Religious Aspects of Tamil Land and Bengal:

Religious Aspects: Indian context

Social history of India has established the fact that Indians have been following religious activities from olden days. India is a place where different religious practices are being adhered to by its people for ages. Notwithstanding different religious beliefs people live in harmony here. After the arrival of Aryans from Asia Minor a new breed of religion was sown in Indian soil, especially along the gangetic plateau where the Aryans settled. This new crop of religion and its accompanying rituals were embraced by majority of the people of India due to its very simple formalities. The religion followed by majority of the people was the culmination of the realizations and feelings of the sages over centuries. The sages had prescribed certain principles called Vedic principles which they conceived in their minds during long penance and meditations for the freedom of the souls. They were convinced that those Vedic principles would show the way of life. Nevertheless those Vedic principles were not static. Many learned sages had given their own understanding and belief by way of short notings in the religious text called ‘The Vedas’. There was no hard and first rule that the sermons and the principles incorporated in the Vedas were to be followed in life in toe-toe. Thus faith and realization of the sages for centuries in respect of spiritual and metaphysical matters and their understanding on the way of life were turned into religion. As the religion had its root in the valley of Sind, the followers of Vedic principles were erroneously called as the Hindus and the religion as the Hindu religion. That was the mark of the beginning of the Hindu religion in India. Under the Hindu religion, different groups of people had chosen their own path to follow for satisfaction of religious beliefs. This had given rise to the followers of Tantrick rituals, Puranic rituals, Saivaities, Vaisnavas etc. within the main frame of Hindu religion. Although the Vedic principles were compiled in the form of religious texts called the ‘Vedas’ with the objective of guiding people to shape up their lives on dotted lines the teachings were nevertheless liberal. People have the right to interpret the ideas according to their own perceptions and follow the same to satisfy their religious beliefs. The Hindu religion followed by majority
people in India had its ups and downs. The Muslim invasion in India posed a great threat to the survival of the Hindu religion. Buddhist religion also tempted the Hindus to switch over their loyalty. However, despite heavy odds, the Hindu religion in India had united its people to oppose and resist all kinds of aggressions and threats. In this connection, it would be a great injustice to the religion and its greatest proponents if we do not take the name of Adi Sankaracharya but for whose efforts to unite the people under one umbrella the Hindu religion would have been extinct by now.

The Hindu philosophy of God symbolizes the great spirit i.e. the 'Paramatma'. The Hindu of India believe that human soul's (Jeevatma) unification with Paramatma is the ultimate goal for liberation of mind. The Hindu religion did not impose any strict compliance of rituals. The Hindus are free to seek ‘God’ in any form of invocation. Many Hindus believe in idol worshipping while others believe in ‘Nirakar Brahma’(figureless spirit).

The most important religious aspect in India is that the country has become the hub for preaching and practising various religions without hurting the sentiments of each other. That is the reason why we notice of temples, gurdwaras, churches, mosques and abodes of Gods of other faith co-existing in India peacefully.

**Religious Aspects : Tamilnadu :-**

The religious faith of the people of Tamil land is unparalleled. The religious cravings and devotional attachments are the ways of lives of the Tamils. The tradition of religious faith in Tamil land had its root in 17th century. The Dravidians (Tamils’origin) had introduced the religious beliefs which later on mingled with the Aryan faith.

After the Aryan civilization, the Tamil Hindus have been following and practicing the religious principles with great devotion and determination. The religious activities have become integral part of Tamil lives since ancient times.

People of Tamilnadu have made religion as their goal of life. The Tamils are staunch followers of the Hindu religious practices. In fact, while they have adapted the Hindu religious principles into their cultural system, the others in Hindu faith followed idol worshipping of Tamils as part of their religious activities. Although at the beginning there was tension between Dravidian faith and Aryan faith resulting in clashes, and the Dravidian
faith had ultimately merged with the mainstream Hindu religion introduced by Aryan sages.

Tamilians faith in religion and the attending rituals can be ascertained from the myriad temples of Gods and Goddesses that have dotted the Tamil land. The religious faith in Tamil people is so intense that it has become part of their social and cultural life.\(^3\)

**Religious Aspects In Bengal:**

In Bengal people are religious minded since ancient times. The Aryan influence taught people of Bengal in ancient era to follow Hindu religion through invoking 'Nirakar-Brahma'. The essence of early Hindu religion preached by sages in Vedic era was the Searching of God within oneself. The early Hindu religion followed by people of Bengal did not prescribe for idol worshipping. The Hindu religion regarded Brahma as the human soul. The Bengali Hindus followed the teachings of the Vedas.\(^4\)

In Bengal, Brāhmānical culture to follow the practice of worshipping Gods and Goddesses had developed at a much later times. The Dravidian culture to worship idols of Gods and Goddesses to pursue religion was introduced by the priests and Brāhmīns of Bengali society. The high caste Brāhmīns in Bengali society imposed the idol worship as the way of pursuing religion. Incidentally, they also proclaimed that as the direct descendants of Gods, only they were eligible for performing all religious activities pertaining to the Hindu religion. In ancient times, people of other castes had no right to practice religious activities, although they belonged to Hindu religion.

The Hindu religious faith and the domination of Brāhmīns in the religious affairs took a new dimension following the emergence of many wise and learned people in Bengal. People who learned the Vedic principles of the Hindu religion with open mind and careful scrutiny churned out many ideas and thoughts. As a result of the propagation of new thoughts and ideas by religious leaders, new religious dispensations emerged in Bengal. The new beliefs and thoughts gave rise to the birth of different sects like 'Vaisnavas', 'Sibaities' etc. The religious beliefs advocated by the followers of new sects were opposed to the traditional Hindu religion of Bengal.
Brahmiical culture to perform religious activities and worshipping deities still continue to thrive in Bengal despite stiff opposition and resistance from more progressive people of the society. Brahmiical culture ruled the religious activities in Bengal.
Reference


5. Ibid. Pg – 180 -183.