Indian constitution recognized that the culture of the majority influences the way in which society and government might express themselves. In such cases, size can be a disadvantage and lead to the marginalization of the relatively smaller communities. Thus, safeguards are needed to protect minority communities against the possibility of being culturally dominated by the majority. They also protect them against any discrimination and disadvantage that they may face.
3. Given certain conditions, communities that are small in number relative to the rest of society may feel insecure about their lives, assets and well-being. This sense of insecurity may get accentuated if the relations between the minority and majority communities are fraught. The constitution provides these safeguards because it is committed to protecting India's cultural diversity and promoting equality as well as justice. The judiciary plays a crucial role in upholding the law and enforcing

fundamental rights. Every citizen of India can approach the courts if they believe that their fundamental rights have been violated. Now let us understand marginalization in the context of the Muslim community.

## ❖ **Muslims and Marginalization**

1. Muslims are 13.4 per cent of India's population and are considered to be a marginalized community in India today because in comparison to other communities, they have over the years been deprived of the benefits of socio-economic development. The data in the threetables below, derived from different sources, indicate the situation of the Muslim communitywith regard to basic amenities, literacy and public employment
2. Recognizing that Muslims in India were lagging behind in terms of various development indicators, the government set up a high-level committee in 2005. Chaired by Justice Rajindar Sachar, the committee examined the social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community in India. The report discusses in detail the marginalization of this community. It suggests that on a range of social economic and educational indicators the situation of the Muslim community is comparable to that of other marginalized communities like scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. For example, according to the report the average years of schooling for Muslim children between the ages of 7-16 is muchlower than that of other socioreligious communities.
3. Economic and social marginalization experienced by Muslims has other dimensions as well like other minorities, Muslim customs and practices are sometimes quite distinct from whatis seen as the mainstream. Some- not all- Muslims may wear a burqa, sport a long beard, wear a fez, and these become ways to identify all Muslims. Because of this, they tend to be identified differently and some people think they are not like the 'rest of us'. Often this becomes an excuse to treat them unfairly, and discriminate against them. This social marginalization of Muslims in some instances has led to them migrating from places where they have lived, often leading to the ghettoization of the community. Sometimes, this prejudice leads to hatred and violence.
4. In the case of the Muslim community there is a link between economic and social marginalization. The experiences of all these groups point to the fact that marginalization is acomplex phenomenon requiring a variety of strategies, measures and safeguards to redress this situation. All of us have a stake in protecting the rights defined in the constitution andthe laws and policies framed to realize these rights. Without these, we will never be able toprotect the diversity that makes our country unique nor realize the state's commitment to promote equality for all.

## ➤ **Some other problems of minorities**

1. The level of education among the minorities especially Muslims are very low.
2. The per capita income of the minorities is low and hence they are forced to live in dismalliving conditions and to lead avocations unsuited to them.
3. Economic opportunities are unavailable or when available the skills to tap them are missing.Their share in government services is very low.
4. They area made the victims of communal violence.

## ➤ **Approaches to the minority problem**

1. He can see the importance assumed by problems of minorities. It is not just related to numerical representation in a society. It is related to its oppression. Besides, it is to be precised on the basis of language, culture religion etc. In relation to that of a dominant group.
2. A whole lot of theories have been advanced about the nature, causes and implications of the problems of minorities. Some consider that ethnic identity among minority groups is natural and primordial. The scholar who stress the cultural differences say that prinordialism and linguistic differences among minority groups tend to generate conflict rather than co- operation among then.
3. Other scholars consider the utilitarian bent of minority groups and state that it is representing a power struggle. They feel that cultural factors are incidental to this process. These scholars feel that the minority identity should be seen in the context of development where each group tries to forge an identity in its struggle for scare resources various approaches have been adopted towards a solution of the minority while some suggested assimilation. Other suggested protection and for some the way out was to get rid of minoritycommunity itself, by persecution, deportation etc.

### ➤ **Assimilation:**

1. Earlier problem was essentially one of the conflict or religions and ethnic groups. But these days the problem is essentially related to national minorities. A nation state prefers if possible a homogenous religion, language, ethnic identify etc.
2. In the words of Clude, "the rise of the problem of minorities was a logical consequence of the ascendancy of nationalism. It is injected into politics this principle that the state should be nationally homogeneous and a nation should be politically united.
3. This gave rise to unrestricted control over given territory, uniformity of laws, languages, customs etc. Irrespective of differences. Homogeneity is never a reality thus there are constant efforts by the majority to assimilate the minority. The welfare and security of state were primary consideration. As a result the minority considerations. As a result the minority considerations were sidelined. It was not long before the various majority ethnic groups realized this kind of subjugation and fought for their rights.
4. The assimilation of heterogeneous groups through coercion is not so bluntly adopted states now prefer adopting others indirect methods. Discrimination is one such method

### ➤ **Discrimination and Annihilation:**

1. Due to minority's distinct characteristics, they are subjected to great deal of discrimination. The discrimination may be in form of fewer government funds for minority educational institutions etc. Very often they are discriminated to their social life.
2. They are subjected to ridicule and segregation which compels them to stay away from the majority. That is why we find that minority groups stay together in ghettos away from the majority Raganath Mishra commission and Sachar committee appointed by GOI dwell's deeply on this problem in India.
3. This discrimination infact leads to assimilation among some ambitions members of minority community. These people in order to advance themselves seek to rid themselves of their disabilities deliberately surrendering their typical features.
4. In case assimilation is found to be impossible. Some states resort to very direct method of annihilation where members of minority group are eliminated by expulsion or by massager. We can find this example in rohingya minority problem in Myanmar.



## ➤ **Tolerance and Equality:**

1. The policy of tolerance and fair treatment is adopted by many states when dealing with minority community. A great deal of leeway is given for preservation and pursuance of the minority's social and cultural life. Though the states may have in mind the assimilation of various minority groups as the final goal it will nevertheless adopt a tolerant attitude towards minority groups as long as the minority community do not cause any destabilizing effect on the nation state.

2. We find this policy of tolerance and fair, treatment guiding the provisions in our Indian constitution. The constitution establishes no state religion, guarantees equal opportunity to all irrespective of caste, creed and religion. Thus, we find that constitution envisages fair treatment for all however the question that has been asked many times is how are the minority group faring under constitution? It is true that there is equality on the paper, but is it really practiced?

3. It is contention of the many minority groups, also studies have revealed that these groups suffer a great deal of discrimination in social life, in securing job, in getting funds for educational institutions, in their social interaction and so on. In any case a great deal seems to depend on the bargaining power a particular disadvantaged group has. Some are at disadvantage in their efforts to bring to state's notice that certain of their socio-cultural rights needs protection.

### ❖ **PM's new 15 point programme for minority welfare**

The government has announced prime minister's new 15-point programme, for the welfare of minorities in India. The programme is to be executed by the ministry of minority affairs. Under the programme, students belonging to minority communities in the country i.e.

Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Buddhist, and Parsis could be able to get benefits specified under the scheme.

## ➤ **Programmes**

1. Equitable availability of ICDS services
2. Improving access to school education
3. Greater resources for teaching Urdu
4. Modernizing madarsa education
5. Scholarships for meritorious students from minority communities.
6. Improving educational infrastructure through the Maulana Azad education foundation.
7. Self-employment and wage employment for the poor.
8. Upgradation of skill through technical training.
9. Enhanced credit support for economic activities.
10. Recruitment to state and central services.
11. Improvement in condition of slums inhabited by minority communities.
12. Prevention of communal incidents
13. Prosecution for communal offences.
14. Rehabilitation of victims of communal riots.

## ➤ **Significance of the new programme**

1. The new programmes will go a long way in improving the conditions of minorities.
2. By improving education and exposing minorities to modern education, the programme will lead to skill development and skill improvement among the minorities which will ultimately make them suitable for the modern jobs available in the country and abroad.
3. Their economic conditions will be improved.
4. The programme clearly talks about the rehabilitation of the victims of communal violence, which has been a serious problem in India.

## ➤ **Constitutional safeguards to minorities**

In India, the national constitution of 1950 or any other constitutional document does not define the word 'minority'. The constitution only refers to minorities and speaks of those "based on religion or language". In the constitution of India, the preamble (as amended in 1976) declares the state to be "secular", and this is of special relevance for the religious minorities. Equally relevant for them, especially, is the prefatory declaration of the constitution in its preamble that all citizens of India are to be secured "liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship and "equality of status and of opportunity."

The Constitution of India has provided two types of safe-guards -general and specific to safeguard various interests of the minorities. In the first category are those provisions that are equally enjoyed by both groups. The provisions ensure justice- social economic and political equality to all. The second category consists of provisions meant specifically for the protection of particular interests of minorities.

1. People's right to "equality before the law" and "equal protection of the laws";
2. Prohibition of discrimination against citizens on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth;
3. Authority of state to make "any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens" (besides the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes);
4. Citizens' right to "equality of opportunity" in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state – and prohibition in this regard of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.
5. Authority of state to make "any provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in favor of any backward class of citizens which, in the opinion of the state, is not adequately represented in the services under the state;
6. People's freedom of conscience and right to freely profess, practice and propagate religion –subject to public order, morality and other fundamental rights;
7. Authority of state to make law for "regulating or restricting any economic financial political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice", and for "providing for social welfare and reform";
8. Authority of state to make laws for "throwing open" of Hindu, Sikh, Jain or Buddhist "religious institutions of a public character" to "all classes and sections of the respective communities";
9. Sikh community's right of "wearing and carrying of kirpans" ;

10. Right of “every religious denomination or any section thereof – subject to public order, morality and health- to establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes, to. “manage its own affairs of religion”, and own and acquire movable immovable property and administer it “in accordance with law”;

11. People’s “freedom as to payment of taxes for promotion of any particular religion”;

12. People’s “freedom as to attendance at religious instruction or religious worship in educational institutions” wholly maintained recognized or aided by the state;

13. Right of “any section of the citizens” to conserve its “distinct language, script or culture”

14. Restriction on denial of admission to any citizen, to any educational institution maintained or aided by the state, “on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them”;





15. Right of all religious and linguistic minorities to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice; and

16. Freedom of minority-managed educational institutions from discrimination in the matter of receiving aid from the state.

➤ **Part IV of the constitution of India, containing non-justifiable directive principles of state policy, includes the following provisions having significant implications for the minorities:**

1. Obligation of the state “to endeavor to eliminate inequalities in status, facilities and opportunities “amongst individuals and groups of people residing in different areas or engaged in different vocations;

2. Obligation of state to “endeavor to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India”;

3. Obligation of state “to promote with special care” the educational and economic interests of “the weaker sections of the people” (besides scheduled castes and scheduled tribes; and

4. Obligation of state to “take steps” for “prohibiting the slaughter of cows and calves and other milch and draught cattle”.

➤ **Part IV-A of the constitution, relating to fundamental duties, applies in full to all citizens, including those belonging to minorities and of special relevance for the minorities are the following provisions in this part.**

1. **Citizens’ duty to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India “transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; and**

2. **Citizens’ duty to “value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture”. Some other provisions of the constitution having special relevance and implications for the minorities are :**

3. **Official obligation to pay out of the consolidated funds of the states of Kerala and tamilnadu**

4. **6.5 And 13.5 lakh rupees respectively to the local “dewasom funds” for the maintenance of Hindu temples and shrines in the territories of the erstwhile state of Travancore-cochin;**

5. **Special provision relating to the language spoken by a section of the population of any state;**

6. **Provision for facilities for instruction in mother-tongue at primary stage;**

7. **Provision for a special officer for linguistic minorities and his duties;**

8. **Special provision with respect to naga religious or social practices, customary law and procedure, and “administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according tonaga customary law.”**

9. **identical special provision for the mizos; and**

**10. Provision relating to continuation in force of pre-constitution laws “until altered or repealed or amended by a competent legislature or other competent authority”**

➤ **Part III of the constitution gives certain fundamental rights. Some of these rights are common to all the citizens of India including minorities. These rights are enshrined in –**

1. Article 14: this ensures equality before law and equal protection of law
2. Article 15: this prohibits discrimination on any ground i.e. Religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth.
3. Article 21: no person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty
4. Article 25: this ensures freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion.
5. Article 26: this ensures a right to manage religious institutions, religious affairs, subject to public order, morality and health.
6. Article 29: gives minorities a right to conserve their language, script or culture. It provides for the protection of the interests of minorities by giving them a right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. The state is directed not to discriminate against minorities institutions in granting aid.
7. Article 350A: directs the state to provide facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education.
8. Art 164(1): according to this article in states of Bihar, MP and Orissa there shall be a minister in charge of tribal welfare who may in addition be in charge of the welfare of the scheduled castes and backward classes.
9. Art 244(1): regarding administration of scheduled areas and tribal areas - (1) the provisions of the fifth schedule shall apply to the administration and control of the scheduled areas and scheduled tribes in any state other than the state of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. (2) The provisions of the sixth schedule shall apply to the administration of the tribal areas in the state of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.
10. Art 244(A): formation of an autonomous state comprising certain tribal areas in Assam and creation of local legislature or council of ministers or both thereof. Parliament may by law from within the state of Assam an autonomous state comprising (whether wholly or part) all or any of the tribal areas.
11. Art 275: provided that there shall be paid out of consolidated fund of India as grants-in-aid of the revenues of a state such capital and recurring sums as may be necessary to enable the state to meet the costs of such schemes of development as may be undertaken by the state with the approval of the govt of India for the purpose of promoting the welfare of the scheduled tribes in that state or raising the level of administration of the scheduled areas therein to that of the administration of the rest of the areas in that state. Provided further that there shall be paid out of the consolidated fund of India as grant-in-aid of the revenues of the state of Assam sum capital and recurring.
12. Art 330: reservation of seats for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in the house of people.
  - Seats shall be reserved for scheduled castes.
  - The scheduled tribes except the scheduled tribes in the autonomous districts of Assam.
  - The scheduled tribes in the autonomous districts in Assam.
13. Art 332: reservation of seats for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in the legislative assemblies of the states.

- Seats shall be reserved for the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes (except the ST's of autonomous districts of Assam) in the legislative assembly of every state.
- Seats shall be reserved also for the autonomous districts in the legislative assembly of the state of Assam.

14. Art 334: reservation of seats and special representation in legislative assemblies and house of people to cease after fifty years.

15. Art 335: claims of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes to service and posts—the claims of the members of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes shall be taken into consideration consistently with the maintenance of efficiency of administration in the making of appointments to service and posts in connection with the affairs of the union or of a state.

16. Art 338: national commission for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes

17. Art 339: control of the union over the administration of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

18. Art 340: appointment of a commission by the president to investigate the conditions of backward classes.

➤ **Art 341: power of the president to specify the castes, races or tribes or posts of or groups within castes, races or tribes as scheduled castes.**

Art 342: power of the president to specify the tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribes or tribal communities as scheduled tribe.

Art 350(a): facilities for instruction in mother tongue of a minority group.

Art 350(b): special officer for linguistic minorities.

SAATH TO SUCCESS