RELIGIOUS BEHAVIOURS AND ACTIVITIES

1. RELIGION

Religion has been identified as one of the important concerns of mankind, along with art, philosophy and science. Among these four, it is religion which has the earliest history of development. And hence it has been rightly pointed out that a study of mankind and his problems would not be complete without taking into consideration of some of his religious beliefs and practices.

We may claim that religion differs from both science and philosophy in emphasizing personal adjustment and commitment. Because of this, religious people think that their beliefs are basically true. Though religion involves practices, we may say that these practices are merely man-made process. However, the basic operative factor for every religion is nothing but the intimate relationship between man and God; this has been clearly expounded in Saiva Siddhanta.

1.1. DEFINITION OF RELIGION

Religion comes from the Latin word ‘religio’ which means “to bind” Literally speaking, religion is a principle of unification and harmonisation. Any principle which binds us all together in some way
is religion. It is not mere belief but behaviour; not mere conviction but conduct; not mere faith but functioning. Again it is important to understand yet another etymological meaning of the word ‘religion’ which is derived from the Latin. ‘religion’ which means together, count or observe or to bind\(^2\). It gives the meaning of the performance of necessary action which may bind together man and supernatural power.

In religion, the whole of human being’s personality is involved. And hence William James defined religion as “the feeling, acts and experience of individual man in their solitude so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine”\(^3\).

Hoffding defines religion as “the conservation of value”\(^4\). According to Alexander, “religion is faith in deity”\(^5\). To Patruc, “religion is the consciousness of our practical relation to in invisible spiritual order”\(^6\). Whitehead says that religion is the vision of something which stands beyond, behind, and within, the passing flux of immediate things\(^7\).

W.T. Stace defines “religion as the hunger of the soul for the impossible, the unattainable, the inconceivable”\(^8\).
Durant Drake described religion as that which “is the matter of will, if being understood and identified with practical reason, that is to say, certain acts ought to be done or that certain attitudes ought to be adopted”\(^9\). According to Swami Vivekananda, “religion is not in doctrines or dogmas, not in intellectual argumentation; it is being and becoming, it is realisation”\(^{10}\).

Thus religion is the art of living, through right action, and how to live our daily life in harmony, within ourselves and with others and there by lead a life of peace and happiness.

Again, Herbert spencer says that “religion is the recognition that all things are manifestation of a power which transcends knowledge”\(^{11}\). J.G. Frazer explains that “by religion then, I understand a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life”\(^{12}\). According to F.H. Bradley, “religion is rather the attempt to express the complete reality of goodness through every aspect of our being”\(^{13}\). Mathew Arnold describes “religion is ethics heightened, enkindled, lit up by feeling”\(^{14}\). James Martineau is also of the view that religious beliefs are holding moral relationship with mankind\(^{15}\).
J.M.E. McTaggart says that “It seems to me that if (religion) may best be described as an emotion resting on a conviction of a harmony between ourselves and the Universe at large”\(^1\). As far as Tiele is concerned, “religion is, in truth, that pure and reverential disposition of frame of mind which we call piety” \(^2\). And, according to Edward Caird, “A man’s religion is the expression of his ultimate attitude to the universe, the summed-up meaning and purport of his whole consciousness of things”\(^3\). However, it is important to note the views of Friedrichschleier who says that the essence of religion consists in the feeling of an absolute dependence.

It is religion alone, truly understood and truly practised, that can establish real and permanent harmony in human society and in the relation between individuals, communities and nations. Religion is concerned with the systematic discipline of the entire being of man of his body, senses, mind and heart for the direct immediate intuitive experience of the truth\(^4\).

Again, it is to be learnt that religion has three elements-an intellectual one; it is a process of reasoning, recognising a causative force for the existence of all beings. The content of faith is generally based on the tradition of the human group is emotional element. The last is to volitional element\(^5\).
According to Julian Huxley, “Religion is a way of life. Which follows necessarily from a man’s holding certain things in reverence from his feeling and believing them to be sacred”\textsuperscript{21}.

We may accept the views of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan who says, “Religion is not a creed or a code but an insight into reality, it is a matter of life and experience and not a belief and dogma. It has for its aim the perfection of the deepest reality which is one with the deepest self”\textsuperscript{22}. Hence we are of the view that religion is, in essence, experience of or living contact with ultimate reality. It is the discipline which guides man to fight against the evil and to strive for the truth of the spirit. It wipes of all the anxieties of human life and bring peace and happiness to him.

Religion is a widespread and significant social force. Religion itself has been a dominant factor in the life of a man though its doctrines may differ and activities based on these may vary. From time immemorial, man is found supplicating some unknown power through the medium of song, dance, ritual, ceremony and sacrifice. The nature of this unknown power differed according to the nature of the contemporary conditions. This unknown power was named variously as God, Spirit or Ghost. Religious practices have coloured
both social and the economic life of a man. Art and literature owe much to the ecstasy of religious emotion.

"Religion is the effective desire to be in right relation with the power manifesting itself in Universe"\(^{23}\). Prayer is the medium of this commerce with God. Prayer is action in religion. Prayer is vital in religion. It is not merely uttering some words or reciting certain formula but putting the soul into close relationship with the mysterious power. Religion is the prayer of Heart\(^{24}\).

Thus we classify all the definitions of religion under three categories:

1) a mode of behaviour

2) a system of intellectual beliefs

3) and a system of feelings\(^{25}\).

Definition of religion emphasises the element of belief. Religion is a felt practical relationship with what is believed to be a super-human Being or Beings\(^{26}\). Thouless does not want to use the word 'God' in his definition as this word has not been satisfactory defined. Super-human Being means, a Being greater than man and after whom man goes in search of.

Religion is the behaviour and behaviour produces which are associated with a belief attitude towards some concept of Gods.
Conklin emphasizes the God concept. There can be no religion without God. But mere knowledge of God however extensive may not be enough. One must have strong faith also\textsuperscript{27}.

King in his Development on religion says The fact of religion of any kind in certain individuals implies some sort of conscious states. These conscious states, may be described in part at least as valuational. The religious consciousness may be called a valuating attitude toward something real imagined\textsuperscript{28}.

For Cuber, religion is a culturally entrenched pattern of behaviours made up of
1. Sacred beliefs
2. Emotional feelings accompanying these beliefs
3. Over conduct presumably implementing the beliefs and feelings\textsuperscript{29}.

Sacred beliefs are fundamental to all religion and is accompanied by string emotions like awe, fear, reverence, love, humility and hate. These emotions resulting from belief compel one to observe a formulated code of religious conduct. This includes among other thing prayer, offerings, construct temples to God, following moral precept and charity.
"Religion should be looked upon as a functional part of life, as that mode of behaviours in the struggle for life which use is made of powers characterized here as phycic superhuman, and usually personal. In its objective manifestations, religion appears as attitudes, rites, creeds and institutions, in its subjective expression, it consists of impulses, desires, purposes, feelings, emotions and ideas connected with the religious actions and Institutions.\textsuperscript{30}

Durkheim defines. " A religion is a unified system of beliefs, and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a church all those who adhere to them.\textsuperscript{31}

Religion " is a cultural pattern based on relations with the supernatural or the extraordinary as conceived by the particular people involved. In its purer form it involves.

1) The emotion of reverence

2) The belief in mysterious powers usually personified and not controlled by ordinary means

3) Non-coercive behaviours of man into relation with these powers often with the aid of culture object.\textsuperscript{32}
Galloway clearly mentions that, "Religion is a process which has two sides to it – an inner and outer. From one point of view it is a state of belief and feeling, an inward spiritual, disposition. From another point, it is an expression of this subjective disposition in appropriate acts. These two aspects act and react on one another in promoting religious experience. Faith is the cognitive side of religion. It is motivated by emotion and puts the object which would satisfy the inner urge of the individual into the field of his worship. When man falls in his attempts to achieve anything valuable either spiritual or material he seeks the help of others who are more powerful than himself. The desire for help from the supernatural Being stimulates him to feel and act in a particular way”\(^33\).

Pratt according to that religion is the serious and social attitude of individuals or communities towards the powers which they conceive as having ultimate control over their interests and destinies\(^34\). Grenstead says that may by nature is religious because God has created him\(^35\). Tylor's view is that religion is a belief in spiritual Being\(^36\). Jung states that religion is the culmination of the completeness of life. It is the response of a completeness of life. It is the response of a complete man to the Supreme Being\(^37\) Piper declares that religion is man's search for more secure and abundant life in a precarious world in which God is the greatest fact\(^38\). Arnold
says that religion is morality touched with emotion. Hocking conceives of religion as a matter of feeling which is wider than explicit thought.

On the basis of these definitions, we may conclude that religion is a way of life revealed through emotional expressions, inspired by faith in God, or a supernatural power who controls and guides the action of man and the destiny of the world. Man is not by any means satisfied with his achievements in the world. He feels very often that his life is both inadequate and incomplete. He longs for perfection. This longing makes him to seek the help of some supernatural power which can do for him things that he cannot do for himself. Religious faith is manifested in emotional activities like prayer, worship, singing, dancing, sacrifice, offering and pilgrimage. The development of temple's architecture and festivals conducted incessantly from the past prove that religion is the vital force of man, generating his attitudes.

1.2. CHARACTERISTICS OF RELIGION

1. Belief in supernatural beings (God).

2. A distinction between sacred and profane objects.

3. Ritual acts focused on sacred objects.

4. A moral code believed to be sanctioned by the Gods.
5. Characteristically religious feelings, which tend to be aroused in the presence of sacred objects and during the practice of factual, and they are connected in idea with the Gods.

6. Prayer and other forms of communication with Gods.

7. A worldly view or a general picture of the world as a whole and the place of the individual therein. This picture contains some specification to an over all purpose or point of the world and an indication of how the individual fits into it.

8. A more or less total organization of one’s life based on the world view.

9. A social group bound together by the above⁴¹.

1.3. NECESSITY OF RELIGION

Man stands between the visible and the invisible world. Our ordinary level of consciousness is not the highest form or the sole mode of experience possible to man. To get at the inner experience we must abstract from the outer. We must get away from tumult of sense impressions, the riot of thoughts, the surgings of emotions, the throbs of desires. Also, we have problems both speculative and practical which arise not from any personal desires; they are common to all people in all ages. But these problems, now, press on us in some peculiar terms. That’s why the intellect calls for their solution.
It has widely been admitted that only through faith in God, we can bring in kind he ‘this worldly’ and the ‘other worldly’ experiences. Other than this idea of faith in God, we could not find any alternative remedy for the people who are in the perplexities of a distracted world. Bohme says, that we come into the reality of our being and perceive everything in a new relation. “If we can stand still from self-thinking and self-willing and stop the wheel of imagination and the scenes”. 42

The feeling of dependence, the idea of a higher power, and of a spiritual consciousness, is the starting point of a religion. And if we look for a solution to the problems of these days, we naturally peep into the principles of religion. It is only religion which gives meaning and significance of life in this world of turmoil. Through religion, we can understand the intrinsic value of life, and of our existence. A typically human need can be called the demand for meaning. Life without ultimate significance is not only flat dry and stale, but also it leads finally to the negation of life itself. Men lose heart when they are convinced that their existence is meaningless. A man with a fine car but he has no place to travel can hardly be happy. Similarly, a human being with all the means of life but no point to it as a whole, will find himself in ever deepening frustration.
Thus, the necessity of religion will easily be felt. It is but an intrinsic element of human nature. Not only religion gives the meaning, significance, and value of our life but also the purposes and ends of our life. And we can also see that any religious system is capable of responding creatively to every fresh challenges which come from any quarter. And we may also hold that the necessity of religion also shows the need for a perfect life which opens the gateway of culture.

1.4. AIM OF RELIGION

It has been said that the aim of religion is the realization of the divine in the actual consciousness and the attainment of perfect freedom". That is perfect self-union, perfect boundlessness and blissfulness. We may say that there is no difference between god-realization, self-realization and the realization of moksha or nirvana.

We may claim that the aim of religion is not reflected on ecstasy, but identification with the current of life. The religious man transcends the limitations imposed on him by his material nature or social conditions, and enlarges the creative purpose. Hence Dr. S. Radhakrishnan is of the view that religion is a dynamic process, a renewed effort of the creative impulse working through exceptional individuals, and seeking to uplift mankind to a new level.
1.5. RELIGION AND SOCIETY

It is a matter of fact that we may say that man cannot live apart from society and religion. Today the goal of religion is not only liberation, but it is more concerned with social welfare, social relation, social concession and national integration. Religion is for the betterment of human beings. Social welfare and service of humanity is the call of all religions. And hence religion must be viewed as a part of culture through society.

2. SOURCES OF RELIGIOUS BEHAVIOUR

2.1. THE INSTINCT THEORY

This theory tries to explain many aspects of human behaviour including religion. It was very popular in the earlier decades of this century when behaviour was labelled 'Instinctive'. It was deemed that no further explanation was necessary.

The word 'Instinct' has been used in various senses. McDougall, the doughty champion of instinct theory defines it, as "an inherited or innate psychophysical disposition which determines its possessor to perceive and pay attention to, objects of a certain class, to experience an emotional excitement of a particular quality upon perceiving such an object, and to act regard to it in a particular manner, or at least, to experience an impulse to such action".