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Let there be more Light in the Corridors of worship Places

OUTLINE

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Introduction

Thesis Statement : In the world of modernization, man made progress; however, at the expense of religious zeal and spiritual liberation. Ironically, religion, nowadays, is maligned by heinous and malicious acts. Therefore, religion should be realized by its true essence, for it promotes nothing but peace.

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How religion is maligned and misinterpreted

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Theoretical Perspectives to realize the need to get connected with divinity and rekindle relation with divine power

a- Transcendentalism by Ralph Waldo Emerson

b- Concept of Khudi by Allama Iqbal

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Literary Depictions to reveal the dilemma of considering religion either as a threat or a mean for salvation and utility

a- Religio-centrism causes loathe and inferiority complex in other religion followers

(i) Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe

b- Atheism leads people to look down on other people who

believe in religion

(i) Night of the Scorpion
by Nissim Ezekiel

c. Unshakable belief in virtue
and goodness of God gives
strength to face hardship

(i) No Coward Soul is Mine
by Emily Bronte

d. Religion as a complete code of
life guides human beings and
spread message of peace

(i) Prophet by Kahlil Gibran

5 Religions strive for peace and denounce
terror and vandalism

- a. Islam
- b. Christianity
- c. Judaism
- d. Hinduism
- e. Buddhism

6. How intolerant and parochial religious
outlook of the contemporary world has
shaken the peaceful foundations of
religion

- a. Islamophobia and unprecedented
rise in the desecration of
holy books
- b. Rise of Far Right parties
suppressing religious minorities
- c. Sectarian violence resulting
in massive bloodshed

7 To inculcate 'Let there be more light
in the corridors of worship places',

measures must be taken in consideration

- a. Realize the true essence of religion and practice it
- b. Enact laws to protect the minorities and consider their sentiments
- c. Promote religious tolerance to co-exist peacefully
- d. Freedom to practice religion peacefully

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Conclusion

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that" (Martin Luther King, Jr)

This quote can be referred to the gloomy contemporary situation of today's world where religion is brutally slandered and polarized. It expresses that only with gentle care, light and love can we drive out darkness that is veiled on religion. In the world of modernization, man made progress; however, at the expense of religious zeal and spiritual liberation. Ironically, religion, nowadays, is maligned by heinous and malicious acts. Therefore, religion should be realized by its true essence, for it promotes nothing but peace. To support the need to rekindle relation with divinity, Iqbal's

concept of Khudi and Emerson's Transcendentalism presents strong theoretical arguments. Moreover, literary depiction of religiocentrism, atheism superiority complex presents the grim reality of world. On the other hand, religion as complete code of life and God as the symbol of strength presents the ideal lens to practice religion. Additionally, religions like Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism promote and strive for peace. However, acts of desecration of holy books, suppression of religious minorities and sectarian violence presents the devastating result of misinterpreting religion. Therefore, measures such as realization of true religion, enactment of minority protection laws, promotion of religious tolerance and freedom to practice religion must be taken into account to drive out the darkness of parochial religious views.

With millions of innocent people killed and uncountable people displaced as a result of WWII, people were sceptic to believe in the existence of God. As WB Yeats writes, "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; / Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world, / The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere / The ceremony of innocence is drowned /

also (5) not only but also

(WB Yeats, The Second Coming) Not only this, but the books of Darwin and Karl Marx further shake the foundations of religion. People became not only atheists, but also anti-religion. Further, the 9/11 incident aggravated the concept of religion which changed the dynamics of the world. The religion is maligned, nowadays, and seen as a threat for the peaceful existence of the world. Therefore, there is strong need to condemn the catastrophic devastation of the world.

Among the number of theoretical perspectives that reinforces the idea to get connected with divinity, Ralph Waldo Emerson's Transcendentalism remains the crucial one. Transcendentalists advocated the idea of personal knowledge of God with no intermediary required for spiritual insight. Emerson advocated the need to rekindle relation with sole power to attain spiritual liberation and transcend the bounds of physical world. He says, "what lies behind us, and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us." Thus, Emerson reinforces the idea to make alliance with divine power to attain peace.

In addition to Emerson's Transcendentalism, Iqbal's concept of Khudi remains significant to comprehend divine spark. Iqbal's philosophy revolves around the issue of the progression of human being in the direction of Allah Almighty. He states that even though man was made a supreme being, but he was reduced to the lowest of low because he lost his divine spark. He says that till his ego is perished before God, he cannot achieve 'Ultimate Ego'. He says, "Rise your khudi to such heights that before every decree God himself ask you "Tell me what is your wish?." To sum up, Iqbal expresses the need to get connected with divine spark which constitutes the integral part of a man.

Literature is a depiction of life. It reflects social, political, economic, psychological and prevalent beliefs of the society belonging to an era. In the same manner, literature has been used to depict the different dimensions of how religion is viewed in a society.

To begin with the parochial views of religion, religio-centrism causes wrath and inferiority complex in those people who follow other religion. Chinua Achebe's masterpiece 'Things Fall Apart'

centers around the theme that people who are xenophobic ridicules the other religion followers. To illustrate, he writes that imperialists took pride in their religion and caused great deal of pain to colonized minds. They shunned their religions and filled them with inferiority complex. Achebe writes, "the white man says that our customs are bad; and our own brothers who have taken up his religion also say that our customs are bad. The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peacefully with his religion and we have fallen apart." To conclude, literature depicts that xenophobia and religiocentrism create loathe in people.

Second, literature also expresses that people who do not believe in religion look down on those people who do believe in religion. Nissim Ezeziel in his poem, 'Night of the Scorpion', illustrated that how people from the west mocked the beliefs of the local people based on the fact that they themselves abandoned their religion. Ezeziel presents that locals tried to subside the pain of author's mother who was stung by a scorpion with their religious mantras. He writes, "The peasants came like swarms of flies / and buzzed in

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the name of God a hundred times /
to paralyse the Evil one" / (Nissim
Ezekiel, Night of the Scorpion) To sum
up, hatred is spread, according to
literary depiction, when one looks down
on religion.

In contrast, to show
religion as a mean of salvation,
literature has been used as a finest tool.
To start with the goodness of religion,
unshakable belief in virtue of God gives
strength to face hardship. Emily Bronte,
in her poem, 'No Coward Soul is Mine',
presents that how steadfast belief in
God gives strength to face every misery
of life. She states that those who
believe in God never fear from the
wrath of life, for they derive courage
from the omnipotent. She describes,
"No Coward soul is mine / No trembler in
the world's storm-troubled sphere / I see
Heaven's glories shine / And Faith shines
equal arming me from Fear." (Emily
Bronte, No Coward Soul is Mine) Thus,
religion gives strength in the face of
miseries and hardships.

Second, religion guides man
in every aspect of life as depicted
by literature. The Prophet, one of the
finest publications of the 20th century

by Kahlil Gibran explores the theme of religion as a complete code of life. Kahlil Gibran writes in his book about a fictitious prophet who preaches about religion which is full of love and peace. He speaks in his sermon about ethical values of life and guide about everything from family, relationship, friendship, love, children, work to death. Thus, religion is rightly depicted as the ideology which preaches anything but terror and vandalism.

"Compassion is the key in Islam and Buddhism and Judaism and Christianity. They are profoundly similar." (Karen Armstrong). Despite differences in the number of God, style of worship and belief system, one thing that unite all religions together is that they all preach for the preservation of peace and denounce vandalism.

To begin with Islam, it preaches for peace and unity in the world. The advent of Islam itself brought peace in the Arabic world who were ignorant and savages. Islam revolves around the message of peace and equality. Allah says, "And fight in the way of God with those who

fight with you, but aggress not: God loves not the aggressors. (2:190) This verse strongly advocates that God forbids the killings and aggression in the world. To conclude, Islam revolves around the message of love and denounce violence and killing.

In addition to Islam, Christianity also denounces and condemns violence and bloodshed in the world. Christianity is a religion of peace and it always advocates to live with peace and fraternity. It never speaks in the favour of aggressors and stands with oppressed. Bible says, "And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful." To conclude, Christianity as a religion promotes peaceful living and compassion for everyone.

Moreover, Judaism, another Abrahamic and divine religion, focuses on the concepts of peace, tranquility and harmoniousness. Judaism advises its followers to follow what is right and what brings peace and order in the world whereas it shuns people from following what is evil and anything that can wreak

havoc in people's life. The Bible of Jews writes, "Turn from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it" (Psalms 34:15). Therefore, Judaism like other two divine religions strive for peace in the world and never supports evil and malicious acts.

Additionally, Hinduism teaches its followers to get close to the Supreme, for God always gives peace. Hinduism, the religion of Hindus, along with divine religions gives the message of peace and unity to its followers. "One who is not connected with the supreme can have neither transcendental intelligence nor a steady mind, without which there is no possibility of peace" (Bhagavad-git, 2nd chapter, 66th verse). Therefore, no religion including Hinduism gives the message of radicalism and extremism to its followers and only preaches peace.

In the last, Buddhism considered as one of the most peaceful religions of the world stresses on the need of peaceful living in the world. Buddhism which revolves around the philosophy of 'wantlessness' teaches the important principle of ahimsa, the 'non-injury' of other living things.

Buddha said that, "Speak only endearing speech, speech that is welcomed. Speech, when it brings no evil to others, is a pleasant thing." Thus, Buddhism like all religions takes up peace as a fundamental part of faith and shuns any sort of violence and terror.

Despite the peaceful teachings of religions, the intolerant and parochial religious outlook of the contemporary world has shaken the peaceful foundations of religion.

Among the number of malicious acts to malign religion, Islamophobia and unprecedented rise in the desecration of holy books remains the most crucial one. After the aftermath of 9/11 incident, there is igniting fire in the west against Islam as they see Islam as a threat and as a result of it, they desecrate the holy books. For example, since January 2023, there is rise in the burning of holy text books in west especially in Scandinavian countries which they conceal under the name of freedom of speech. Therefore, religious is not a threat but made one by those who themselves are hate-mongers.

Along with the rise of islamophobia, the rise of far-right parties also add fuel to the fire of religious suppression. Far right parties play a major role to suppress religious minorities and treat them as threat to their own people. For example, there is a rule of far right party in France which banned hijab, in India who goes with ideology of Atchand Bharat and Hindutva, for which they suppress millions of muslims. Moreover, in Israel, which stamps the rights of innocent Palestinians just because they are muslims. To conclude, the rise of the far-right parties has contributed a lot to the religious hatred.

In addition to these, not only fight of different religions has wreaked havoc, but the sectarian violence within a religion has shuddered the concept of peace. Sectarian violence between Sunni and Shia sects has resulted in massive bloodshed in the world. To illustrate, the proxy wars under the influence of sectarian supremacy between Iran and Saudi Arab has killed and displaced a lot of people in war-torn countries like Yemen, Syria, Lebanon,

Iraq, Kuwait etc. Not only them, but Pakistan itself has seen massive bloodshed in the name of sectarian supremacy and religious radicalism. Thus, sectarian violence has resulted in the bad image of religion.

To inculcate that there must be more light in the corridors of worship places, tangible measures must be taken into consideration. To begin with, religion must be realized in its true essence and practice accordingly. People should learn religion instead of adopting what they are taught by others. To illustrate, various institutes and books along with seminars should be joined and consulted to learn religion by tangible source, so that people realize its true nature of peace and practice it accordingly. Therefore, religion should be learned to attain the actual spiritual liberation.

Furthermore, to protect the minorities and respect their sentiments, government must take initiatives to enact laws. Laws should protect the freedom and liberty of religious minorities, so that they do not feel inferior and threatened. For example, Both Denmark and

Sweden are reportedly considering the banning of desecration of religious texts on security grounds. Moreover, the laws must be swift and effective, so that no one evades its grip. To conclude, the government must enact laws to protect the religious minorities, for no one in world is the person of lesser God.

Moreover, there is a strong pull to promote religious tolerance to co-exist in the world peacefully. People should be motivated and trained to be indifferent and rather sympathetic towards other religions with different faith. To illustrate, people in the west should learn to not look down on the people of other religions. Similarly, Muslims and Hindus should co-exist peacefully, for both of their religions promote peace and fraternity. Therefore, people should be motivated to be welcoming to other people without letting their personal biases and prejudices between them.

In the last, there should be freedom for everyone to practice his/her religion peacefully. There should not be any ban on someone wish to wear hijab, turban or their choice to not

wear it at all. All should be given equal opportunities and liberty to practice his/her religion peacefully as long as it does not cause/render any harm to others. To illustrate, it can be related to John Stuart Mill's concept of liberty which says that man can exercise liberty until it does not bring harm to others. To sum up, for there be more light in the corridors of religion, there must be liberty to practice religion.

In conclusion, even though, man made progress, as defined by theory of social evolution, they did it at the expense of their divine spark and religious enthusiasm. Religion is victim of malicious and heinous acts, for it is misunderstood and misinterpreted. Thus, there is a dire need to make a connection with divinity again to face the strings of life. The theoretical concepts of Allama Iqbal's Ichudi and Emerson's Transcendentalism presents the journey of spiritual liberation. Moreover, literary works also depicted the way religion was either looked down by xenophobic and looked upon by those who realized religion's peaceful essence and nature.

Furthermore, all religions including Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism support the peace and denounce any sort of terror, violence and vandalism. However, the radical religious outlook of the contemporary world has destroyed the basis of religions with rise of burning of sacred holy books, rise of far-right parties suppressing minorities and immense bloodshed because of sectarian violence. Despite the darkness of these acts, the light of worship places can bring peace in world through the realization of religious spirit, enactment of laws protecting minorities, promotion of religious tolerance and freedom to practice religion peacefully. Therefore, there should not be any stone left unturned to promote the positive and real outlook of religion, for only darkness can be driven out by light.