



## IMPACT OF RELIGION ON INDIAN SOCIETY: A STUDY WITH HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

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### ABSTRACT

According to Wikipedia a religion is an organized collection of beliefs, cultural systems and world views that relate humanity to an order of existence .However the word religion is sometime used as faith, and sacred believes also for duties of an individual .In brief we can state that it has multi-dimensional aspects .From ancient period man has been searching real meaning of word religion. It has absurd meaning for someone it is code of conduct and for another group it is way of living life.We can say that religion is perspective of an individual to search of an invisible controlling power of universe which we have considered as God a kind of supernatural power. India is birth place of many religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. In fact India has gifted the world the precious thing spiritualism; it is kind of spiritual journey which embodies self spiritual emancipation.

In India above mentioned religions have played vital role on the structure of society. Various religions have bestowed it with tremendous cultural heritage, ethical values such as love, peace, tolerance and non-violence. Four Vedas Rig-Veda.Yajur-veda, Samveda and Atharva- Veda, Upanishdas, Bhagavadgeeta, Puranas and literature of Buddhism and Jainism and also Sufi traditional literature give us message of humanity .Indian subcontinent had the roots of spiritual atheism which is being known as ancient ,Indian phlisophy.In the past our society witnessed mixture of occult ideas of spiritualism which impressed the world .Western religious philosophy insisted upon excessive materialism but Indian philosophy is the combination of materialism and spiritualism. Swami Vivekananda strongly advocated in Chicago religious conference which was held on 1893 that there should be balanced combination of materialism and spiritualism for welfare of society it is the essence of Indian society. Ramayana and Mahabharata are two epics which are one of the precious heritage of the world both these scared epics which have the impact on our society they not only teach us adherence of duty but also overall balanced behavior of society. Mahabharata one of the oldest epic of the world possibly reflects the state of affairs from the 10<sup>th</sup> century B.C. to the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. originally it consisted of 8800 verses and was called Jaya Samhita or the collection dealing with victory.Bhagvatgeeta which is gift of Mahabharata. It has the largest impact on Hinduism it teaches not only adherence of duties but is kind of psychoanalytical therapy which can boost the morale of an individual.Upanishdas and Arnayakas in the later Vedic period were kind of revolt against Vedas in brief we can say that these sacred books have imbibed humanism on the Indian culture . Besides philosophy of Hinduism, Buddhism also has made strong impact on Indian society. It made an important impact on society by keeping its doors open to women and sudras .Since both women and sudras were placed in the same category by Brahmanism. Their conversion to Buddhism freed them from feeling of inferiority. Jainism also has laid its print on Indian Society .Through their linguistic revolution of languages they enriched treasure of Indian languages. The Prominent objective of this study is to highlight

*impact on various religions on Indian society. This is an attempt to study an impact of religions which were born in Indian soil*

## INTRODUCTION

Religion is an integral part of human society .In fact religion has played major role in the development of civilization .From antiquity till the modern age of scientific progress religion is an energy of living organism of human life .We cannot imagine society without religion .But religion has proved itself as double edged weapon ,in the modulation of society. In India religion remains crucial issue .Various religions in India have played their major role to form the shape of Indian society .The prominent objective of this paper is to throw light on the role of various religions to create largest impact on Indian society.

Before going to evaluate the contribution of major religions on Indian society, it should be necessary to define religion. It is difficult to define religion exactly, because religion is an abstract concept. However for our purpose we can define religion as code of conduct for the welfare of society. According to Wikipedia *a religion is an organized collection of beliefs, cultural systems and world views that relate humanity to an order of existence* .However the word religion is sometime used as faith, and sacred believes also for duties of an individual .In brief we can state that it has multi-dimensional aspects .From ancient period man has been searching real meaning of word *religion*. It has absurd meaning for someone it is code of conduct and for another group it is way of living life. We can say that religion is perspective of an individual to search of an invisible controlling power of universe which we have considered as *God* a kind of supernatural power. India is birth place of many religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. In fact India has gifted the world the precious thing spiritualism; it is kind of spiritual journey which embodies self spiritual emancipation.<sup>1</sup>

In India above mentioned religions have played vital role on the structure of society. Various religions have bestowed it with tremendous cultural heritage, ethical values such as love, peace, tolerance and non-violence. Four Vedas Rig-Veda, Yajur-veda, Samveda and Atharva- Veda, *Upanishdas*, *Bhagavadgeeta*, Puranas and literature of Buddhism and Jainism and also Sufi traditional literature give us message of humanity. Indian subcontinent had the roots of spiritualism which is being known as ancient, Indian philosophy. In the past our society witnessed mixture of occult ideas of spiritualism which impressed the world .Western religious philosophy insisted upon excessive materialism but Indian philosophy is the combination of materialism and spiritualism. Swami Vivekananda strongly advocated in Chicago religious conference which was held on 1893 that there should be balanced combination of materialism and spiritualism for welfare of society it is the essence of Indian society. Ramayana and Mahabharata are two epics which are one of the precious heritage of the world both these sacred epics which have the impact on our society they not only teach us adherence of duty but also overall balanced behavior of society. Mahabharata one of the oldest epic of the world possibly reflects the state of affairs from the 10<sup>th</sup> century B.C. to the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. originally it consisted of 8800 verses and was called *Jaya Samhita* or the collection dealing with victory. *Bhagvatgeeta* which is gift of Mahabharata. It has the largest impact on Hinduism it teaches not only adherence of duties but is kind of psychoanalytical therapy which can boost the morale of an individual.<sup>2</sup> *Upanishdas* and *Aranyakas* in the later Vedic period were kind of revolt against Vedas in brief we can say that these sacred books have imbibed humanism on the Indian culture . Besides philosophy of Hinduism, Buddhism also has made strong impact on Indian society. It made an important impact on society by keeping its doors open to women and sudras .Since both women and sudras were placed in the same category by Brahmanism. Their conversion to Buddhism freed them from feeling of inferiority. Jainism also has laid its print on Indian Society .Through their linguistic revolution of languages they enriched treasure of Indian languages. The Prominent objective of this study is to highlight impact on various religions on Indian society. This is an attempt to study an impact of religions which were born in Indian soil. In Mahabharata religion has defined as यः धारयती सः धर्मः<sup>3</sup>

## 2) OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- i) The major objective of the present study is to analyze an impact of major religions on Indian society
- ii) To give origin and brief history of the development of various religions those are related with Indian culture.
- iii) To give contribution of religions to change socio-cultural scenario of India
- iv) To give scope for the discussion of an advantages and disadvantages those have influenced socio-cultural atmosphere of India
- v) To elaborate moral values of and ethics for the solution of many problems those have created due to globalization.

## 3) SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study has typical significance .Because in our age we are facing several problems in technologically advanced society blind adherence of materialism is gradually demolishing our familial system .With the adoption of ethical values from various Indian religions, we can inculcate ethical values in young generation ,it will definitely prove effective for sustainable economical development.

## 4)SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the present study is large but we have made it brief and limited .This study tries to explore the contribution of major religions for the socio-cultural development of Indian society .As well as it studies advantages and disadvantages of impact of various religions on Indian society.

## 5) METHODOLOGY

This paper is theory based .Secondary data has been taken from various articles and books.

## 6) IMPACT OF ANCIENT HARRAPAN CIVILIZATION AND CONCEPT OF RELIGION ON INDIAN SOCIETY

Indian society Harappa Civilization is one of the ancient civilizations in India. It is also known as Indus or the Harappa culture .It arose in the north-western part of the Indian subcontinent.It had its own concepts and ideas about religion, Influence of Harrappan culture prominent on the Hinduism, as well as on Buddhism and Jainism,

In the excavation of the Harrapan culture numerous terracotta figurines of women have been found. The Harrappans therefore looked upon the earth as a fertility goddess and worshipped her in the same manner as the Egyptians worshipped the Nile goddess Isis .But it does not prove that they were matriarchal people like the Egyptians.In Egypt the daughter inherited the throne of property but yet it has not proved that Harrapan society is, matriarchal. It is remarkable fact that concept of mother goddesses came from Harrapan culture In the sixth century A,D. various mother –goddesses such as Durga,Amba,Kali ,Chandi,etc.,came to be regarded as goddesses in the puranas and in the Tantra literature. In course of time every village came to have its own separate goddess.<sup>4</sup>

One of the salient features of the Harappans that in excavation of this ancient civilization various images have been found .The male deity is represented on a seal. This seal recalls us the traditional image of *Pasupati Mahadeva*.It has served as vehicles for god's .Because in later Hinduism every god is supposed to have his own conveyance for his movements. Another impact of this civilization that the numerous symbols of the phallus and female sex organs made of stone have been found in Harappa. This phallus worship which started in the days of worship in Hindu society.

The people of this Civilization were worshipper of nature the picture of god with *papal* has been found on the seal of stone this tree continues to worshipped to this day. Animals were also worshipped in Harappan times and many of them are represented on seals. This animal worship has been continued in Hinduism .The inhabitants of the Indus region worshipped gods in the form of trees, animals and human beings .But the gods were not placed in temples. It was might possible that Harrapans believed ghosts and evil forces were harming them and therefore they used amulets against them<sup>5</sup>

### 7) IMPACT OF VEDIC CIVILIZATION ON INDIAN SOCIETY.

It is supposed that a little earlier than 1500 B.C the Aryans appeared in India .In this period kinship was the basis of social structure and man was identified by the clan to which he belonged. The people were attached to the tribe, since the territory or the kingdom was not yet established. It seems that in this period family was large unit. Because it was patriarchal society people desired for the birth of son .In Rig Veda no desire is expressed for daughters. Women could attend assemblies .They could offer sacrifices along with their husbands .The institution of marriage was established, although symbols of primitive practices survived .We also notice the practice of levirate and widow remarriage in Rig Veda .There are no examples of child –marriage and the marriageable age in the Rig Veda seems to have been 16to 17 Aryans worshipped natural forces as god .Wehave also found some examples of female divinities such as Aditi and Ushas but they were not prominent due to the patriarchal set up of Aryan society.

In the later Vedic phase society became divided into social classes such as brahmanas ,rajanyas ,vaisyas and sudras .This demarcation caused for rigid caste system .It also created problem of untouchability.<sup>6</sup>

### 8) IMPACT OF BUDDHISM ON INDIAN SOCIETY

Buddhism taught people not to take things for granted but to argue and judge them on merits. .The place of superstition was taken by logic.This promoted rationalism among people. In order to preach their doctrines of their religion the Buddhist wrote new type of literature .They enriched *Pali* language by their writings With its emphasis on non-violence Buddhism boosted cattle wealth of the country. In brief we can say that Buddhism had great impact on our society it has taught us moral and democratic values which is an integral part of Indian civilization.<sup>7</sup>

### 9) IMPACT OF JAINISM ON INDIAN SOCIETY

Jainism taught five doctrines (1) Do not commit violence, (2) do not speak a lie (3) do not steal (4) do not acquire property (5) observe continence.

Apart from this doctrines Jainism also have laid major impact on Indian society.Jainism made revolt against the evils of the varna order and the ritualistic Vedic religion. Jainas in their early period of evolution discarded Sanskrit language. They adopted Prakrit language of the common people to preach their doctrines .They wrote their literature in Ardhamagadhi. many regional languages developed out of prakrit languages ,Particularly Sauraseni, out of which grew the Marathi language .A large portion of Jaina literature has been not yet published. In early medieval times the Jainas also made good use of Sanskrit language and wrote many texts in this language .They also contributed to the growth of Kannada, in which they wrote extensively.<sup>8</sup>

### 10) RELIGION AS DOUBLE-EDGED WEAPON FOR SOCIETY

Religion proves itself as the medium of progression for an individual as well as destruction .In this sense it is double edged weapon .Extremists in every religions have misused religious principles for riots and communal violence. Really it is curse for our society. Fake sages and so called saints have made religion a medium of profit.

In our society though various religions have constituted an atmosphere of tolerance .But barbaric incidents of riots have laid stain on the religions. Crimes rate has been increased due to superstitions which have created by some anti-social elements .This is concerning factor for our socio – cultural life. But the picture is not so worst because basic structure of Indian society is based on truth, love non-violence and fraternity, it has made our country as peculiar land of various religions which are living peacefully together.

### 11) CONCLUSIONS

- 1) This study shows that India has glorious religious culture.
- 2) All the religions in India give the message of love and humanity.

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- 3) Religions have enriched our society with ethical values those can proved effective to fight with problems which globalization have created.
  - 4) Preaching of many religion can prove psychological remedy for mental disorder and psychological diseases.
  - 5) Moral values can be re-established in our society with the study of good principles from every religion.

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