

SOCIOLOGY
OF
RELIGION

1

Definitions and Approaches

Introduction

Ever since man evolved and developed an understanding of things around him and his own self, he could feel the power of something which controlled him which we call 'divine'.

Religion is man's effort to seek God who is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient. The way religion confronts the individual with the most momentous life can present. It calls the soul to the highest adventure it can undertake, a proposed journey across the jungles, peaks and deserts to the human spirit. The call is to confront reality, to master the self.

Q1. Define the scope of religion in sociological perspective.

Or

Discuss the sociological perspective on religion.

[Dec-2007, Q.No.-7]

Or

Explain the significance of religion in society.

[June-2010, Q.No.-1]

Ans. The scope of religion in sociological: The ancient period had its shruti and smriti tradition. Life was nearer nature and its elemental forces became subject matter of these compositions. The Greek and the Indian thinkers even conferred divinity on nature.

Religion as a social force exerted influence on both the preliterate and literate societies. Its teachings and modes of worship got spread far and wide. The source of the early ways of remembering them consisted of hymns and Pontiac expressions that could be sung, at times in groups. These made religious performances attractive. A few story tellers could

produce some dramatic effects in and through the Hari Katha. The devotional compositions of Nanak and Kabir were used to good effect.

Groups of people began to identify themselves with the Sun, the Moon and Fire as the Kshatriya lineages identified their ancestry. Among the tribal's there were references to animals, like the Crow, the Eagle, the Kangaroo; in India, people used totemic connections with the snake, lion, deer etc. The totem represented the clan, or embodied its spirit. Water, earth, and fire were raised to that status, as also places like river, hills and mountains. So we have a Kailash Parvat, the sacred Ganga, and lakes and pious connections. In praise of these places, numerous songs and stories have come about. The great epics of India are described in various forms as the story of the Rama or Krishna; with ideas of good and evil, of gentleness and cruelty, of saints and devils expressed dramatically. Books embodying the quintessence of devotion and glory of God are composed in literary styles. Almost everything worth knowing, preserving and being passed on from generation to generation seems to carry a religious flavour. Even discussions among the best of minds revolve round the true meaning and import of the text. Not surprising therefore the first formal schools took the form of mission schools, madarsas, or ashrams seminaries, and the intellectuals dealing with various forms of knowledge and its application come from such centres. Remembered knowledge, written and later published texts come into vogue. In and through these institutions developed grammar of various languages, styles of expression, methods of reasoning and elements of scientific pursuits. In a sense for the early and both preliterate and literate, things worth knowing about man and nature and the supernatural, all combined into the broad sphere of religious enterprise, if one may use that phrase. Religion was all pervasive, and the soul of society, as Durkheim put it. Participation in collective activities generated a sense of group solidarity and a force different from unconnected actions of sociological religion.

Q2. Outline the secular approaches to religion.

Ans. Secular approaches to religion. In Germany quite a few scholars found their parents getting converted to Christianity and the second, generations of the like of Max Weber and Karl Marx found themselves that category.

A few events and movements that preceded them need to be recalled. the nineteenth century Europe, there was a general mistrust of the Jews and yet, they had great scholarly traditions and their material success had created a lot of jealousy against them which almost expressed itself in racial terms.

Durkheim lived on the border of France and Germany, and he too was brought up in a Jewish family. In his school days, this bright student was often by others to becoming a trained priest. The loss of the territory to Germany in 1871 and of his father prompted Durkheim to move to Paris and he became an agnostic, that is a person not practicing any faith. Thus the nature of religions become even more significant. The Republic was normally opposed to the interests of the combined monarchs and their families, the nobility and the Church. The Republic was brought to end, and the third Republic in France took the shape of Napoleon-II after the defeat of France in the War, the despotic rule of Napoleon-II was a stake in making the Republican institutions of education, army, and education qualitatively better than previous ones. Durkheim's help was taken to improve secular basis of education. He played his part in training qualified teachers; and in the field of sociology of promoting scientific studies of social phenomena. He passed on some views on the relative significance of science and religion in the relative significance of social affairs of that a little later.

In the middle of the twentieth century, Merton commented upon the intellectual participation in the life of the tribal peoples and the intellectual dealing with various forms of knowledge and its application come from such centres. Remembered knowledge, written and later published texts come into vogue. In and through these institutions developed grammar of various languages, styles of expression, methods of reasoning and elements of scientific pursuits. In a sense for the early and both preliterate and literate, things worth knowing about man and nature and the supernatural, all combined into the broad sphere of religious enterprise, if one may use that phrase. Religion was all pervasive, and the soul of society, as Durkheim put it. Participation in collective activities generated a sense of group solidarity and a force different from unconnected actions of sociological religion.

Persons treated religion as a repository of the values of society. These provide the basis for legitimization of rules of conduct and discipline, the very institution of law. Such modes of resolving disputes in a society enabled the polity to function and achieve common goals of the society and these aided the manner in which the economy of the society got organized to take use of the natural resources through adaptation. In the famous paradigm of social system it is to this last function (Latency) that religion belongs. In terms of sectors of a system, these are represented by economy, polity, legal arrangements and religion.

Q3. Write a short note about the God and Godesses.

Ans. Hinduism is supposed to be 'apauruseya', i.e. of impersonal origin and so also are the Gods of Hinduism. They are eternal and though the deities appear to be different and independent, they are really facets of the same Brahman, the Supreme God. As Sri Ramakrishna says, there can be many spiritual paths as there are spiritual aspirants and similarly

there can really be as many Gods as there are devotees to suit the mood, feelings, emotions and social background of the devotees. The Hindu scriptures were eloquent while describing the qualities of God. He is all-knowing and all powerful. He is the very personification of justice, mercy and beauty. He is ever ready to shower His grace, mercy & blessings on His creation. From the Rig Veda, we come to know of the Vedic gods, Indra, Agni, Vasus, eleven Rudras, twelve Adityas, Indra and Prajapathi, being the Gods of earth, the heavens and the space. The main Hindu Gods are accepted today can be broadly classified as Saiva Gods, Vaishnava Gods, Sakthi or Saktha.

The initiatives taken by Raja Ravi Verma of Thiruvananthapuram in the turn of the 19th and beginning of 20th century are recalled in his coloured paintings depicting Krishna, Vishnu, Shiva, Ganpati, Gouri, and the various Avatars of Vishnu, 89 such prints being brought out through lithograph printing press set up for the purpose. The prints became highly popular. The originals in bright oil paintings depicted gods and goddesses in dignified postures, amidst natural or courtly scenes, with aristocratic dress in quite a few cases.

Later the popular prints covered scenes from puranic and epic stories, e.g., Krishna dancing on the Kailia nag, or Durga slaying Mahishasura at the coronation of Rama etc. Scenes of Heaven and Hell and personification of cosmic powers got depicted. Saints and rishis as well as political personalities also found a place. The pictures are used for sacred purposes at worship during festivals and natural or courtly scenes and heroic deeds find a placement in drawing rooms. Modernized three dimensional versions are now printed in Shivkashi (Tamil Nadu) and Singapore. The introduction to Hindu religious sources are available for ready reference. The highly illustrative work with its colours and neat explanations have been found suitable by the Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK76RA, UK to be included among 'students text books' with permission to use in various formats for the staff and students for the course of world religions beginning 2006.

Q4. What is meant by religion? Discuss origin of religion theories.

Ans. India is a country of religious diversity and religious tolerance established in both law and custom. Throughout the history of Indian religion has been an important part of the country's culture. A vast majority of Indians associate themselves with a particular religion. Indian census has established that Hinduism accounts for 80.5% of the population in India. The second largest religion is Islam, at about 13.4% of the population. The third largest religion is Christianity at 2.3%. The fourth largest religion is Sikhism at about 1.9% of India's population. This diversity of religion

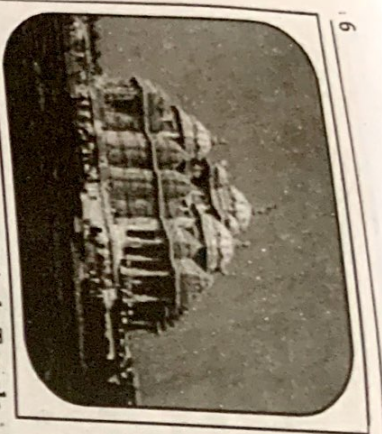
belief systems existing in India today is a result of, besides the existence and birth of native religions, assimilation and social integration of religions brought to the region by traders, travelers, immigrants and even invaders and conquerors. Stating the hospitality of Hinduism towards all other religions, John Hardon writes, "However, the most significant feature of current Hinduism is its creation of a non-Hindu State, in which all religions are equal."

Other native Indian religions are Buddhism and Jainism. Ancient India had two philosophical streams of thought, the Shramana religion and the Vedic religion, parallel traditions that have existed side by side for thousands of years. Both Buddhism and Jainism are continuations of the Shramana traditions, while modern Hinduism is a continuation of the Vedic tradition. These co-existing traditions have been mutually influential. Zoroastrianism and Judaism also have an ancient history in India and each has several thousand Indian adherents. India's religious tolerance extends to the highest levels of government. The Constitution of India declares the nation to be a secular republic, that it must uphold the right of citizens to freely worship and propagate any religion or faith. The Constitution of India also declares the right to freedom of religion as a fundamental right. Citizens of India are generally tolerant of each other's religions and retain a secular outlook, although inter-religious marriage is not widely practiced. Inter-community clashes have found little support in the social mainstream and it is generally perceived that the causes of religious conflicts are political rather than ideological in nature.



"Priest King" of Indus Valley Civilization

Existence and Development of Vedic Religions
Hinduism is often regarded as the oldest religion in the world, with roots tracing back to prehistoric times, or 5000 years. Evidence attesting to prehistoric religion in the Indian subcontinent derives from scattered Mesolithic rock paintings depicting dances and rituals. Neolithic pastoralists inhabiting the Indus River Valley buried their dead in a manner suggestive of spiritual practices that incorporated notions of an afterlife and belief in magic. Other South Asian Stone Age sites, such as the Bhimbetka rock shelters in central Madhya Pradesh and the Kupgal petroglyphs of eastern Karnataka, contain rock art portraying religious rites and evidence of possible ritualised music. The Harappan people of the Indus Valley Civilization, which lasted from 3300–1700 BCE and was



Akshardham the Largest Hindu Temple in The World

Indus Valley Civilization, the Vedic religion of the Indo-Aryans and other Indian civilizations. The oldest surviving text of Hinduism is the Rigveda produced during the Vedic period and dated to 1700–1100 BCE. During the Epic and Puranic periods, the earliest versions of the epic poems *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* were written roughly from 500–100 BCE, although these were orally transmitted for centuries prior to this period.

After 200 CE, several schools of thought were formally codified in Indian philosophy, including Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Purva-Mimamsa and Vedanta. Hinduism, otherwise a highly theistic² religion, hosted atheistic schools; the thoroughly materialistic and anti-religious philosophical Carvaka school that originated in India around the 6th century BCE is probably the most explicitly atheistic school of Indian philosophy. Carvaka is classified as a *nastika* ("heterodox") system; it is not included among the six schools of Hinduism generally regarded as orthodox. It is noteworthy as evidence of a materialistic movement within Hinduism. Our understanding of Carvaka philosophy is fragmentary, based largely on criticism of the ideas by other schools and it is no longer a living tradition. Other Indian philosophies generally regarded as atheistic include Classical Samkhya and Purva Mimamsa.

Birth of Shramana Religions

Mahavira the 24th Jain Tirthankara, stressed five vows, including *ahimsa* and *asteya* (non-stealing). Gautama Buddha, who founded Buddhism, was born to the Shakya clan just before Magadha rose to power. His family was native to the plains of Lumbini, in what is now southern Nepal. Indian Buddhism peaked during the reign of Asoka the Great of the Mauryan Empire, who patronized Buddhism following his conversion and unified the Indian subcontinent in the 3rd century BCE. He sent missionaries abroad, allowing Buddhism to spread across Asia. Indian Buddhism

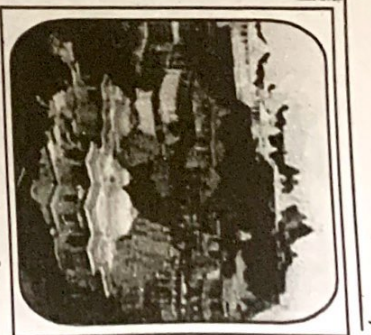
declined following the loss of royal patronage offered by the Kushan Empire and such kingdoms as Magadha and Kosala.

Some scholars think Hinduism expanded between 400 BCE and 1000 CE, as the decline of Buddhism in India continued. Buddhism subsequently became effectively extinct in India.

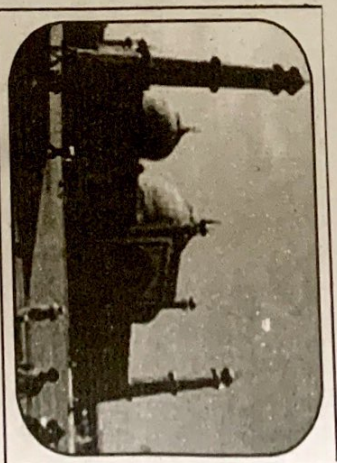
The only tangible things that indicated that there were some forms of worship or beliefs were in form of cave paintings or some figurines etc. But none of these could tell what the people were thinking and religion was definitely something in the realm of beliefs. Thus to get to origins one had to devise a methodology and for Edward Tylor it was the Psychic unity of mankind, what Evans-Pritchard has called, "If I were a horse" hypothesis. Informed by the intellectual climate of those times the scientific community believed strongly that humans were one species and in spite of morphological and other cultural differences were identical in their capacity for thought and intellectual reasoning. Thus Tylor put himself in the place of the early human assumed to be endowed

with reflective capacities, in order to decipher his thinking. Tylor reflected on the thoughts that would occupy the attention of the early man, the most. And to Tylor, the two phenomena that would be most thought provoking were the phenomenon of death and dreams. No doubt these are the two phenomena that may appear to intrigue humans even today but certainly to the early man they would be clothed in mystery.

Early man would have wondered what happens when a person dies? How come a talking, walking person suddenly becomes inert? Again what happens to a person in dream? How come even while the body appears to be inert, a person experiences many journeys, meetings with people and activities that is apparently not done by him/her in physical form. From these reflections arose the belief in a spirit body, the belief in soul. Thus the soul or the unseen part of the body would also be endowed with power and the animate dimension of existence. It was this soul that made a person



Paltana Jain Temples



Jama Masjid

walk and talk. When the body is asleep the soul goes on its own journey, meets people and acts in various ways. But the separation of soul from gross body is temporary in sleep. When we wake up it marks the return of the soul to the material body. But at the time of death, the separation is final. The soul never returns and the body, of no consequence without the soul, just rots away.

However, the definition of Tylor of religion as "belief in supernatural beings" is still valid and so is his definition of a kind of religious practices as Animism³. Wherever we have belief in spirits and forces of nature the people and the culture is usually designated as Animistic. But the sequence of religious beliefs as stretching from Animism to Monotheism is no longer acceptable. More acceptable is to believe that all religions have some elements of some kinds of beliefs including that of magic. Beginning from the early period however, the differentiation of Magic and religion was a major contribution of anthropological theories although the approach to the study of both varied considerably as theoretical approaches succeeded one another.

Most of the theories of the origin of religion, apart from being evolutionary in character, were also designated as the psycho-cultural theories as many of them traced the origin of religion in the deep recesses of the human mind, in the human psychological responses to the phenomenon of nature and to the facts of life and death. This was in the absence of any kind of field data and only secondary sources could be accessed and these provided only a deductive process of reasoning to the arm-chair anthropologists of that time.

Q5. Outline the Marxist anthropological viewpoint on religion.

Ans. Marxism is a particular political philosophy. Economic and sociological world view based upon a materialist interpretation of history, a Marxist analysis of capitalism, a theory of social change and an atheist view of human liberation derived from the work of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.



Marxism

Stephen Feuchtwang (1975), gives a fresh approach to defining religion as "a shared reality it is both a system of ideas about reality and a means of communicating those ideas". In other words religion is a kind of ideology. He problematizes the postulate of a super organic or supernatural, something that has been more or less taken as a given condition in all the other approaches. This idea is treated as an independent fact of social life largely because of its universal nature. But although the existence of superhuman

ings is universal in the minds of most human beings, yet for a science that assumes the existence of anything to be contingent upon its proof by demonstration, thus this belief is subjectivity and not an objective verifiable fact. Several prominent scholars, including Peter Worsely and Louis Dumont, have studied religion as ideology. The production of ideology is a social phenomenon and like all social phenomenon it has a tangible, material dimension. An ideology has a social and historical existence, but most ideologies express themselves as the final truth. Social experience then comes the subject of investigation in terms of the manner in which a social formation appears to the subjects defined, in the ideologies of that formation. In some ways the approach of Geertz is close to the concept of ideology, for it too is a set of symbols. But since all systems have their contradictions and change, these are misrepresented and disguised according to the very structure of the ideology. There are certain organisations and occasions, such as rituals and festivals that are specifically oriented towards reproducing ideologies that otherwise remain the back of all social activities. Ideologies, however, are contested, there are struggles of supremacy of one, over the other and conflict of ideologies actively present in the consciousness of the subjects. This is the manner in which social formations transform themselves: Feuchtwang supports an argument with a description of late imperial China, indicating how though the ideology of filial⁴ devotion and protection embodied in extended kin relationships and a structure of political loyalty and obedience embodied in the peasants and the landlords and the royalty of the system was maintained. The ghosts and demons act as a third category posed to both these structures and the gods protect households against demons. These are then conceptualized as higher orders of reality of heaven and gods. Ultimately the ideological structures serve to protect the imperial and leisure classes. Capitalist and bourgeoisie ideologies invaded and transformed the existent ideologies naturally after the Marxist analysis is highly structural and objective in nature. A contemporary generation of anthropology moved away from the aim of such objective, external analysis to be more than subjective and reflexive of phenomenon.

Q5. What is meant by symbols? Show how religion is a system of symbols.

[June-2010, Q.No.-6]

The approach of Clifford Geertz is that of the interpretive sociology/anthropology broadly in the tradition of Weber and he is mainly concerned out interpreting and providing a "thick" description of cultural systems that they can be apprehended by those who are not insiders to that

cultural system. Here, 'Geertz task is to develop a theory of religion on the view that it is distinctively a part of the cultural system. He has on the fact that sociological theorizing on religion has not really advanced all since the works of "four big men" of Durkheim, Weber, Freud, and Malinowski and asserts that in order to advance the theoretical understanding of religion one needs to broadly encompass different frameworks provided by these different theorists and advance them in a coherent fashion. Now, in order to analyze religion as a cultural system, one first needs the working definition of the term culture. Geertz defines this term as "a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life."

Unlike the functionalists who concentrated on action, explaining action through the way people thought about them; Geertz is primarily rooted in the deductive process of thinking about phenomenon, giving it a secondary place to the action that follows a particular state of mind. In turn is dependent on the powerful meanings emanating from symbols. His view of religion is purely esoteric and supra-organic, posits a circular relationship between a world-view and a way of life because people have a particular view of the world, they prefer to that kind of life that in turn upholds the world-view by its practices.

However, the symbols are real and tangible and are representative of all the beliefs and meanings present in the culture. Religion is thus defined by Geertz as: (1) A system of symbols which acts to (2) Establish power, pervasive and long lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) Formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) Clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) The moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.

In other words through the religious symbols whose power lies in representing some of the most fundamental values of the people of culture conditions are created that led to the performance of practices acts that may be termed religious in content but that may have larger social significance; like people waving a holy war carrying flag symbolize their religious meanings. The presence of the flag stirs powerful emotions and sets the moods for action. To Geertz the term 'moods' is period earlier than the emergence of Homo sapiens and indicate that even in content for in itself it does not lead to action but it sets the stage for acquiring a 'motivation' that is certainly action oriented. Moreover, not purely directed towards subsistence or bodily requirements. One can religious symbols make sense only within a particular value system. A saffron flag may stir emotions only in the people to whom this color is linked to a larger system of meanings and it is this linking to this system of meanings that is responsible for the creation of powerful emotions.

Definitions and Approaches

The function that Geertz visualize for religion is the imposition of some sort of order on reality, to drive away a sense of chaos, an assurance that "God is not mad". And he is able to identify the three points at which human capacity of interpretability tends to break down and the three points at which religion comes to the rescue to provide a meaning where other source is so equipped. These are, first, at the limits of human analytical capacities, when it appears that no knowledge would provide an explanation. For example, how can one explain that while in an earthquake most people died, a baby of few months is able to survive or perhaps why a person died of lung cancer who has never smoked a cigarette in her entire life. Second, at the limits of the power of endurance, that is when suffering seems unbearable, religion cannot make the suffering go away but it can provide an explanation that makes it bearable. Thus at the height of poverty one may be told that the gates of heaven are open only for the poor thus making even crushing poverty somewhat bearable. Third, at the limits of the power of moral insight or the problem of evil that assaults most of us every day when we see the bad person thriving and the good person suffering.

Thus religion comes to the rescue when we are at the end of our explanatory apparatus and the power of religion lies in that it does not look for explanation in rationality but in faith, in the acceptance of things as they are. Thus the functions of religion lie in the cognitive rather than in the practical realm. It helps to look at the world in a particular way, a way that is less traumatic for our sensibilities; in this way Geertz in critical of Malinowski's reduction of all religion to practical sense.

Thus in primarily focusing on cognitive processes Geertz gets close to the psychological dimension in his analysis especially with regard to the moods and motivations.

27. Provide earliest evidences and forms of religion. Describe cosmologies and world-view.

[June-2008, Q.No.1]

Ans. Evidences and forms of religion: The earliest evidence of religion could thus be the pre-historic cave paintings, some of which date from a period earlier than the emergence of Homo sapiens and indicate that even proto humans like the Neanderthals indulged in some activities that were purely directed towards subsistence or bodily requirements. One can speculate that one purpose of these paintings that often depict scenes of hunters, animals and human figures, could have been ritual in nature. Analysis of such early evidences of human culture is often done by the methods of ethno archaeology where comparison is made with similar practices among living human populations.

The commonsense understanding of religion that it has to do with esoteric, the other worldly and with that which is not primarily in nature, indicates that symbolism, representations and abstract thought all of which are necessary for anything like religion to exist were present in humans from the very beginning. There is every possibility that cave arts could be representing what Frazer had called sympathetic magic but that is mostly speculation.

The fact that women could produce life out of their bodies while men could not must have put men in awe of women and they would have considered her even to be dangerous (having power). As Mary Douglas (1966) has pointed out what was dangerous could also be considered polluted. Thus the concepts of taboo and danger go hand in hand. Evidences of some kind of concern with the afterworld or soul are found from burial sites, that often indicated that those who were buried were accompanied by some objects indicating belief in soul or after life. Material objects and culture cannot however indicate exactly what the culture bearers were thinking.

The earliest elements of religion can only be abstracted from existing material that cannot be dated, or in other words that seem to have existed from pre-historic times. In India both burial sites and rock paintings indicate some kind of ritualistic beliefs dating from the Mesolithic period (Thapar 2002: 73-74). Some of these archaic beliefs, myths, folklore and practices are often taken as continuities of the earliest stages of human existence. Proof of their antiquity is that certain types of beliefs, myths and practices are nearly universal, indicating that they are either a part of humankind's cultural evolution or have been diffused from the early human societies. Thus one of the most common myths of genesis is the deluge myth found across the world like Noah's Ark, the story of Manu etc. and is traced to the earliest human civilization at Mesopotamia.

Worship of nature is again a part of very ancient beliefs and so are the merging of the animate and the inanimate. The Nagas not only believe that stones are animate, they also believe that stones procreate just like humans (Hutton 1968). In fact certain kinds of distinctions are part of particular mode of thinking characteristic of the much later Judeo-Christian traditions, such as the separation of nature from culture, animate from inanimate, human from animals and good from evil. Few ancient indigenous culture and societies follow these distinctions. Hinduism, for example, has no concept of Satan or any kind of evil force. All supernatural beings, Gods and Goddesses are like humans with characters and there is no dualism between good and evil. The evolution of a definite evil force seems to have originated at a much later period in the ancient and tribal belief systems. Ravana's widely worshipped. It is seen that those trees, plants and animals are

usually worshipped that appear to have larger than human life force are especially beneficent in some way. But this need not be always the case. The Neem tree with all its medicinal value is not an object of worship at all.

People would thus pray to the god of the heavens to give them rain to prevent famine and floods. They would pray to the earth to remain bountiful, to provide crops, fruits and trees. They would pray to the sea to remain calm, not to drown their boats and ships and allow them to go fishing and for voyages. Thus these were transformed into gods without characters for only then the humans would know how to handle them. When described as men and women with particular characters and identities, they became both accessible and malleable. Sometimes Totemism they were converted to kin and ancestors; thus bridging the gap even more. In fact the familiarity in ancient times of the gods and men led Frazer to remark on the "world as a great democracy" in those times.

In Indian mythology, Indra, the god of the heavens is often depicted as lustful and deceitful person. Such close interaction and identification of gods and humans may be attributed to less complex societies with a sense of hierarchy. In more hierarchic societies with well-developed notions of centralised powers; the incarnate divinities in the form of rulers inspired awe and blind obedience. At the funeral of such monarchs, since the name Animism for this first form of religion. This belief in soul China, sometimes hundreds of lives would be sacrificed, that included the wives, retainers and even councillors. They commanded immense labour and even without the help of sophisticated machine technology were able to build such architectural marvels as the pyramids.

Another way in which the belief in the sacred character of nature has played a very important role in human societies has been in the worship of nature itself, in its natural form. Such beliefs have given rise to the concept of sacred groves, trees, rivers and mountains. It was recognized by environmentalists today, such beliefs may have been instrumental in preserving and conserving nature as well as maintaining the balance between humans and the non-human dimensions of nature. The Judeo-Christian religions have often been criticised for not having any reverence towards nature. In fact, the spread of Christianity has often been blamed for the destruction of nature as has the spread of western scientific beliefs of the nineteenth century that led to commodification of nature. However, even the concept of sacredness of nature may backfire as has been demonstrated in the case of Alley who has shown that the belief of Hindus in the sacred nature of the river Ganga is leading to its pollution as people believe that Ganga can never be polluted, on the contrary anything thrown in becomes purified. Thus it is not possible to persuade devout Hindus not to throw dead bodies, leaves, garlands and many other objects

in the river, that objectively would pollute it but according to the belief of devotees, it is the objects that get purified by contact with the Ganga water. She thus distinguishes between the terms purity (shudhata) as different from clean (swachhata) as they apply to the river, whose being can be immaterial as it is always pure.

The phenomena of nature are also viewed as signs and omens. The star of Bethlehem was supposed to herald the coming of a god-king. There is widespread belief that the sighting of a particular comet brings about disasters like war. A ring around the moon is supposed to indicate a storm and the Nagas believe that a short rainbow is indicative of an impending disaster like war. A very special phenomenon that occurs but rarely like the flowering of the bamboo trees in the North-eastern India is also believed to lead to widespread famine.

8. What is the concept of sacrifice? Is it same in all religions? Discuss and comment.

The concept of soul was seen as a little different from the western concept of soul. In ancient times the concept was like a belief in a dual body a material body and another shadow self.

The concept of soul was introduced into social theory by Tylor, who To Tylor, it was believed to be the cause of animating the human body, since the name Animism for this first form of religion. This belief in soul led to many associated beliefs like the after-world, heaven and hell, resurrection of soul from one body to another as in lycanthropy and transmigration of soul over various births. The soul was almost always conceived of as indestructible and passing on, either to another world, or

to another body. Sometimes the soul was conceived of as a power, the soul-uff that resided in some part of the body, like the navel or the head. In fact the practice of head hunting is derived from the magical power of the head of a person, one could transfer the power of the soul stuff to one's self. Thus a warrior would become more and more powerful, the more heads he hunted.

The concept of sacrifice plays a very important role in all religions. Sacrifice may be taken in the sense of making an offering to the gods or it may be taken in the sense of giving up something, to deprive one's self. Of course in many instances they may coincide and the famous story of Abraham in the Bible, where he is required to make an offering of his own son to God. In Islam, this myth is still followed in the ritual of Bakra, where a goat or animal reared in the household is sacrificed to god. Linked to the concept of soul, blood sacrifice is not viewed as a killing but as a way of

releasing the soul from the body so that it goes up to the divinity to which it is offered. Therefore, quite often a sacrifice is guided by certain notions of perfect quality and flawless. In many cultures, a sign is also looked for to see if the animal is acceptable to the divinity, if such a sign does not come about then the animal may be released. Quite often, when an animal is sacrificed, then it is symbolic of a human sacrifice and when a fruit or vegetable is sacrificed, then it is symbolic of an animal. The idea is to offer something precious, of value to please the divinity.

However, since the sacrificed animals or even fruits and vegetables are actually eaten by the congregation and only symbolically by the gods there is another explanation of sacrifice, put forward by Robertson Smith (1894): that is as a repast, a feast that is shared by the gods and the humans. This sharing in established a kinship between gods and men and reaffirmed the divinity of humans as well. No doubt such values exist in Christianity where the holy-communion is the symbolic partaking of the body and blood of Christ, in the form of water and wine. Such a communion makes a human being also holy and purified. A parallel can be drawn with Durkheim's explanation of totemistic rituals where the ritual consumption of the flesh of the totem is seen as a kind of reaffirmation of the divinity of the humans and their kinship with the deity.

Another understanding of sacrifice is in the Hindu notion of *tyaga* which may be viewed as renunciation or withdrawal from something. Sacrificing worldly pleasures or giving up something for a certain period, like seeing a fast or abstinence or fasting can also be viewed as a mode of sacrifice. Here, the principle is the same that is to make an offering to the deity or to imbibe the divinity in one's self by the process of purification that sacrifice involves. Such abstinence may precede a more important ritual or worship as people who go for pilgrimage often do, like pilgrims to Meppan or to the forest shrine of Sabarimalai in Kerala.

When the soul is conceived of as a shadow body, it could result in belief in ghosts or shadow images of a person that persisted after death. As Herbert Spencer has pointed out, such shadow selves could also be installed and worshipped as deities. Thus a person who was powerful or exemplary was expected to retain those characters even after death. We have many instances of people being deified and worshipped as gods after their death. Many people believe that a person with exceptional ability has a stronger soul or greater soul power. In some cases, the soul may be, worshipped after death, but not always. But a real man-god through Karsten points out is a person who is seen to the incarnation of a divine spirit or a part of, like son-of-god. Thus Jesus Christ was seen as the son of God, Rama and Krishna are seen as the incarnations of the god Vishnu.

perhaps the only way in which they differ from the medicine men of small-scale societies may be in the size and complexity of the culture and not in the essential principle of deification that is based in all upon the existence of some greater power within the individual which is worshipped. And this power is not secular but divine power, which he calls it Mana, or a spark of divinity or incarnation of god. The more category of incarnation are the Bodhisattva, who cannot be incarnations of divinity as Buddhism does not believe in any god. Thus Mahayana Buddhism, the great Buddhas are like the incarnations of gods but instead of divinity they contain the essence of liberation, the transcendence, the emptiness of Nirvana. As pointed out by Smart "emptiness is a quasi substance and this filmy 'nothing' is found in the created human being". Thus we have sacred beings even without the belief in a god.

In some cases belief in soul power also leads to cannibalism as eating a part of a body is believed to transmit the power of the dead person to the eater. Such customs were found among the indigenous people of South America, the Australian aborigines and a few others. The Relfel regarding the location of the soul in the body differs across cultures. The ancient Hebrew believed that the soul (nephesh-is a biblical Hebrew word which occurs in the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament) was located in the blood.

Many numerous beliefs are found regarding blood, its shedding and its transmission across cultures based on the principle that blood contains life energy or soul. In some cultures the loss of soul-power is supposed to lead to a debilitated condition of the physical body. Thus many kinds of illness, especially those that lead to weakness of body may be attributed to what is called 'soul-loss'. Some people like the Nagas, before they converted to Christianity, believed in what is known as lycanthropy, the transformation of a human soul into an animal. There are two types of lycanthropy in which the animal in question shares soul substance with the human and another in which the human is capable of transforming to an animal. The Nagas believed in the former type and it was believed that if any injury was done to the animal alter of the human, then he too will manifest the symptoms and if the animal dies, the man too will die. The Nagas believe that the tiger and the leopard have a common origin with humans. A hunter never eats an animal he has killed because the natural hostility that an animal feels towards its killer, is believed to harm the animal. The Nagas believe that the meat of the hunted animal. A man going for fishing, through the whole day, otherwise the fish in water would hear him. The Nagas do not speak the whole day, otherwise the fish in water would hear him. The Nagas eat all animals, they generally apologize to an animal before killing it, as its death was necessary. Naturally enough the Nagas do not kill an animal without any purpose".

Q9. Write a note about the myths.

Ans. Psychologists like Sigmund Freud have tried to trace the evolution of the human race through its myths and Jung has referred to myths as collective memory of the human race.

A reason for this attempt to relate myths to some pan-human conditions whether of the human brain, or of its collective past lie in the surprising similarities between myths across the world in different times and spaces.

Thus some of the myths that are very common are the myths regarding trees and snakes that play an important role in most cultures. Both these objects are believed to symbolize fertility, sexuality and regeneration. Psychologists have related some of very primary concern to human societies, such as of snakes with myths to the sub-conscious symbolic associations, such as of snakes with fertility. Sociologists and anthropologists have looked more towards functional dimension of myths, the role that they play in society. Myths have been widely used in the study of history of religions as they provide concrete material not otherwise available for study of many ancient cultures. One of their main characters is that they are seen as passed down from immemorial although modern myths also exist. Each time a myth is created it lends validity to something, like a deity, a ritual or an identity.

As Smart has pointed out there is a tendency of a dominant culture to treat their own stories as truth and that of the others as myth. Thus, in anthropology⁵ of myths we find the inclusion of the bible, for the Christian dominating the world from the colonial period and being responsible for most publications have never accorded the status of myth to their own "religion. In fact what has always been treated as myths are the stories of the people usually studied by anthropologists, the marginal and indigenous and therefore, the study of mythology has been popular anthropology rather than in other social sciences. It is only recently that scholars like Roland Barthes have brought in the concept of modern myths and related them to post-modern societies.

Sometimes these stories provide what Sherry Ortner has called scenarios and serve as elaborating symbols for social action. They provide a kind of guideline for people to act. For example, the Ramayana provides a guideline for ideal family roles in India; the ideal wife, the ideal brother the ideal servant and so on. For most people the actions of the myth characters who are also the revered characters, sometimes deities, inform right ways of doing things or come in handy when there is a confusion to action. In other words they form a kind of ethical ideals as amply illustrated in the Jataka tales, where each incarnation of the Buddha shown to take the right path towards Nirvana by upholding the ethical ideals. The Bhagavat-Gita is an exemplary example of a guide to action.

They also make sense of the universe around us. Many myths serve the purpose of making sense of things, clans, social organizations and the relationship between categories of people like men and women; for example, the myth of genesis in the Bible established forever the inferior position of woman as compared to man and therefore justified patriarchy.

Myths are often complete histories of a people or region as they usually provide the entire story from the beginning to the end of creation.

Sometimes contradictory versions of the same myth may be symptomatic of a changing society or of different groups within the same society. There are for example, many versions of the Ramayana, including some written from the point of view of women, where the interpretations of the main characters are quite different. There is also difference between the North Indian and South Indian versions of the Hindu myths. Similarly, Franz Boas and other American anthropologists have shown how the myths range in character as they travel from one cultural region to another.

Myths have a close relationship to Nationhood and ethnic identities. A shared past is itself a great claim to unity or when a group wants a separate identity, it may claim that it has a different past. For example, the Nagas, who do not want to be part of the Indian nation, claim that they have completely different traditions and roots from the main land Indians. During the freedom struggle myth of a glorious Hindu past was built up to counter both centuries of Muslim rule as well as to provide a critique of western superiority. It was claimed that it was Islam that had led to deterioration in the position of women and in society in general. However, such claims have often been refuted by scholars but continue to play an important role in the emotions and sentiments of the common people.

Q10. Describe the Freud's approach to religion. [Dec-2010, Q.No.-1]

Ans. Sigmund Freud born Sigmund Schlomo Freud (6th May, 1856 - 23rd September, 1939) was a Jewish-Austrian neurologist who founded the psychoanalytic school of psychiatry. Freud is best known for his theories of the unconscious mind and the defense mechanism of repression and for creating the clinical practice of psychoanalysis for treating psychopathology through dialogue between a patient, technically referred to as an "analysand" and a psychoanalyst. Freud is also renowned for his redefinition of sexual desire as the primary motivational energy of human life, as well as for his therapeutic techniques, including the use of free association, his theory of transference in the therapeutic relationship and the interpretation of dreams as sources of insight into unconscious desires. He was an early neurological researcher into cerebral palsy and a prolific essayist, drawing on psychoanalysis to contribute to the history, interpretation and critique of culture.

Freud reformulates the stages postulated by scholars of society into the phase of animism, culture as savagery, barbarism and civilisation; when the love object is still the ego, the religious phase when the object of love is the parents and the scientific stage when humans renounce the pleasure principle and are completely directed outwards in the search of their love object. Thus, once again Freud compares primitive man to immature adults, yet to resolve their libido. His evolutionary schema of magic, religion and science is explained through psychoanalytic concepts, where Magic is the attempt at wish fulfillment through narcissistic attempts at the misplaced powers of the ego. Magic is used to people's attempts to make things happen by the sheer power of thought. Religion as explained in details is derived from the projection of parental figures on the external world of imagined reality, namely, the supernatural and science is the phase of mature sexuality when the love object is sought outside of self.

With regard to religion Freud discovers that Totemism is not just a kind of religious belief but that Totemism was the past of every culture. Thus, from a particularistic religion Totemism is elevated to the status of the Primary religion. It is stated that although Totemism in the present form may have changed in some ways, the oldest forms of Totemism always had an animal as a totem and the animal was believed to have a soul, a second universal aspect of Totemism is the fact of exogamy.⁶

Now if by this logic of displacement the totem is the father then the rules of Totemism of not killing the totemic animal and not having sex with the women in one's own group; under conditions of the primitive horde resemble strongly the myth of Oedipus. According to this myth when Oedipus was born, a divine message from the heavens warned his father, the king, that a boy would grow up and kill him and marry his mother, the queen. Alarmed by the divine oracle the king orders that the child be thrown into the sea. He is however rescued by the queen of another kingdom who finds him on the sea-shore. He children, both highly eurocentric and racist in character. But the situation adopted by the king and queen and grows up as an adult personality in early childhood experience and the displacement were freely used to explain religion to war with his original kingdom, ruled by his parents. In the course of the war he kills the king his father and as was the custom in those days marries his widow, the queen. The queen recognizes him by a birthmark and when he realizes what he has done he kills himself out of guilt.



Sigmund Freud

In fact all religions were the projection of the guilt of the sons onto an external father figure, who was loved and worshipped and feared at the same time. At a higher level the prohibition on killing the totem was also extended to the brothers and later extended in case of universal religions to all humanity. Freud's theory of religion elaborated further in his book 'Future of an Illusion' reduced religion to a neurosis. The projection of parental figures onto the childhood onto the pantheon of gods led to the cross-cultural applicability of Freud's thesis to non-western cultures by the collaboration of psychologists like Abram Kardiner with anthropologists making use of the data to illustrate the Freudian theory.

211. Give a critique of the oedipal theory.

The heavy criticism that was faced by this theory came from people who saw the equating of tribals, the so-called 'primitives' with neurotics and racist in character. But the situation adopted by the king and queen and grows up as an adult personality in early childhood experience and the displacement were freely used to explain religion to war with his original kingdom, ruled by his parents. In the course of the war he kills the king his father and as was the custom in those days marries his widow, the queen. The queen recognizes him by a birthmark and when he realizes what he has done he kills himself out of guilt. To Freud the oedipal myth is nothing but the projection of the infant's sexual impulse of all small boys to have their mother as a love object with

The patriarchal nuclear family composed of father, mother, siblings and headed by the father, was typical of European Middle classes in the nineteenth century, but this was certainly not the universal form of the family. Family has changed form over the years and is found in different forms in various cultures of the world, the families vary according to which fields power, father or mother or mother's brother, the line through which descent is reckoned, subsistence patterns, livelihood and so on. The Oedipal complex can be rightfully located in the patriarchal family only but would lose its meaning in the matrilineal society. Moreover, assumptions of group marriage and the primitive horde are speculative and not substantiated by any living data.

The two major objections made by Malinowski for the primitive horde hypothesis that lies at the heart of the theory of Freud regarding the origin of religion and society.

Firstly that Freud has presupposed the existence of culture in the horde for the kind of emotions and relationships presupposed by him for this primitive cultural primate horde are not found among animals but in the patriarchal human family; "Remorse, mental conflict, ambivalent emotion — these are cultural, that is human and not animal responses" In Freud's theory the animal horde turns human when remorse sets in and exogamy⁸ and Totemism appear, but the beginnings of the feelings are cultural and based in animal instincts. Moreover, Malinowski is critical of the concept of a mass psyche and the inheritance of acquired psychic dispositions. As anthropologists have clearly demonstrated, human groups pass on culture ^{the disposition} inculcated in each generation is through the mechanism of culture transmission of enculturation and not inheritance of qualities of the mind.

Again going back to the Oedipal complex itself, Freud had rooted the complex in the child's sexual attraction towards its mother and the incomplete resolution of this attraction leading to neurotic behaviour that stems from unconscious hostility towards father and repressed attraction towards mother. Among the matrilineal Trobrianders, the role of father in procreation of child is not known. The mother is recognized as a kin or blood relation but the father's relationship to child is only as mother partner. The mother's brother is the blood relative through whom the child inherits his property and who is seen as the closest male relative of the parental generation. The relationship between brother and sister is a strict avoidance hence the mother's brother plays little role in the life of child in early infancy where the father is the tender and loving figure who is grateful to his wife for her sexual favours that he shows by his great affection for her children. He has no economic contribution to the child's life and any social claim or control. Unlike the European child the Trobriand child is never forcibly separated from mother and grows up naturally to find his

www.GullyBaba.com

Definitions and Approaches

23

love interest in his companions. Love and sexual play between children is never forbidden and no repression regarding sex develops in a Trobriand child. There is no initiation ritual and no physical or social separation from mother. The relationship with father that is of love and care becomes less important as the child grows up and he comes under the authority of the mother's brother from whom he learns his work and from whom he will inherit. There is strict segregation from sister for whom he is expected to work in adult life and who remains a mystical and distant figure for him. In later life also the relationship with father is of love and emotional support. As girls grow up they form a close relationship with father and the father-daughter relationship is more like that in European societies where the Electra complex can develop. But there is no reason for the development of the Oedipal complex as the ambivalent⁹ attitude towards the father is completely absent as so is the separation and longing for the mother.

Following Malinowski many other anthropologists had analyzed totemism but none except Meyer Fortes acknowledges any kind of debt to Freud. Fortes draws attention to the fact that according to Freud totemism could only be understood if attention was paid to the component of taboo in it. The taboos represent the psychological pressures that arise when actors are told that what they want to do prompted by their desires not correct or culturally acceptable. Thus, taboos are connected to the emergence of conscience as most people adheres to the normative not from external pressure but because they listen to the 'inner voice' namely, the voice of conscience, as represented by the primitive taboos. The repressed urges are then often projected onto the animal species that represents the father figure that in a culture stands for the restrictions on one's urges being the recognized authority. Thus, an actor is in fear of the father's authority and therefore harbours a latent feeling of hostility but the father figure is also revered because it is the root of one's identity especially in a patriarchal context. According to Fortes, among the Tallensi whom he had studied, the totemic animals are symbolic of the paternity perpetuated through the patrilineage and the Tallensi consciously identify with the totem as a father figure and therefore it is subjected to taboo. The reverence manifested for the totem is the same as that for the ancestor. Moreover, taboos are not confined to tribal religions alone but are found in most universal religions such as among orthodox Jews, Hindus and Muslims. Each one of these religions strictly adhere to certain food taboos like beef for the Hindus and pork for the Muslims. These taboos are followed as they represent strictures handed down by remote ancestors and as a part of belonging to a community that traces ancient kinship through an ancestor and are viewed as representative of the identity of the community. Thus, community identity, ancestors and taboos are all linked inextricably to

each other. Fortes adds a very rationalistic explanation to the fact that animals that are subject to taboo. The reason is very obvious that it is animals that are killed for food and are thus the object of desire as coveted food.

Q12. Discuss the relationship between culture and self.

Ans. The emic concept of self as against the etic concept of self. Contemporary approaches of both psychology and the social sciences in anthropology and sociology have tended to focus more on the subject's experience than limit themselves to understanding human behaviour or from the outside or in an etic manner.

Psychological studies of the classical tradition had tended to ignore self-consciousness as non-scientific. Western approaches to the study of behaviour had viewed it more in sense of social roles relatively free from religious/philosophical systems. But we cannot ignore the fact that inspiration of socialisation to fulfill the expected social roles there is an inner sense of self that is often in conflict with the performance of the social role. The self is also an evolving concept transforming with external factors. Since the philosophical tenets of cultures vary, the conception of self is influenced by these philosophies and therefore evolves differently and also copes differently with the environment to form personality structures that vary across cultures. Self-perceptions have a causative effect on behaviour, like a person would understand whether or not he/she is adapted or not, adapted to the society depending on the expectations of behaviour that are socially determined. However, the self-consciousness can be at variance with the etic judgement of behaviour, like a person perceived as maladjusted may not think so himself. Francis Hsu has made a distinction between the expressible conscious and the non-expressible conscious. Thus different cultural forms create divergent forms of self-hood as result of a dynamic interaction between psychic demands and the requirements of the society on the individual. Each individual in the process of adaptation thus tries to find a balance between the two. To understand behaviour in any culture one must examine the meaning systems of the actors and how they have been formed in the society.

Without an understanding of such meanings one can never understand behaviour properly as only conditioned by etic or non-self conscious factors. Moreover, concept of self-hood of the individual is constantly being redefined as a result of interaction with others. Thus, the concepts of self and their meaning system should play more determining role in the understanding of personalities.

In the analysis of the western concept of self, that is an amalgamation of both psychology and philosophy, Frank Johnson identifies three levels. On

the first level are those states where the mind communicates with itself in solitary communication. In other words what we consider as talking to one's self, this can take the form of introspection that is when one is making a judgement about one's self or analyzing one's own behaviour or it can be pure fantasy or day dreaming. At the second level are the states of mind that arise when one is interacting in small face to face groups or with one or two persons only. On the third level are experiences that one comes across when facing a crowd or alone in a large group. Thus, in the second case one is acting upon others that is interacting but in the third case one feels as if one is being acted upon. In the first two cases the self is experienced as a subject but in the last case the self is felt as an object. These states may be differentially interpreted in different cultures. Like for the Japanese to be sincere means to act according to one's role expectation that is according to one's objective self. But to an American it may mean acting according to one's inner convictions that is according to one's subjective self.

The European philosophy is based upon a dualism between mind and body but the eastern philosophies may not follow such a distinction. Thus, western scientific methods as applied to psychology concentrated on studying the physiological basis of behaviour ignoring the subjective consciousness of the mind altogether.

The roots of western systems of thought arise in a monotheistic belief system where the world is dichotomized into this or that. Thus, in Christianity we have good vs. evil; God vs. Satan and one is either a believer or a non believer. The Judeo-Christian traditions tend to see the world in terms of black and white. In the polytheistic religions the belief systems are accustomed to accept variety and alternate view-points. For example Hinduism there is no concept of Satan; also there is a highly relativistic concept of good and bad. Good and bad is situational and not absolute, as one knows from the discourse on dharna in the Bahgavat Gita. Even Japanese thought does not contain absolute and compartmentalized categories as in western thought. Even the concept of a religion as it is understood in western thought is absent in Japan. Thus, Christians were often subjected to a sense of alienation from their being because they considered themselves as sinful. They have a greater chance of feeling isolated as they strive towards an objective reality.

The most complex sense of self is found in Hindu thought. The concept of the real self is the atman but the real existence of the atman comes about in the state of moksha when the atman is merged in the larger reality of the paramatman. Thus, as Aghananda Bharati puts it the Hindu sense of self is not one of the individual but of the dividual, the incomplete self that must realise itself only in merging its identity in the larger Self. Thus, the distinctions at the level of the individual are really not that important hence

the concept of sin in Hinduism is very diffuse. The actions of this lesser self, the atman, really do not matter when it is submerged in the larger self. However, actions or karma are the ways in which the atman realizes itself. Thus, the western concepts of individualism are absent in Hinduism where the individual self is seen as inconsequential. More importantly in terms of actual behaviour Hinduism looks upon the material world as a lesser order of reality as it involves the lesser self. The Hindu looks upon the western concept of self as materialistic as it emphasizes the individual identity of the self that is manifest in the material world. To the Christian this self is preserved till the end of time.

In Hindu thought the atman is clothed in layers that only obscure the ultimate reality; these consist of the material self, the physiological self, the intellectual self and even the self-conscious ego. Once these are removed the atman is indescribable, has no material existence and no essence at all. Thus, to be a Hindu one does not even have to follow a particular course of action, for ultimately, all is maya.

Difficult Words

1. **Vedanta:** The system of philosophy believing that all reality is based on a single principle, Brahman. It teaches that the believer's goal is to realize one's unity with Brahman.
2. **Theistic:** Belief in the existence of a god or gods.
3. **Animism:** An idea that souls or spirits exist not only in humans but also in animals, plants, mountains & other entities of nature.
4. **Filial:** Pertaining to a son or daughter.
5. **Anthology:** Published collection.
6. **Therapeutic:** Related to cure of a disease.
7. **Matrilineal:** Based on kinship with the mother or the female.
8. **Exogamy:** Marriage of a man outside his own tribe.
9. **Ambivalent:** Coexistence of opposing like love and hate in the mind.

2

Classical Theories

Introduction

This chapter covers the major approaches to religion that can be called from the work of Marx, Durkheim and Weber. As is clear the Marxian approach is one in which religion in keeping with Marx's view of society, is an exploitative institution. So far as Durkheim is concerned, he found it simpler to study the aboriginal tribe and look for attitudes, outcomes towards the sacred and the profane. In case of Weber he tried to look into the question of disenchantment and social meaning along with the impact of religion in economy.

Q1. Outline the Marxian notion of religion and evaluate it critically.

[Dec-2008, Q.No.-3][June-2009, Q.No.-2][Dec-2010, Q.No.-2]

Ans. Karl Marx despite his later influence, did not view his work as an ethical or ideological response to nineteenth-century capitalism (as most later commentators have). His efforts were, in his mind, based solely on what can be called applied science.

Religion can only be understood in relation to other social systems and the economic structures of society since it is a creature of productive forces. For him the religious world is but the reflex of the real world. His interpretation of religion thus can be said as functional because he is concerned with the social purpose of religion and not on the religious doctrine or the religious beliefs as such in Marx's opinion religion is an illusion that provides reasons and excuses to keep society functioning just as it is. For him religion is irrational, alienating and hypocritical. Religion is irrational because it is a delusion and a worship of appearances that avoids recognizing underlying reality. It alienates people from their highest

ideals and aspirations and projects them to an alien and unknown being called God. It negates all that is dignified in a human being rendering them servile and more amenable to accepting the state of being oppressed. It is hypocritical in the sense that the state professes valuable principles, it sides with the oppressors, Jesus aiding the poor, but the Christian church merged with the oppressors helping the poor, taking part in the enslavement of people for centuries. Roman state, the Catholic Church preached about heaven, but acquired much property and power as possible.

Marx says that religion is meant to create illusory fantasies for the poor who are dominated and ruled by the ruling class, which owns the means of production. The economic realities that keep them suppressed prevent them from finding true happiness in this life. So religion gives them an illusion that this is correct or true because they will find true happiness in the next life. In the existing social system the people are in distress, religion does provide solace. Thus Marx says religion masks the social reality, provide them temporary relief, just as people who are physically injured receive relief from opiate-based drugs. Here Marx compares religion to opium — a sedative substance.

A sedative only helps to forget the pain for the time being, it fails to cure the physical injury. The pain could be healed only if one solves the underlying causes of the pain. Similarly, religion does not fix the underlying causes of people's pain and suffering — instead, it helps them forget why they are suffering and causes them to look forward to an imaginary future where they accept the social system in its existing form. It thus prevents work and change circumstances. The worse is, as Marx puts it, that the "opiate" of religion, i.e., religion is administered by the oppressors who are responsible for the pain and suffering or the actual oppression.

For Marx religion is an expression of more fundamental unhappiness and a symptom of more fundamental and oppressive economic realities. He hopes humans will create a society in which the economic conditions causing so much pain and suffering would be eradicated and, then, the need for soothing drugs like religion will cease. To put in other words, what Marx expects is that in the ultimate society of socialist communism there will be oppression of one group by other and hence there is no need for an illusory happiness and there ceases the requirement of religious dogmas.

Marx believes that any religious beliefs survive in the society so long as the people are not aware of their interests. People are not aware that religion serves the interests of the ruling classes. This is because people are social beings and into believing that what they know is the truth. Marx proposes that religion

internalizes in people a set of beliefs that are contrary to their interest but are in the interest of the ruling class. In the Communist Manifesto, Marx suggests that religion, like morality and philosophy, must be eliminated if we are to achieve a new political and economic existence. "Communism," he and Engels write, "abolishes all religion, and all morality, instead of constituting them on new basis" (1968). The reason for this is the historical evidence that regardless of previous changes in the productive systems, religion has always supported the maintenance of the legitimacy of the exploiter and exploited. Thus, to create a truly free society, religion as a tie to the past must be eliminated.

So we have seen religion acts as an illusion masks the social reality and perpetuates social injustice.

Q2. Discuss the Marxian notion of religion. How is religion regarded as a part of superstructure? [Dec-2007, Q.No.-9][June 2008, Q.No.-5]

Ans. Marx viewed religion as one facet of that whole which he calls superstructure and that is based on and affected by the infrastructure. The shift in the historical epochs along with the change in the economic infrastructure there occurs transformation of the superstructure.

For Marx economy is the foundation of the whole socio-cultural system. The economic system of production and distribution or the means and relations of production in the Marxian sense constitute the basic structure of society. The production of immediate material means of subsistence and the consequent degree of economic development form the foundation upon which other institutions such as state, legal conceptions, aesthetic and religious ideas of the people concerned are developed. Hence for Marx like all other factors in the human experience, the foundation of religion too is dependent upon the economic factor. So differences in religion occur with changes in the infrastructure. He proposed that earlier religious beliefs arose from primitive man's helplessness in his struggle against nature, while in the class society it is rooted in his struggle against man. In man's quest and struggle against his exploiters, the working masses experience a different form of helplessness - and this experience is what changed religion and introduced the belief in a better life in a hereafter, the alleged reward for his earthly suffering.

Marx adds all the facets of superstructure such as religion, state, political, legal philosophical and artistic react upon one another as well as upon the economic base. Thus, it is not the economic situation is the sole active cause. The reciprocity among and between the economic institutions act as cause of change, though economic necessity always asserts itself. For him the human thought, human awareness and human consciousness

were not self-originating but are derivatives of economic principle. And religion always occurs. Because of his work, it has become impossible to study religion without also exploring its ties to various social and economic forces. Even for those who find it difficult to accept his political views, his social theory based on the interaction between the social infrastructure and superstructure has been and continues to be an important departing point for sociological approach.

Q3. Give some criticism to the Marxian approach to the study of religion.

Ans. Marx draws most of his religious interpretations from the study of Christianity, the religion he was most familiar with. He is not taking into consideration the religions in general although his comments do hold for other religions with similar doctrines of a powerful god and happy afterlife. They do not apply to radically different religions. It is possible to say that in this matter he was influenced by Hegel, who thought that Christianity was the highest form of religion and that whatever was said about it was also automatically applied to "lesser" religions - but that isn't true.

Another flaw of this theory is that he argues religion is wholly determined by material and economic realities. Not only is nothing fundamental enough to influence religion, but also influence cannot run the other direction, from religion to material and economic realities. This also proved to be false because if Marx were right, then capitalism would appear in countries prior to Protestantism because Protestantism is a religious system created by capitalism - but we don't find this. The Reformation comes to 16th century Germany, which is still feudal in nature. Real capitalism doesn't appear until the 19th century. This caused Max Weber to theorize that religious institutions end up creating new economic realities. Some argue with evidence that Marxian propositions about the role of religion in the society must be limited to the operation of religion at certain times and in certain places. So also one shall not restrict to the idea that religion is only dependent upon economics and nothing else, such that actual doctrines of religions are almost irrelevant. Instead, we can recognize that there are a variety of social influences upon religion, including economic and material realities of society. By the same token, religion can in turn have an influence upon society's economic system.

The contemporary period witnessed the breaking down of the communist society that Marx talks about. It is also true that religion never disappeared in the Marx's communist Utopia.

In spite of a number of problems with his ideology and personally, Marx's theory of society and of religion, while in many ways controversial, has nonetheless provided great insight into the functioning of society. Whatever one's final conclusion about the accuracy or validity of Marx's ideas on religion, we should recognize that he provided an invaluable service by forcing people to take a hard look at the social web in which

Q4. Outline the dominant ideology in Marxist theory.

Ans. The dominant ideology in Marxist theory is the set of common values and beliefs shared by most people in a given society, framing how the majority think about a range of topics. The dominant ideology is understood in Marxism to reflect, or serve the interests of the dominant class in that society if the dominant ideology conflicted with the legitimacy of the dominant class's rule, then society would have to be in a state of war with itself, with the dominant class appearing as an illegitimate occupation.

(a) **Influence of Feuerbach on Karl Marx:** Marx owes his philosophical awakening to Feuerbach. Two of Feuerbach's important works on religion are *The Essence of Christianity* and *Lectures on the Essence of Religion*. The central thought in *The Essence of Christianity* is that the superhuman deities of religion are actually the involuntary projections of the essential attributes of human nature. In Feuerbach's own words: "Man projects his being into objectivity, and then again makes himself an object to this projected image of himself thus converted into a subject". What the devout mind worships as God is accordingly nothing but the idea of the human species imagined as a perfect individual. Once they are unmasked, shown for what they really are, religious belief and the idea of God can be useful instruments of human self-understanding, revealing to us our essential nature and worth. But taken at face value, they are alienating insofar as they betray us into placing our own possibilities outside of us as attributes of God and not of humanity, viewing ourselves as unworthy objects of a projected image of our own essential nature. Theology, as Feuerbach sees it, only reinforces the state of alienation by taking the objectifications of religion for real objects, and the theologians end up with dogmas that are self-contradictory and absurd.

Marx was influenced by the arguments of Feuerbach, such as:

- Humans make religion in their own image;
- They cling to religion so long as they feel the continued need to project themselves onto the universe, so long as they love the illusion of their dreams more than the reality of the waking world;
- One of the signs of human maturity is the self-conscious attempt to overcome human self-alienation, to be conscious of the projective impulse that gives rise to religion, and then to leave religion, as such, behind.

Thus the basic tenet of Feuerbach is that man makes religion and the idea that God makes man is an inversion. Marx agreed with Feuerbach in that the religious and metaphysical ideas convey false views of the world and these false views arise from the aims and desires of man from the social arrangements, which prevent these aims and desires from being realised. Feuerbach thought that once this was clearly recognised people would free themselves from their obsession with another world and would endeavour all the more strongly to realize love, justice, goodness and wisdom in the human world. For Marx too, religious conceptions are inversions that conceal the reality.

But Marx also pushes further than Feuerbach to give a precise analysis of human self-alienation, of the reasons why humans get involved in clinging to an illusory world of projections in the first place. For humans and their self-alienation have to be understood in concrete social and political terms. According to Marx the idea that God makes man is more than a philosophical alienation or mere illusion. It expresses the contradictions and sufferings of the real world. For him the state and society produce religion, which is an inverted consciousness of the world because they are an inverted world. The religious inversion compensates in the mind for a deficient reality; it reconstitutes in the imaginings a coherent solution, which is beyond the real world in order to make up for the contradictions of the real world. Marx later calls these inverted ideas as ideology (in German Ideology), something that starts from consciousness instead of material reality. According to him the real problems of the humanity are not mistaken ideas but real social contradictions and these mistaken ideas or ideology are actually the consequences of the social contradictions. And Marx argues that due to the limited material model of activity the human beings are unable to solve the social contradictions and practice and hence they tend to project them in ideological forms such as consciousness, which is to say, purely mental or discursive? solution, which effectively conceal or misrepresent the existence and character of these contradictions. Thus the religious ideology conceals the social contradictions and contributes to their reproduction and serves the interests of the ruling class. The ideological distortions manifested in the religious ideas cannot be overcome by criticism; they can disappear only when the contradictions, which give rise to them, are practically resolved.

Marx is therefore a fierce critic of religion, though he is aiming primarily at religion as a cause of the problem, but only as a symptom only perpetuates the very problem it professes to solve.

The Origin of Religious Ideology: In German Ideology criticizing Feuerbach (for whom religion is just an illusion) explains the social and historical origin of religious ideology. For Marx humanity or man is not formed at all times of societal development. There are different sorts of 'forms' that existed at different times and places. Men for him are social beings whose nature changes with the sort of life they lead. The sort of life they lead changes according to the way in which they get their living, according to the tools and organizations of labour they employ to get food, shelter and to satisfy their other needs. With the development of man society, division of labour appears among men and between men work. The division of labour leads to class divisions and at different times different classes have dominated human societies in accordance with whatever was the predominant mode of production. One class will dominate in every society depending on the mode of production and nature of division of labour. When division takes place in the dominant class forms a sub class who specialize in production of ideas. Since these ideas are produced from within the dominant class, they will be imposed on the whole society. They will in fact be the expression of the needs and aspirations of the dominant class although they will be seen to those who produce them and many others to be of universal significance. Religious ideas are produced in the society in such way by specialists at the best of a given class or within the framework of a given historical epoch and reproduce a false consciousness of things.

How does Durkheim explain religion? Distinguish between the sacred and the Profane. [Dec-2008, Q.No.-5]

Durkheim defines religion as "a unified system of beliefs and practices sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden — activities the human beings are unable to solve the social contradictions and practices which unite into one single moral community called consciousness, which is to say, purely mental or discursive? solution, which effectively conceal or misrepresent the existence and character of these contradictions. Thus the religious ideology conceals the social contradictions and contributes to their reproduction and serves the interests of the ruling class. The ideological distortions manifested in the religious ideas cannot be overcome by criticism; they can disappear only when the contradictions, which give rise to them, are practically resolved.

Marx is therefore a fierce critic of religion, though he is aiming primarily at religion as a cause of the problem, but only as a symptom only perpetuates the very problem it professes to solve. Durkheim also talks about how all of the first systems of representation were religious in origin, pointing us to a new way to discuss epistemology. In Durkheim's sociology of knowledge, Durkheim uses the history of religions to show how religions mirrored the way society was structured. For example, classificatory schemas for social groups were based on tribal references. Tribes were divided into two phrases, which were further

subdivided into various clans. Durkheim proposes that these divisions formed the basis of how humans learned to classify their environment into different categories. He notices that there is nothing objective or observable world that forces us to group things with each other. Every in our experience is "disparate" and discontinuous. Nowhere in reality we observe beings that merge their natures and change into one another. It is only the religious practice of grouping various totem clans together that allowed us to start grouping other things in our environment. As Durkheim explains, "the realities to which religious speculation applied then are the same ones that would later serve as objects of scientific reflection. Those realities are nature, man and society both attempt to connect things to one another, establish internal relations between things, classify them, and systematize them".

Weber, the last of the three writers, like Durkheim, invested significant time in the study of religion. Also similar to Durkheim, Weber sees a deal of contemporary society rooted in the processes of religion. However, like Marx, Weber sees the driving force of history as material interests, not ideas, as found in religious beliefs. So in tying religion to the spread of capitalism, as he does in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, he attempts to show that the ideas behind the religious beliefs of Calvinism steer the direction of the forces that were already in motion. A combination of technologies that facilitated capitalism and the spread of habits of the Calvinists allowed capitalism to flourish in Europe and spread to the Americas.

In the *Sociology of Religion*, Weber lays out his thesis that people form their interests, and that religious leaders and structures help people achieve those goals. In this way religion provides the tools for both stability and social change. Various trends are seen in how this process develops. He describes the importance of magical beliefs for early society, but also explains the importance of magical beliefs for early society, but also explains explanations of how acts became efficacious⁶. Magicians are endowed with charisma, that is, the power to accomplish necessary tasks, like heeding facilitating crop growth and protecting the village. Once a magician is established that he can do the things he claims, the village endows him and his with symbolic representation. As Swindler describes, "Conflicts and encounters between magicians and their clients lead to a 'protective abstraction' in which magicians give symbolic form to their clients' extraordinary powers, finally creating a new realm of experience".

As these acts became symbols in the community, systems of gods were created which the magicians manipulated to help the community prosper (in the case of curses). Magicians, however, were utilized for special events, and were on an "on-call" basis. Their jobs were secure as long as they remained effective and as long as the village continued to depend on them.

needs requiring his services. Further, the symbol systems and gods became embedded into the community structure, and as political systems developed, the gods came to represent those political communities. As time went on and specific gods were found to be more effective at producing military victory and economic prosperity, those gods grew in prominence and monotheism became more dominant.

Sacred and profane

These are the difference between Sacred and the Profane. Durkheim argues that religious phenomena emerge in any society when a separation is made between the spheres of the profane.

Durkheim stated that religion is primarily concerned with three kinds of activities: (a) maintaining a separation between sacred and profane, (b) laying down a system of beliefs for the faithful, and (c) setting up a system of rules that forbids certain ways of acting. An object is intrinsically neither sacred nor profane. It becomes one or the other depending on whether men choose to consider the utilitarian value of the object or certain intrinsic attributes that have nothing to do with its instrumental value. This division between sacred and profane is common to all the religions and according to Durkheim, this division is the most distinctive element of religious life since it forms the basis of religious life in several respects. "In all the history of human thought," Durkheim emphasized, "there exists no other example of two categories of things so profoundly differentiated or so radically opposed to one another".

While trying to find out the common observable features of religious life, Durkheim perceived that the belief in supernatural realm is not common to all the religions, but separation of different aspects of life, physical things, and certain behaviours into two categories of sacred and profane is common. Objects and behaviours deemed sacred were considered part of the spiritual or religious realm. They were part of rites, objects of reverence, or simply behaviours deemed special by religious belief. Those things deemed profane were everything else in the world that did not have a religious function or hold religious meaning. In general, those aspects of social life given moral superiority or reverence are considered sacred, and all other aspects are part of the profane. For example, the Catholic Church respects the crucifix and the behaviours and actions performed during 'mass' as sacred, while other behaviours and objects are not. Thus, sacred may embody transcendental gods and deities or natural things and objects or beliefs, rites and practices or words, expressions or combination of words or anything socially defined as requiring special religious treatment. The sacred things are symbols that they represent something. "The Sacred thing", wrote Durkheim, "is par excellence that which the profane should not touch and cannot touch with impunity".

was deeply interested in the problem of what held complex societies together. Religion, he argued, was an expression of social cohesion. In the fieldwork that led to his famous *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim, a secular Frenchman, looked at anthropological data on Indigenous Australians. His underlying interest was to understand the basic forms of religious life for all societies. In *Elementary Forms*, Durkheim argues that the totems the aborigines venerate are actually expressions of their own conceptions of society itself. This is true not only for aborigines, he argues, but for all societies.

- Durkheim largely ignores the role of individual religious leaders as well as the way religion functions in social conflict and asymmetric relations of power.
- The "collective consciousness" stimulated by religious assemblies infer more of a social psychology, which is never made explicit in Durkheim's theory of religion is based on the case study of a tribe in Australia. He either ignored the counter-instances among the neighbouring Australian tribes, or interpreted them arbitrarily according to some ad hoc, evolutionary speculations.
- Some argue that there is no evidence that Australian totemism is the earliest totemism, let alone the earliest religion; and, technically less advanced than the North American Indians.
- Australians have a kinship system which is far more complex.
- Even if it is limited to Australian tribes, it is found that the cohesive force among aborigines is the tribe rather than the clan; that there are clans without totems; that most totems are represented by the carvings and inscriptions on which Durkheim placed so much weight; and that the "high gods" of Australia are born of a synthesis of totems.
- Criticisms such as these have led some scholars to suggest that Australian data were introduced simply to illustrate Durkheim's theories, rather than the theories being constructed or adapted to account for the data.

Q8. Provide the main feature of Weber thesis on religion and economic development.

Ans. Weber's work in the field of sociology of religion started with his essay "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism," which grew out of his heavy "field work" among Protestant sects in America and contrasted with the analysis of The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism; The Religion of India.

He opined that the social change is caused by religion rather than the actions of religion. As said earlier, he studies religion in terms of the subjective meaning of religious action or inaction of social actors. Based on that, Weber propounds a new theory, different from what existed at his time about the rise of capitalism in the modern Western Society, relating economic and religious spheres of society.

In his most famous work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber examines the relationship between the rise of certain forms of Protestantism and the development of Western industrial capitalism. He wrote this essay between 1902 and 1903, and it was subsequently published as two essays in 1904 and 1905. Max Weber's central thesis of religion and economy is reflected in this masterpiece work. It represents Weber's theme of religion and religious ideas as well as his views on capitalism and the capitalist development.

In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber examines whether the religious beliefs of the individuals affect their actions and tries to show how the beliefs influence individual actions by establishing a connection between patterns of belief and system of social action. He also shows here that there is a connection between religion and the commercial activities. He reaches these inferences based on certain observations of the modern western European society of his time.

The commercial activities of many of the western European countries intensified along with a simultaneous popularity of Protestantism in these societies. The capitalism of those times was identified by two contradictory activities of amassing wealth beyond the personal uses of individuals and avoidance of use of these wealth for the purposes of personal pleasures and enjoyment. Thus, Weber noticed capitalism is not only the production and exchange, money making and profit, but an ascetic attitude towards it. These two contradictory characteristics led Weber to argue that if asceticism had found its way into commercial activity then a religious ethic must underlie capitalism. Asceticism, for him, is a conscious denial of worldly pleasures with the aim of reaching a valued goal and higher moral state. He used the word asceticism to pinpoint a way of living in the world in which the individual engages in self-denial for purposes of attaining future rewards.

Weber defined capitalism as modern phenomena; a very complex system of institutions, highly rational in character and the product of a number of developments peculiar to the western civilization. The capitalism he is talking about is the rational capitalism. The factors that produced this rational capitalism, according to Weber, are many other rational activities like The rational permanent enterprise, rational accounting, rational technology and rational law.

Q9. What are the features of spirit of capitalism that Weber talks about?

Ans. The origin of spirit of capitalism, the role of spiritual in the growth of western entrepreneurship, Weber first tries to make some concrete points about some related phenomena.

Weber felt that behind the development of western capitalism underlies a philosophy or 'spirit', which is different from other systems of money making. He identified three overriding imperatives behind the development of capitalism; the devotion of amassing wealth and profit beyond personal needs of the individual; the commitment to unrelieved hard work coupled with self-denial; and the avoidance of the use of wealth for purposes of personal enjoyment. It is this spirit, according to Weber, that forms the special nature of western capitalism.

In order to prove the manifestation of spirit in the economic activity, Weber turns to the works of Benjamin Franklin, a successful entrepreneur who provides some useful tips on how to make money. Weber interprets Franklin's advices as a peculiar ethic and they refer to specific 'ethical spirit', which are ethical maxims for shaping the conduct of life.

Weber then said, "Truly what is preached here is not simply a mere making one's way in the world, but a particular ethic... It is not a business astuteness, that sort of thing is common enough, it is an ethic. Weber maintained that the central spirit of capitalism had the effect of putting forward the expectation of the performance of the work as a duty and in doing so it made the non-performance of work as infradignity such duty.

Modern vs. Traditional Capitalism: Weber maintained that the spirit of capitalism was distinctive of modern western capitalism only; it was not found in the traditional capitalism. The characteristic feature of the modern capitalism is the unique combination of devotion to the earning of wealth through legitimate economic activity, together with the avoidance of use of this income for the use of personal enjoyment. This is rooted in the belief in the value of efficient performance is a chosen vocation as a duty and virtue. Thus, the presence of ethical demands in the economic activity implies religious doctrine.

Weber shows the distinctiveness of the spirit of modern capitalism contrasting with the attitudes of the labourers in the traditional capitalism. In the modern capitalism, according to Weber, the employers price their goods according to different rates and they do it in order to get as much more profit from the workers as possible. The workers earn more by increasing the intensity of their work, benefiting both employers and the workers by maximizing profit and the wages. Whereas in traditional capitalism raising the rates had the effect of less rather than more incentive to work. In traditional capitalism the workers preferred to work less than earning more.

Q10. Outline the Webers sociology of religion. [Dec-2008, Q.No.-3]

Ans. The sociology of religion concerns the dialectical relationship between religion and society, the practices, historical backgrounds, developments, universal themes and roles of religion in society. The sociology of religion deals with objective understanding of the subjective meaning of the religious action or inaction by the social actors. In order to make such knowledge of the understanding objective, he founded the methodology of the ideal type and the elective affinity of causal relationships. Weber elaborated a set of categories, such as types of prophecy, the idea of charisma, routinization, and other categories, which became tools to deal with the comparative material. Weber holds that there is no universal law of society as supposed in natural science, or the law of history which determines the course of the dynamic mechanically. For Weber the scientist's goal is to arrive at propositions of fact or at relations of causality or at comprehensive interpretations that are universally valid. The goal of Weber's sociology of religion is to understand religious action from the subjective meaning of the actor rationally and also categorically; it is not to establish the laws of religion and society, or to extract the essence of religious action.

Typological and comparative understanding of religious action depends on the theoretical construction of the ideal type through thinking or empathic experiments. Objective understanding of religious action, on the other hand, depends on the value-judgement free analysis of the subjective meaning of social action from the viewpoint of ideas as well as material and mental interests. To make a value-judgement free analysis, one has to distinguish the empirical recognition of "what is" from the normative judgement of "what should be". The validity of an ethical claim is not the matter of social analysis, but the matter of conscience and belief. The criteria of value-judgement are imperative, and does not depend on empirical reality. The understanding of "what is", on the other hand, involves not just empirical facts of social action, but also the subjective meaning of the social action. Social action is not mechanical reaction of the law-of-material interests, but the dynamic of ideas and interests, which give the actor the conscious or unconscious meaning of life and the world. In order to understand sociological reality of religion, Weber holds the importance of religious idea, which cannot be reduced to the component of material interests (Marx) or to the social nexus and function (Durkheim). According to Weber "Not ideas, but material and ideal (ideological) interests, directly govern men's conduct".

Q11. Analyze the relation between Protestantism and capitalism.

Or

Religious Theories

Write about the relation between ascetic Protestantism and capitalism.

[June-2009, Q.No.

Or

Discuss ascetic Protestantism and the spirit of capitalism.

[Dec-2008, Q.No.

Ans. The relation between Protestantism and capitalism can be explained in the following manner:

In the Protestant Ethic, Weber was trying to unearth the religious beliefs that promoted the spirit of capitalism among the believers. All establishing the existence of correlation between the religious beliefs and capitalist spirit in the modern western capitalist society, his attempt was to unearth particular religious ethos that promoted spirit of capitalism. He also found an intellectual or spiritual affinity between the protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism. He examined other religious groups also in an attempt to establish the correlation between the spirits of capitalism and religion.

Although capitalism was found in other societies too, the particular type of capitalism, Weber talks about, the combination of unlimited quest for profit and rational discipline of work, developed in the modern western industrial societies only. He tries to find out whether or to what degree particular attitude towards work determined by a religious conceptualization has been the differential factor present in the Western societies or elsewhere, which accounts for the unique course of Western history. He found that it is consistent with the spirit of certain kind of ascetic Protestantism to adopt an attitude towards economic activity, which is in turn consistent with the spirit of capitalism. There is a spiritual affinity between a certain vision of the world and a certain style of economic activity.

Weber differentiates four main types of ascetic Protestantism: Calvinist Methodism, Pietism, and the Baptist sects. Weber was not concerned about the overall historical description of the dogma of ascetic Protestantism but only those elements in their doctrines, which are most consequential affecting the practical conduct of the individual in their economic activity. For that purpose Weber found the doctrines of Calvinism as most closely related to the spirit of capitalism.

Weber identified as the center of the Calvinist's religious reform a set of ideas known as the doctrine of predestination, which was based on some essential decrees. They were:

- Before the world began God divided all the humanity into two classes of persons; the saved and the damned. To those who had been elected to be saved, God gave everlasting life, salvation and eternal glory.

- God withheld salvation and gave everlasting death and dishonour to those who were condemned.
- No believer should or could know their fate until it is revealed to them upon their death. Since the elect differ in no way from the damned, no physical signs or marks distinguished the elect from the damned.
- Nothing could be done to relieve, forgive or reverse the decrees; no priest, no prayer, no sacrament and no worldly forgiveness by confession or communion.
- God has abandoned all but the elect since Christ had endured suffering only for the elect.

Difficult Words

1. **Dogmas:** Principles lay down by the authority of a Church.
2. **Discursive:** Proceeding by argument or reasoning.
3. **Obscure:** Not clearly expressed or understood.
4. **Epistemology:** The theory of knowledge, esp. with regard to methods.
5. **Disparate:** Different.
6. **Efficacious:** Sure to produce the desired effect.
7. **Utilitarian:** Useful for a purpose.
8. **Proscriptions:** Something rejected or denounced.
9. **Shamanistic:** Pertaining to witch doctor or priest claiming to communicate with gods.
10. **Dichotomy:** Division.
11. **Interdiction:** Prohibition.
12. **Genealogical:** Concerning study of lines of descent.
13. **Ascetic:** A person who practices severe self-discipline and abstains from all forms of pleasure, for spiritual reasons.