

The Evolution of Religious Belief in Human

Kasturi Banerjee Dey¹, Dr. Sudhir Sing²

¹Ph.D. Research Scholar SunRise University, Alwar, Rajasthan India

²Associate Professor, SunRise University, Alwar, Rajasthan India

Abstract: Religion is a primary truth for every civilization. In the process of human evolution the religious beliefs among the primitive man has also evolved. In the early period man has scared from the nature they do not aware about the scientific reason behind the several natural calamities and they start worshipping the nature and this was the first step of religion existence. In this paper I have try to explain the different theoretical modes about the evolution of religious belief.

Key Words: Religion, Animatism, Animism

I. INTRODUCTION:

The evolution of the religious belief among the man is a process of the evolution of human imagination. From the beginning many social scientist and anthropologist has given their views regarding the study of religion. Hence religion is the set of beliefs and thoughts based on theory of mind that produces a shared imagination to enhance survival chance under existential pressure. Many belief that from the period of Mesolithic people start to practice burials with their material things. In 1859 Charles Darwin published his great work in his book 'The Origin of Species'; where he proposed that natural selection is the main process through which any organism evolved, hence after this the views regarding the religious belief has also turned with a new direction. The anthropologist like E.B. Tylor, James Frazer, Herbert Spencers etc have believed about the unilinear evolution of the religion among the human civilization. E.B. Tylor (1871) explained that religion is a cultural truth; and also pointed out that belief creates religion. He proposed the theory of 'Animism'; where he postulate that every living organism has a soul and it is the main impetus of life. Later in 1909 R .R. Marrett a student of Tylor published the book 'The Threshold of Religion' and coined the term 'Animatism'; where he explained that 'nature' creates the religious belief among the primitive man.

The Subject matter of religion is basically a thinking ability of humankind which dealt in anthropology in differently from the other discipline. It tries to explain not what religion is but why it play a significant role among any civilization. There is no society that is known so far without any religious idea.

II. DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF:

As early as 19th century anthropologist and social scientist are attempted to search for earlier forms of religion and religious thoughts and the various causes of change therein. Anthropologists are trying to known the relevance of religion in human societies whether they are technologically advanced or primitive hunters-gatherers. The scholars basically considered the existence of religion belief among the human civilization is a part of their cultural development. Each culture has some unique features of its own and each culture can be studied and described hence the existence of religious belief is versatile in nature as the cultures of human civilization is also versatile. The social and anthropological perspective of religion is the way its practitioners see the world, interpret and see themselves different from others.

Different scholars work on the concept of religion and try to define it according to their understanding. The early work was done by E.B. Tylor (1871), in his book 'Primitive Culture' he defined religion as "religion is the belief in spiritual beings". According to him the evolution of religion occurs from animism to monotheism through polytheism. Tylor himself belief that 'Animism' is the earliest concept towards religion. It is a belief in the existence of spiritual beings. Tylor wanted to know why how and when the concept of spirit was developed. He pointed out that in all primitive society there exist a concept of power inside each living body which he coined as 'soul' or 'anima', the primitive people belief that if the soul leave the body the body becomes still, and this concept of soul is the root of animism. Tylor was criticized by

many scholars, according to them the theory of 'animism' given by Tylor is very complex in nature and it is also not deal with the emotional content of religion. Prof. K. T. Preuss and Prof. Max Mullar postulated a pre animistic stage where the spirit was not supposed to be only those of the dead man; they consider that each and every single object has a life and hence all of them are animate objects. This postulated was developed the theory of 'Animatism' in which Mullar concluded that the earliest form of religion considered the worship of various object in nature. R.R. Merett developed the postulate 'manaism'; it is a Melanesian term meaning power. He argued that all objects in nature have some 'mana'; it attributes as supernatural power of persons and things. In Polynasia any success in life is considered as a result of mana; they belief a master craftsman is able to show his excellence because he possess mana; a weapon for which a warrior wins a battle is also cause of mana; hence every successful man possess the power of mana in the background. The Polynasian think that their king or the leader hold a greater degree of mana than the others and this mana is a pillar of success of their leader. Any misfortune in the kingdom is believed to be caused due to the loss of mana on the part of the king. Herskovit considered that mana is like a electricity; according to him mana is impersonal and like electricity it can be channeled, directed and used to achieve a desired end by one who knows how to manipulate the power of mana.

According to Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) religion arose out of ancestor worship. On the other hand James Frazer pointed out that magic is the source of development of religious source among the primitive man. Emile Durkheim considered religion is the most primitive social phenomena. He argued that it basically divided into two different part one is sacred and the other known as profane. He believed that the sacred part is the religion which contain the gods and deities and the other sacred performances. And the second part is considered as magic. The functional approach of religion is given by Malinowski and A.R. Radcliffe-Brown. On the basis of the fieldwork on Trobiand Islanders Malinowski argued that religion is intimately connected with various emotional states of mankind. According to him religion has a function of bringing about a readjustment between man and the supernatural in upset states of existence. It is a device

to secure mental and physical stability in an individual's life. On the other hand Radcliffe Brown takes a different stand; according to him the function of religion is not to purge fear and other emotional strains from the human mind, but to instill a sense of dependence in it. He belived on the survival of the group rather one individual; and if the latter has to make some sacrifices it is in his interest to do so; because without social survival individual survival is not possible. Therefore the fibction of religion is to create a twofold feeling of dependence on society and thereby obtain the individual's concurrence with the social norms, the ultimate aim being social survival.

III STAGES OF EVOLUTION OF RELIGION

Religion is an universal phenomenon and over the past many scholars has try to give their views about the evolutionary stages of religion. In his work 'Religion in human Evolution' (2011) Bellah try to define the different stage of the religion beliefs; he says that over the years the symbolization of religion had become more complex because the human society become complex in day by day. He categorized the development in five different stages-

- Primitive
- Archaic
- Historic
- Early modern
- Modern

He pointed out the primitive religion was mythical, where nearly every mountain, rock, and tree is explained in terms of the actions of mythical beings. In the archaic stage the religion believes considered as a new world religious system, major part of Africa, Polynasia, ancient middle east, India and China are comes under it. In this stage religion considered as the emergence of cults with a complex of gods, priests, worship, sacrifice, and, in some cases, divine or priestly kingship. The belief of myths and rituals in primitive religion also continue within the structure of archaic religion although it is systematized and elaborated in new cover. The historic stage are more recent and relatively complex which emerged within societies that were more or less literate; these believes are distinguished from archaic religions because they are all in some sense have an awareness of the transcendental as opposed to merely the cosmological

monism of the primitive and archaic religions. Early modern religious symbolism focused on the direct relation between the individual and transcendent reality. According to him modern human beings are secular, materialistic, and areligious would be misguided and would not adequately gauge the modern temper. In the modern era the religious existence is get a new cover; he pointed out that a very high percentage of modern societies has followed the religion thoughts; hence the concept of religion is still important for the civilization to explain their social customs.

IV MAJOR FUNCTIONS OF RELIGION

Religion is a pillar of any society it has some definite function to control the social behavior of human; some are as follows

- It define the meaning and purpose to life.
- It maintain the social stability and uniformity.
- It works as an agent of social control.
- It provide the psychological well-being of man.
- It motivate the individual for positive work which can make a positive social change.
- It promote the spiritual well-being of man.
- It maintain the personal, marital, and family happiness of any individual.

V. OBJECTIVE

- To find out the cause of transformation of religious belief.
- Interpret the socio-cultural impact of religion.
- To find out the social aspect of religion.

VI. CONCLUSION

Religion is a supernaturalism that consists of a system of belief, thought and action. It lies in the core of all primitive as well as civilized cultures. It acts as an internal control power to control society and maintain the moral health of the society. A religion can neither be defined in terms of particular faith; in fact there exist a variety of religious idea among the human civilization. The fast and foremost necessity of religion is to examine the nature of supernaturalism. All religions essentially exhibit a mental attitude towards super nature, which is manifested in belief and rituals. Belief considered as the static part of religion while ritual is a dynamic part of the same. Ritual

consists different actions that aim to establish a connection between the individual who perform the religious act and the supernatural. Belief on the other hand is the character for the rituals who has no direct impact. Hence religious attitude is universal for all known cultures, primitive as well as modern. Religious believes have been associated with the genus 'Homo' for the last 60,000 years at least as inferred from the artifacts.

REFERENCE

- [1] Blume M (2009), The Reproductive Benefits of Religious Affiliation. *The Biological Evolution of Religious Mind and Behavior*, 117-126, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-00128-4_8.
- [2] Robert N. Bellah, *Religion in Human Evolution: From the Paleolithic to the Axial Age*, Harvard University Press, 2011,
- [3] E.B.Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, Cambridge University Press, 1871.
- [4] Robert Marett, Nabu Press, 1909.
- [5] Dr. Indrani basu roy, *Anthropology The Study of Man*, S. Chand Publication, December 2010.
- [6] Makhn Jha, *An Introduction To Anthropological Thought*, Vikas Publishing, January 1994.
- [7] Nadeem Hasnain, *Indian Anthropology*, Palaka Prakashan, 1996.