

PROJECT REPORT

RELIGION AND SOCIETY

**- A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF RELIGION WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO S. RADHAKRISHNAN**

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Preface

Recently, study of religion in social context has become very relevant all over the world. Religion, being a factor of culture, is a continuous growth and influences from past to present give form and colour to the spiritual consciousness of man. Religion is seems to be one of the most powerful, intensely felt, and influential forces in human society since it provide a foundation for the consciousness of value. It has shaped people's relationship with one another influencing family, community, economic and political life. Hence it is worthwhile to study religion from social perspective in this contemporary world.

In India religion is understood as "Dharma" which has been conceived as that which maintains or sustains human society and the world. Dharma sustains human society in the sense that it governs the conduct and behaviour of the people and thus maintains order and balance in society. Radhakrishnan considers "Dharma" to be a word of protean significance which explains that it is the concept under which the Hindu brings the forms and activities which shape and sustain human life.

The proposed research project is an attempt to study sociological approach to religion with special reference to S. Radhakrishnan. Radhakrishnan's social philosophy is wholly pervaded by religious ideals and values. According to him, religion in the true sense has a positive role in the resolutions of problems rooted in the complexity of modern society. Radhakrishnan holds that the gap between man and man can't be bridged on the ground of a theory which formulates objectives and means of social development in terms of science and technology alone. Radhakrishnan talks about the ideals of establishment of a world community based on the universal moral order. True religion will bring people of the world close to one another. A socio-political system based on the philosophy of spirit is an open system in the sense that it derives its force from a reality which is not exhausted by revealing itself in spacio- temporal texture. Such a philosophy has got unbounded relevance today for the contemporary society.

Proposed project consists of five chapters. Chapter1: Introduction. Chapter2: Approaches to religious studies, Chapter3: Sociological approaches of religion, Chapter4: Radhakrishnan's conception of religion and society, Chapter 5: conclusion.

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NILAMANI DUTTA

Religion and Society- A Sociological study of Religion with Special reference to S. Radhakrishnan

Introduction:

Religion, the most fundamental as well as universal aspect of human life, has been co terminus with human history. It has been expressed in different tradition in different way. Comparative as well as recent study of religion reveals that, philosophy behind religion rest on its influence on society. It is a binding force of society. It is certainly true that religion has been used to justify social, economic, political and other concern. In the history of religious studies, religion has been interpreted basically from transcendental as well as rationalistic perspective. But these two perspectives of religious studies culminate in social good. Society is the ultimate concern of religion though the heart of religion is divinity.

History of religion reveals that religion has many stages and forms, and its message varies when we pass from age to age and race to race. But it is a continuous presence among man, and whether in rude and stammering tones or in refined speech; it expresses man's answer to the problem of his existence and his destiny. Religion grows just because it is the expression of human spirit which is involved in the process of growth. The course of development, however brings with it expansion and articulation of the structure of society. Religion being an element of social life must interact with the other factor involved in the process of development of society. Galloway observed "Through the various forms of culture man can promote the growth and fullness of his life : in religion he finds the meaning and purpose of life itself"¹ Religion being a factor of culture, is a continuous growth, and influences from the past to present, give form and colour to the spiritual consciousness.

Religion and Society- A Sociological study of Religion with Special reference to S. Radhakrishnan

Introduction:

Religion, the most fundamental as well as universal aspect of human life, has been co terminus with human history. It has been expressed in different tradition in different way. Comparative as well as recent study of religion reveals that, philosophy behind religion rest on its influence on society. It is a binding force of society. It is certainly true that religion has been used to justify social, economic, political and other concern. In the history of religious studies, religion has been interpreted basically from transcendental as well as rationalistic perspective. But these two perspectives of religious studies culminate in social good. Society is the ultimate concern of religion though the heart of religion is divinity.

History of religion reveals that religion has many stages and forms, and its message varies when we pass from age to age and race to race. But it is a continuous presence among man, and whether in rude and stammering tones or in refined speech; it expresses man's answer to the problem of his existence and his destiny. Religion grows just because it is the expression of human spirit which is involved in the process of growth. The course of development, however brings with it expansion and articulation of the structure of society. Religion being an element of social life must interact with the other factor involved in the process of development of society. Galloway observed "Through the various forms of culture man can promote the growth and fullness of his life : in religion he finds the meaning and purpose of life itself"¹ Religion being a factor of culture, is a continuous growth, and influences from the past to present, give form and colour to the spiritual consciousness.

Throughout the history of civilization, religion has played an essential role in many societies. There are many reasons why religions have played such a prominent role in defining the culture of a society, but arguably the most notable of these reasons is that a belief or faith in a spiritual or divine power can add meaning and significance to many people's worldly lives. In cultural system religion is the inspiring spirit which gives meaning and direction to the whole. In themselves the various factors of social life may be regarded as means to the realization of higher values. It is the characteristic of spiritual religion to relate the values realized in human life to an ultimate and supreme value. This final value is not a temporal but a transcendent Good.

Religion, as an element of culture is inherent in many aspects of society which has balanced the order of human relationship. Religious beliefs inevitably affect areas such as politics, economic, and cultural values. Though many people believe that religion occurs only in church, temple, or other spiritual gathering, a closer look at religion and society reveals that the two are not separate at all, but intricately interconnected and inter-dependent. No religion descends from heaven in a social vacuum nor is it practiced in an ethereal or ideal environment. Every religion comes into existence in a society when it gets corrupted or deviates widely from the acceptable path which can ensure good for the whole society. Hence one has to understand the genesis of religion in the light of the society it is born in.

Approaches of Religious Study:

In the history of religious study, Religion has been studied from different perspectives. Generally it is observed that religion has been coterminous with human history. In nearly all societies-primitive, agrarian and industrial- religion has been present in one form or other. Scientific study of religion begins in 19th century in which

Max Muller played very vital role in this regard. Recently religion has been studied in its multidisciplinary aspect. With regard to the theoretical formulation of religion, there are generally different approaches to study of religion.

1. Anthropological approach
2. Psychological approach
3. Sociological approach
4. Phenomenological approach
5. Spiritual Approach of Radhakrishnan

Sociological approach to Religion :

The study of religion has played a vital role in the discipline of sociology since its very beginning in the mid-19th century. Sociology of religion often asked the question about what people believe how religion is organised and how religion affects various aspects of social life. Sociological study of religion explores religion from a variety of different vintage points within the social science, and considers the influence of religion in different areas of social life including the family, race, imagination, and politics.

Sociological study of religion emerged from the philosophy of the enlightenment on the one hand and its Romantic critique on the other². Though sociological study of religion attempt to make religion the object of scientific study, sociology has inherited certain pre-supposition from the philosophical discourse that shapes its perspective on religion in different ways. The renewed global importance of religion has a profound impact on the sociology of religion. It not only provided the discipline within an opportunity for empirical study of religious phenomena on a global scale, also it challenges its conventional theoretical perspective. In order to have better

understanding of the development of the sociology of religion, one has to consider how social scientific understanding of religion is informed by basic assumptions about western modernity, the course of the history, and the place of man in this world.

Martin Riesebrodt and Marry Ellen Knoieczny mention three classical paradigms that had the strongest impact on the sociological study of religion. They are Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Marx weber. Like Plato and Aristotle from ancient Greece, and enlightenment philosopher from the 17th through 19th century, the idea posited by these socialists continue to be addressed today. The works of founding fathers of sociology, including Comte, Marx, Durkheim and Weber make frequent reference to theological discourse or to studies of religious behaviour and belief system. However in the middle part of the last century sociology of Europe and north America came to see religion as of marginal significance in the social world, but with the advent of post modernity as well as high or late modernity, and the resurgence of religion in many different global contexts religion has acquired renewed sociological significance, both in developing societies and in Europe and north America. Consequently the social study of religion has begun to emerge from merging of sociological discipline and manifests a growing commonality of interest with mainstream sociological concern around such cluster of issues as ecology and embodiment, social movement and social protest, globalization, nationalism and post modernity.³

Auguste Comte (1798-1857) was commonly regarded as the father as well as founder of modern sociology. He advocated three stages of evolution of human thought in his book "Course de philosophic positive". According to him in the first stage nature is explained in terms of supernatural beings, in the second by abstract concepts and in the third by scientific causes. He was of the opinion that religious belief and rites bring about social solidarity.⁴ In other words he emphasised the social dimension of religion.

According to Comte sociology was modelled on natural sciences. Empirical observation of human society would give rise to rational and positivistic account to social life which would provide the organising principle for the science of society. In modern society sociology would replace theology as the source of guiding principle and value of human life. The positivistic interpretation of Comte's conception of sociology predicted the complete disappearance of religion and theology as modes of behaviour and belief in modern society. Another evolutionary sociologist Herbert Spencer traces the evolution of religion from ancestor worship through polytheism to monotheism. In his book "Principle of Sociology" the elements of cognitivist and evolutionism are prominent.

From same emergent tradition of evolution French sociologist Emile Durkheim offered a evolutionary account of human societies from tribal to republican, and from magical to rational, and an account which involves the gradual eclipse of religious rituals and dogmas. In his classical works "The Elementary Forms of Religious Life" Durkheim provides much richer analysis of the social function of religion. He considers religion as a distinctive aspect of social reality. By internally regulating the egocentric impulses of man religion makes social life possible⁵. Drawing accounts of the religious practices of Australian aboriginal societies, Durkheim identifies a totemic principle in the interaction between religious belief and practices and nature of tribe. He was of the opinion that the ritual and doctrinal distinction between sacred and profane perform a vital social function in balancing the inherent tension of every society, between structure and counter structure order and chaos, morality and deviance⁶.

According to Durkheim religion is a social fact. "In elementary forms of religious life" Durkheim seeks to identify and define basic element of religion. He distinguishes between magic and religion: magic being individual, religion being communal. Durkheim defined religion " as a unified system of belief and practices

relatives to sacred thing, that is to say , thing set apart and forbidden – belief and practices which unite into one single moral community called church , all those who adhere to them”(elementary forms of religious life) For Durkheim sociological study of religion denotes the function which religion perform in mediating and generating social solidarity, sustaining society, in face of threats to its survival whether from other tribe, from within the tribe, and from natural disaster. According to him religion unites members of the society around a common symbolic account of their place in the cosmos, their history and purpose in the order of the things. Hence it reflects that religion is a source of social and moral order binding the members of the society to a common social project, a set of shared value and social goal.

Durkheim’s sociology of religion is based on social order and its socializing, civilizing, and moralizing mission. According to him, human beings have a double nature consisting of body and soul. On the one hand they drive by bodily needs, following their egoistic natural drives and desire; on the other they have souls, which are social and moral. The task of any social order is to keep the egoistic drive of individual in check and to transform these individual into social and moral agent who conforms to group norms.⁷ Emile Durkheim laid the foundation of sociological study of religion in the west. His works exercise a considerable influence over the sociology of religion which may be seen in certain version of the secularization thesis in Robert Bella’s approach to civil religion and moral value and in the works of Bryan Wilson on the function of religion

Like Durkheim Karl Marx (1818-1883) also regarded religion as a social product, and as an agent of social order in pre-modern societies. According to Marx primary function of religion is to generate order, not creating a commitment to a common social project, but rather to legitimize the unjust and harsh rule of feudal

lords over the peasant or of capitalist over workers. For Marx religion obscures the true nature of things from the masses of the people, mystifying the origins and reality of their oppression, and representing the right of the rulers over the ruled as element of a divinely ordained social order. He also insists that religion acts as an opiate, drugging the masses in their oppression, promising them rewards in the hereafter, or providing them with ritual escape into ecstasy as compensation for their lowly status and oppression in the here and now.⁸

According to Marx, religion is an expression of material realities and economic injustice. Thus problems in religion are ultimately problems in society. Religion is not the disease but merely a symptom. It is used by oppressor to make people feel better about the distress they experience due to being poor and exploited. Marx throughout his work saw religion as a part of a structural system of oppression. Marx's famous statement "religion is the opium of people" appears in his "A contribution to the critique of Hegel's philosophy of right" published in 1844. Marx argued that humans are the creation of their circumstances. Man makes religion, religion does not make man. Religion is indeed man's self-consciousness and self-awareness so long as he has not found himself or has already lost himself again. But man is not abstract being squatting outside the world. The state and his society produce religion, which is an inverted consciousness of the world, because they are the inverted world. According to him religion is the general theory of this world, a universal basis of consolation and justification. It is the fantastic realization of the human essence since the human essence has not acquired any true reality. The struggle against religion is therefore, indirectly the struggle against that world whose spiritual aroma is religion.⁹

Marx defined religion in terms of social phenomenon like class struggle. It is born out of alienation of workers from the product of their work. In order to understand

the Marx idea of religion, we need to explore the idea of "alienation" in Marx critique of religion. The concept of alienation is deeply embedded in all the major great religion and social and political theories of the civilized epoch, namely, the idea that sometime in the past people lived in harmony and then there was some kind of rapture which left people feeling like foreigners in the world. Generally alienation is defined as a constraining process of human consciousness arresting the development and ultimate potential of what human consciousness should properly be. P. Clodi said that alienation "is the negative process by which a subject makes himself other than himself by virtue of a constraint which is capable of being removed on the initiative of the subject himself."¹⁰ Marx was very much concerned about the nature and process of alienation and he examined different type of alienation, how it happened and how it could be solved.

According to Marx religion plays an obvious role in this process of alienation. In early societies religion consists mainly in a response to the mysteriousness of the nature and expresses humanity's lack of understanding and control. But in more advanced society's religion increases the understanding of the true nature of social relation by expressing the alienation inscribed into class structure. Religion by creating the illusion of a transcendental power of perfection which demand submission to the status quo, also prevent social actor from collectively establishing a social order that would allow them to realize their full potential as social and creative human beings.¹¹

Religion, for Marx is like other social institution, dependent upon the material and economic realities in a given society. It has no independent history; instead it is the creature of productive force. Religion can only be understood in relation to other social systems and the economic structure of society. It dehumanizes man. Therefore it is the duty of man to over through all those condition under which he became dehumanized,

oppressed and enslaved. Marx rejected all theories of supernatural powers, all the realities beyond the world and established the truth of this world, the only reality of this sensuous world which can be empirically verifiable. For Marx, sense perception is the sole criterion of reality, a sensuous or a natural being alone is real; a non-natural object, an object that is not an object of sense is an imaginary being, a being of abstraction and therefore, a non-being.¹²

Since man is incomplete in his actual life, he creates an alien being outside and above himself, attributes his own powers to it, projects his own consciousness into it and therefore suffers a loss of power in himself without realizing that those alien powers are really his own powers, God derives his peculiar characters from what the man himself gives up in the process of fantastic creation of God. Consequently, "the more man puts into God, the less he returns (for) himself."¹³ This is the reason why according to Marx, man makes religion, but religion does not make man. Religion is a mark of oppression and exploitation. For an oppressed man, religion provides an illusory relaxation from the hardship of his real life. For this reason religion, for Marx, is 'the opium of the people'. It is a hopeless search of man for a divine meaning in the face of his own meaningless existence.

Max Weber (1864-1920) was German sociologist and political economist who profoundly influenced the social theory, social research and the discipline of sociology itself. Weber's works in the field of sociology of religion started with the essay "The protestant ethics and spirit of capitalism" and continued with the analysis of the religion of china: Confucianism and Taoism, the religion of India: the sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism. According to Weber religion is one of the core forces in the society.¹⁴ Weber attempted to find reason for the different development path of the culture of the western and Eastern tradition. He wanted primarily to explain the distinctive element of

the western civilization in which he found that religious ideas had a major impact on the social innovation and development of economic system of the west.

Max Weber was famous among modern sociologists for his systematic investigation into various traditions of religion. According to him rationalization is the key process in the development of modern society. Reason steadily replaces faith. He claimed that the spirit of capitalism had its origin in the early forms of Protestantism, particularly Calvinism and the spirit of capitalism was one of the main factors in the development of rational capitalism. Weber's sociology of religion begins with an enquiry into the religious sources of modern capitalism and ends with a cross-culturally comparative study of rationalism embedded in the religious tradition of China, India, and ancient Judaism.¹⁵ According to Weber, modern West is the result of a unique rationalization process, which has effected not only its economic system and its bureaucratic organisation but also its culture- especially its science, music and art.

Weber offers a penetrating consideration of religious meaning and doctrines, including belief about God, Theodicies, or explanation of evils, stories of salvation, and channel of divine power and grace. And finally he gives an extended consideration of the interaction between religious meaning and ethical system and human social order, and particularly of economic order and exchange relation. Weber's historical study of the interaction between religion and capitalism reflects his understanding of the generative potential of religious meaning and practice in the wider organisation of society.¹⁶

Weber has been engaged in cross-culturally comparative study of the economic ethics of the world religions. By studying the religion of China (Weber 1920\1951) and India (1920\1958) he concludes that they offered to their practitioners very different psychological incentives from western religion, especially ascetic Protestantism¹⁷.

Western rationalization process of this religiously motivated ethos contributed to the disenchantment of the world by rejecting all irrational means of attaining salvation, and promoted the emergence of rationally organised institutional order and ethics.

Above discussion of Durkheim, Marx and Max Weber regarding the sociological study of religion reveals that they together did not expect that religion will disappear in due course of time, but they assumed that it would be transformed in the modern world. The next generation of scholars elaborated this argument in more details; usually fusing the tradition of Durkheim and Weber as they understood them. Martin Riesebrodt and Marry Knoieczny observed that those who were working in the Durkheim tradition tended to focus on the integrative role of religion at the social centre, Weberian turned instead to religious movement at the margin of society.¹⁸

The central debate in the contemporary sociology of religion lies in between advocates and opponents of the secularization thesis which has dominated society theory since Comte and Durkheim. Secularization refers to those processes by which religion loses its dominance and social significance in society. The principal theorists of secularization are Bryan Wilson, Peter Berger, David Martin, and Steve Bruce.¹⁹ According to them secularization is a consequence of modernization. Cultural reading of new age movement and exploration of the interaction between beliefs concerning the unseen spiritual world and personal or social empowerment, exemplify the interactionist sociological paradigm. The principal contemporary exponent of this approach was Peter Berger (1929) He attempted in his famous book "Sacred Canopy"(1967) to explain religion in secular terms which he called "methodical atheism"²⁰ According to Berger religion is the human enterprise by which a sacred cosmos is established²¹. Religion confers sacred power on the object and meaning with which humans construct social world and models of the cosmos. Religion represents the

attempt to set the human project at the centre of the universe, and to confer human meaning on the whole cosmos.

In India sociological study of religion in academic sphere is a later development. Religion is understood in India as "Dharma" that shapes the character of man both as an individual and as a member of society. Religion and ethics combine here. Religion is a right living, the observance of which secures value and restore social unity. But unlike western thinker who entirely eliminate the transcendental aspect of religion, in India societal aspect of religion is encouraged by faith in a spiritual reality.

In the early days, works of certain outstanding philosopher like Max Muller(*Rigveda*) P.V. Kane (*Dharma shastra*) and R.G. Bhandarkar(*Religious sect*) reflects some sociological studies of religion. The more recent contribution of N.K. Bose, G. S. Ghurye and G.P. Sontheimer also reflects sociological aspect of religion. N.K Bose's book " *The structure of Indian society*' (15) refers to the abiding cultural unity of India through religious belief and practices. He also referred to the inter linkage among the tribes, cast and region through the sharing of common Hindu value. G. S Ghurye in his book "*God and men*' (16) noted that deities such as Shiva, Vishnu and Shakti were religious symbols who integrated the diverse group of India. S. Radhakrishnan interpretation of religion is a land mark in the history of comparative study of religion. He assumed that religion has a strong social dimension. His major works "Religion and Society" published in 1947 reveals that religion is essentially associated with society which can restore the unity of the society.

Hence, it is observed that sociological study of religion (both in west and east) reveals the fact that religion has a societal base, Some treat it from non -trance dental source and some from trance dental source. Religion is the integrative framework of the society.

Radhakrishnan Conception on Religion and Society :

Religious philosophy of S. Radhakrishnan is a landmark in the history of philosophy of religion since he has given a panorama of central core of religion, apart from giving a authoritarian as well as institutional interpretation of religion. According to Radhakrishnan the mandate of religion is that man must make the change in his own nature to let the divine in him manifest itself. He admitted that religion is a man search for his greater self and is not satisfied in accepting any creeds as final or any law as perfect. It is eternal and ever-growing. AS he observes, "This is the teaching not only of the Upanishad and Buddhism but also of the Greek mystics and Platonism of the Gospel and school of Gnosticism. This is the wisdom to which Plotinus refers when he says 'This doctrine is not new; it was professed explicitly; we wish only to be interpreter of the ancient sages, and to show by evidence of Plato himself that they had the same opinion as our self'. This is the religion which Agustin mentioned in his well known statement; that which is called the Christian religion existed among the Ancient and never did not exist from the beginning of human race until Christ came in the flesh, at which time the true religion which already existed began to be called Christianity'. This truth speaks to us in varying dialects across continent and over centuries of history."²² From the above observation of Radhakrishnan regarding the history of religion he categorically admitted that a true religion is a perennial wisdom, it is eternal behind all religions that is "*Sanātan Dharma*"; a timeless tradition of human race.

According to Radhakrishnan if we survey the historical view of different religions, we will be able to obtain a more comprehensive vision and understanding of the spiritual truth. This spiritual unchanging substance of religion is the evolution of man's consciousness. He admitted that witnesses of this spiritual consciousness were

not only by great religious teachers and leaders of mankind, but by the ordinary street man, in whose inmost being spirit is set deep. He has given more emphasis on universality of religion by scrutinizing different living religions of the world. Being an idealist he insisted upon the spiritual unity of mankind. He says, "we may measure true spiritual culture by the comprehension and veneration we are able to give all forms of thought and feeling which have influenced mass of mankind. We must understand the experience of people whose thought eludes our categories. We must widen our religious perspective and obtain world wisdom worthy of our time and place".²³ So it very distinctly observed, religion is the most universal aspect of human life which influences the life of man living in a society. According to Radhakrishnan it is our duty to get back this central core of religion, this fundamental perennial wisdom which has been obscure and distorted in the course of history by dogmatic and sectarian development. So it is observed, in the light of Radhakrishnan's conception of religion, like many modern thinkers both in India as well as abroad he insisted upon eternal religion which is free from any kind of sectarian outlook. J.G. Arapura has commented on significant of Radhakrishnan conception religion in this way: "The significance of Radhakrishnan thought lies in that he had attempted, with considerable success, to restate certain aspects of Vedānta, and recapture the eternal meaning of religion for modern man. He has related the imperishable truth of religion to modern enquiry, setting them in vivid contrast to the grand and magnificent structure of modern man's ignorance which he is pleased to call knowledge, and has addressed his message to contemporary man in his predicament"²⁴ Thus it is clearly noticeable that Radhakrishnan conception of religion reflects the eternal meaning of religion. As he observed, "If religion is to become an effective force in human affairs, if it is to serve as the basis for the new world order, it must become more inward and more universal."²⁵

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Dharma, according to Radhakrishnan is a word of protean significance. It is derived from the root 'dhr' (to uphold, to sustain, to nourish). It is the norms which sustain the universe, the principle of a thing in virtue of which it is what it is.²⁶ Radhakrishnan defined Dharma as the whole duty of man in relation to the fourfold purposes of life (dharma, artha, kama and moksa) by members of the four groups (caturvarna) and the four stages (caturasrama)²⁷. By means of this threefold discipline the Hindu strives to reach his destiny, which is to change body into soul, to discover the world's potentiality for virtue and desire happiness from it. The four ends of life point to the different sides of human nature, the instinctive and the emotional, the economic, the intellectual and the ethical, and the spiritual.²⁸ There is implanted in man's fundamental being a spiritual capacity. He becomes completely human only when his sensibility to spirit is awakened. The basic principle of Dharma is the realization of the dignity of the human spirit, which is the dwelling place of the supreme. As Radhakrishnan says "The knowledge that the supreme spirit dwells in the heart of every living creature is the abiding root of all dharma." He also says "Know this to be the essence of Dharma and then practise it; refrain from doing unto others what you will not have done unto yourself"²⁹. We must look upon others as ourselves. According to Radhakrishnan virtues incumbent on all are the non-hatred to all beings in thought, word, and deed, good will and charity. Our social life must be directed so as to recognise effectively the right of each of its members to live work and grow in his life as a person. It is consecrated activity. The core of the individual life transcends the social forms, though he has need of them. Social life is a movement in our destiny, not the terminus; its state is always one of tension and movement. Radhakrishnan observed "the Hindu Dharma gives us a programme of the rules and regulations and permit their

Dharma, according to Radhakrishnan is a word of protean significance. It is derived from the root 'dhr' (to uphold, to sustain, to nourish). It is the norms which sustain the universe, the principle of a thing in virtue of which it is what it is.²⁶ Radhakrishnan defined Dharma as the whole duty of man in relation to the fourfold purposes of life (dharma, artha, kama and moksa) by members of the four groups (caturvarna) and the four stages (caturasrama)²⁷. By means of this threefold discipline the Hindu strives to reach his destiny, which is to change body into soul, to discover the world's potentiality for virtue and desire happiness from it. The four ends of life point to the different sides of human nature, the instinctive and the emotional, the economic, the intellectual and the ethical, and the spiritual.²⁸ There is implanted in man's fundamental being a spiritual capacity. He becomes completely human only when his sensibility to spirit is awakened. The basic principle of Dharma is the realization of the dignity of the human spirit, which is the dwelling place of the supreme. As Radhakrishnan says "The knowledge that the supreme spirit dwells in the heart of every living creature is the abiding root of all dharma." He also says "Know this to be the essence of Dharma and then practise it; refrain from doing unto others what you will not have done unto yourself"²⁹. We must look upon others as ourselves. According to Radhakrishnan virtues incumbent on all are the non-hatred to all beings in thought, word, and deed, good will and charity. Our social life must be directed so as to recognise effectively the right of each of its members to live work and grow in his life as a person. It is consecrated activity. The core of the individual life transcends the social forms, though he has need of them. Social life is a movement in our destiny, not the terminus; its state is always one of tension and movement. Radhakrishnan observed "the Hindu Dharma gives us a programme of the rules and regulations and permit their

constant change. The rule of Dharma is the mortal flesh of immortal ideas, and so is mutable."³⁰

S. Radhakrishnan emphasised greatly on the role of religion in society throughout his work. Though he was appreciating western culture of material development, at the same time he emphasised the importance of spirituality as the guiding principle of civilization. Radhakrishnan believed that the true religion, however, agrees with the social idealist in affirming eternity of human life on this earth life as well as society. Love of man is basic to religion as worship of God. According to Radhakrishnan we must seek our evolution through life itself, by transforming it, by changing our self. To him religion is based on the discovery of the essential worth and dignity of the individual and his relation to higher world of reality as a result of which man cannot be satisfied by worldly success or triumph of materialistic science. As he exemplified "That he is capable of martyrdom for the ideals shows that he lives in and for a world of eternal realities".³¹ Thus it reflects that according to Radhakrishnan religion is the discipline which touches the conscience and helps us to struggle with evils and sordidness, save us from greed, lust and hatred, release moral power, and impart courage in the enterprise of saving the world^{32aa}. As a discipline of mind, he holds that religion contains the key and essential means of coping with evils which threaten the existence of the civilized world. He pointed out that growth cannot be measured in terms of only material and technical advance but by creative changes of the mind and spirit of the people. Spiritual values like Love for truth and beauty, righteousness, justice and mercy, sympathy with the oppressed and belief in the brotherhood of man are the qualities which can save the world. Thus in this context religion is very relevant in social relation.

According to Radhakrishnan the purpose of religion is to restore the lost relationship between the individual and the eternal. Religion, in its etymological interpretation suggests that religion should be the binding force of society which deepens the solidarity of human society in spite of the obvious shortcoming of historical forms. He says "it is not theology, but practice and discipline"³³. Radhakrishnan observed the present crisis of society and felt the need of religion in society. As he observed "we are living in a world in which tragedy is the universal. There is a startling relaxing of traditions, of restraints and of established law and order. Ideas which until yesterday were regarded as inseparable from social decency and justice, which were able to direct and discipline conduct for centuries are swept away. The world is rent by misunderstanding, bitterness, and strife."³⁴. Present age is revolutionary because the rate of change is very rapid. Everywhere according to Radhakrishnan we hear the sound of breaking, changes of social, political, and economic institution, and changes in the dominance of belief and ideas, changes of fundamental categories of human mind. He says "it is a vast convulsion of society as a whole. It is not mere war, but a world revolution of which the war is a phase, a major alternation in the entire thought and structure of civilization, a crisis that goes to the very roots of our civilization."³⁵ we live in a period of agonising strain, of grave anxiety, of manifold disillusionment. The world is in a trance. He says "Men of intelligence, sensitiveness and enterprise are convinced that there is something radically wrong with the present arrangements and institutions in regard to politics, economics and industry, and that we must get rid of them if we are to save humanity."³⁶It is an age, incoherent in thought and indecisive in action. Our values are blurred, our thought is confused, our aims are wavering, and our future is uncertain. According to Radhakrishnan if we are to overcome the danger that threatens us, we must confront them fearlessly and take the necessary measure. The issue of religion in

current situation is not in regard to doctrinal differences or ritual disagreement, but it concerns the very existence of religion. The mind of the world requires to be pulled together and the present aimless stare of dementia should be replaced by collective rational purpose. As Radhakrishnan observed we need a philosophy, a direction and a hope, if the present state of indecision is not to lead us to despair. Belief may be difficult, but need for believing is inescapable. We are in search of a spiritual religion that is universally valid, vital, clear cut, one that has an understanding of the fresh sense of truth and the awakened social passion which are the prominent characteristics of the religious situation today. According to Radhakrishnan the severe intellectual honesty and the burning passion for social justice are the expression of spiritual sincerity. Our religion must give us energy of thought which does not try to use evasion with itself, an energy of will which gives us the strength to say that we believe and do what we say.

For Radhakrishnan exclusion of religion from society is the primary cause of anarchism. Religion operates as a fulcrum of social norms ideals. Our social life will change if there will be any disruption in religion because social organisation is the outer expression of the human will and desires. Social changes occur only for the establishment of harmony among men. Society is an interrelationship of the individuals and all individuals are guided by the moral law in which religion expresses itself. The endeavour of social organisation is to allow to men mundane things so natural to him within the framework of religion. True religion should not be confused with an organised church. It has no single teacher or book. It is something which has to grow from within the anvil of experience. This kind of religion is rather to be lived than believed.

The economic factor is not the sole reality of society. The will power of man can change the direction of the economic condition. The ideal of value which we cherish in

one mind is the main factor for the change of any existing order. Wealth is for the sake of man but man is not only for the sake of wealth. As Radhakrishnan says, "The present economic order is unjust not because it makes man unhappy but because it makes them inhuman. Happiness is not the end of the man but dignity."³⁷

According to Radhakrishnan the absence of true religion is the cause of the all round unrest and crisis in the present world. Radhakrishnan draws attention to this again and again in almost all his works and advocates a spiritual renewal, a true religious revival, which alone can save the world from the imminent disaster. He observed that the west inherited the emphasis on intellectual culture from the Greeks. The development of science and technology, and their ability to invent machines and control nature for the advantage of man have added to prestige of the intellect. The culture of the spirit has suffered set-back. Life has become aimless, a sport to passions, racial prejudice, national antagonisms. The neglected and suppressed spirit of man has been the cause of perpetual unrest, individual, social and national. This unrest is the sign of an unbalanced civilization which lays stress on one aspect of man and ignores the rest. Hence religion (Dharma) is the obligation to become a universal self; it is also the realization of the Brahman-Atman unity in a cultural as well as in an individual context. In this sense, Dharma comes to mean the ideal of the summum bonum of human life. In Radhakrishnan's view, the ideals of civilization are generated and prescribed by Dharma.

Radhakrishnan was of the opinion that suppressed by the scientific intellectualism and starved by traditional religion, the spirit of modern man has always been seeking some other means of satisfying its hunger as a result of which they are devising several ways to escape from the present confusion what Radhakrishnan calls "substitutes for Religion". He says "The philosophical fashion of naturalism, Atheism, agnotism,

scepticism, humanism and authoritarianism are obvious and easy, but they do not show an adequate appreciation of the natural profundity of the human soul.”³⁸ In spite of our ethical culture and rationalistic criticism according to Radhakrishnan we feel that our lives have lost the sense of direction, it is because we have secularized ourselves. He says “Human nature is measured in terms of intellection. We have not found our true selves, and we know that we have not. It is a self-conscious age in which we live.”³⁹ He also says “our division is profound and no organised religion is able to restore the lost unity. We are waiting for a vital religion, a live philosophy, which will reconstruct the bases of conviction and devise a scheme of life which man can follow with self-respect and joy.”⁴⁰

A living society must have both the power of continuity and the power of change. In a civilized society progress and change are the life –blood of its activity. As Radhakrishnan says “nothing is so subversive to society as a blind adherence to outworn forms and obsolete habits which survive by mere inertia”⁴¹ According to Radhakrishnan the Hindu view of religion makes room for essential change. We cannot identify Dharma with any specific set of institutions. It endures because it has root in human nature, and it will outlive any of its historical embodiments. Thus it reflects that the method of dharma is that of experimental change. We cannot transfer the beliefs and usage of one age to another. Moral ideas about social relation are not absolute, but relative to the needs and condition of different type of society. Radhakrishnan observed “though Dharma is absolute, it has no absolute and timeless content. The only thing eternal about morality is man’s desire for the better. But time and circumstances determine what the ‘better’ is in each situation”⁴². He maintains that undying timeless truths manifest themselves in ever-returning newness of life. The principle of dharma, the scale of value, is to be maintained in and through the new experiences. Only then it

will possible to attain balanced and integral social progress. So it is clear that according to Radhakrishnan religion should have the power to cope with the situation as they come and he was liberal regarding the permeation of new forces in our society. He observed that if religion is to become an effective force in human affairs, it is to serve as the basis for the new world order, it must become inward and more universal, a flame which cleanses our inner being and so cleanses the world. Thus Radhakrishnan was very clear in his thought about the dynamic role of religion which can contribute towards the progress of society.

Radhakrishnan observed that world stands at the crossroad, faced by the two alternatives: organisation of world as one whole or periodic war. We make the society in which we live. We are the masters of the institution which has wrong turn and we must discover the necessary remedies for this sick society. According to Radhakrishnan the world will pass through a phase of growing pains before it reaches a new equilibrium. Even though there may be set backs and relapses, the human race is bound to move towards a saner world. But the pace is set by our courage and wisdom. Aim of religion according to Radhakrishnan is identification with the current of life and participation in its creative advance for the progress of society. Religion (Dharma) is a dynamic process, a renewed effort to the creative impulse working through exceptional individual and seeking to uplift mankind to a new level. Meditation and worship are the means by which the mind, temper and attitude to life are refined.

Radhakrishnan observed that the serious distemper of our social life is due to the imbalance of relationship between social institution and world purpose. He says "nature has made many races with different languages, religions and social traditions, and has set man the task of creating order in the human world and discovering a way of life by which different groups can live peacefully together without resorting to force to settle

their differences.”⁴³. According to him the goal of world process is not intended to be a battle ground of warring nations, but a commonwealth of different groups co-operating in a constructive effort to achieve dignity, noble living and prosperity of all. He also observed that necessary condition for world union is available; only the will of man is lacking. According to him through the facilities of transport and communication the world has become neighbourhood. Science recognises no political and social boundaries and speaks a language which is understood by all. The impact of machine on man has shattered the pre-machine world of entirely independent state. The industrial revolution revolutionized the economic structure that we have in society with world economy which calls for a world order. He contends that Science reveals identifiable cosmic element as the basis of human life, Philosophy visualized a universal consciousness at the back of nature and humanity and Religion refers to our common spiritual struggle and aspiration. He observed that though we have increased production, combated disease, organised commerce and made man master of his environment; and yet the lord of the earth cannot live in safe. This war haunted, machine driven civilization cannot be the last word of human striving. We will know that scientific organisation cannot be the fulfilment of the spirit of man. He says “The defeat of human by the material is the central weakness of our civilization”⁴⁴ According to Radhakrishnan the fear which is the expression of man’s rationality cannot be removed only by any change in outer circumstances. As he observed “we may abolish the horror of the industrial age, clean up the slums and diminish drunkenness; yet the spirit of man cannot by these measure alone gain anything in security.”⁴⁵. There are sufferings which can be overcome by changes in the social order, and it is our duty to achieve a social revolution and remove these social wrongs of hunger, cold, illiteracy, sickness, unemployment. But we have to recognise that there are certain evils which are

organic to the spiritual condition of man and so cannot be removed by social changes. Thus it is observed that according to Radhakrishnan crisis of present society lies on lack of spirituality of man. To him so long as man's life is limited to science and art, technical invention and social programmes, he is incomplete and not truly human, if we are insolent and base, unfair and unkind to one another, unhappy in personal relationship, and lacking in mutual understanding. He observed that the everlasting vagrancy of thought, the contemporary muddle of conflicting philosophies, the rival's ideologies which cut through national frontier and geographical divisions, are signs of spiritual homelessness⁴⁶. According to Radhakrishnan the unrest is in a sense sacred, for it is the confession of the failure to have a self sufficient humanism with no outlook beyond the world. We cannot find peace only through economic planning or good political arrangement. But only the pure in heart, by fostering the mystical accord of mind can establish peace, justice and life in society. He says "we suffer from sickness of spirit. We must discover our roots in the eternal and regain faith in the transcendent truth which will order life, discipline discordant elements, and bring unity and purpose in to it"⁴⁷. Hence it reveals that only the material development cannot be regarded as totality of human development unless it ignores the spirituality of man which is associated with values for the sustaining of society.

Radhakrishnan was against the nationalism based on fanatical patriotism, blind will for power and unscrupulous opportunities. It is a case of one's country against the rest in a never ending contest. The states become a monstrous slave driver and our inner lives are deadened. The more dead we are in our inner being, the more efficient are we for nationalist ends. According to Radhakrishnan our preference for the present order need not be confused with an inescapable law of the universe. The impulse for truth and compassion which is ingrained in human nature requires us to live as free individual in

a friendly world. He observed that "if we are true patriots, our attachment will not be local, racial or national, but human. it will be a love of liberty for all, of independence, of peace and social happiness. We will fight not for our country but for civilization."⁴⁸ Civilization is a way of life, movement of the human spirit. Basis of civilization lies not in any biological unity of race, or in political and economic arrangements, but in the values that create and sustain them. According to him politico-economic structure is the frame work which gives expression to the passionate loyalty and allegiance of the people to the vision and values of life which they accept. Radhakrishnan says "every civilization is the expression of a religion, for religion signifies faith in absolute values and a way of life to realize them."⁴⁹ Thus Religious faith gives us the passion to preserve the values in life and in society.

Nothing is perhaps the greater need of the hour than a sense of real understanding amongst the various religions of the world. True to the tradition of Indian philosopher and saints, Radhakrishnan has always struck a note of an inner harmony and unity existing among religions. According to him, differences between religions are only outward. In their essence they are all one, because all of them are the relative expressions of the some basic truth. As Radhakrishnan observes, "The different creeds are the historical formulations of the formless truth. While the treasure is one and inviolable, the earthen vessel that contains it takes the shape and colour of its time and environment."⁵⁰ Religion is a transforming experience. True religion stands for the fellowship of all faiths. A man may subscribe to all the tenets of his theology and perform the elaborate rituals ordained, yet if he is consistently dishonest, completely selfish and wholly unrepentant, his religion is a fraud. True religion expresses itself in harmony, balance and perfect agreement between body and soul. It furthers the evolution of man in to his divine stature, develops increased awareness and integrity of

understanding. Thus it brings about a better, deeper and more enduring adjustment in life. In this sense religion is the binding force of humanity

According to Radhakrishnan the aim of religion is to take the natural life of man and subject it to control without unduly interfering with its largess. It has two sides: the social and the individual, the *Varna dharma*, which deals with the duties assigned to men's position in society as decided by their character (*guna*) and function (*karma*); the *asrama dharma*, which deals with the duties relevant to the stages of life, youth, manhood, or old age.⁵¹ Man is not only himself, but is in solidarity with all of his kind. According to Radhakrishnan two principles which must govern all group life are the free and unfettered development of the individual and the healthy growth of society. To him individual and society are interdependent, as he says "the sound development of the individual is the best condition for the growth of the society and a healthy condition of the society is the best condition for the growth of the individual".⁵²

According to Radhakrishnan religious life is a rhythm of withdrawal and return: withdrawal into individual solitariness, which expresses the need for thought and contemplation, and return to the life of society. Both these aspects, the individual and the social, are essential. The individual must never submit to that total annexation by society or by any of the numerous intermediate groups. He observed that "the strength of the society is derived from that of forceful individual. If individuality is lost, all is lost. Modern man, without losing their social consciousness, must discover within himself a source of individual initiative sufficiently strong to cope with social despotisms".⁵³

Thus according to Radhakrishnan true religion is a simple one, that is free from the shackles of creeds, dogmatic sentiment or supernatural elements. It affirms the reality of the spirit that broods over the time and space. He says "He that does good is

of God. To do justly, to love beauty, and to walk humbly with the spirit of truth is the highest religion"⁵⁴ It is the universal religion which is not confined to any race or climate. He also says that " whenever the soul comes to itself, in any land or any racial boundaries, whenever it centres down in its inward deeps, whenever it sensitively responds to the currents of deeper life that surround it, it finds its true nature and lives joyously, thrillingly, in the life of spirit. Through the birth of one whose consciousness is absorbed in the supreme spirit, the infinite ocean of wisdom and bliss, the family become pure, the mother is of fulfilled desire and the earth gets sanctified"⁵⁵. Hence religion is an understanding of the inner self and the power of self can restore the order of the society as a whole.

Radhakrishnan emphasised greatly on the spiritual unity of mankind. According to him all the spiritual data of the world of mankind, have their foundation in the recognition of the real, spiritual unity of mankind, a unity to which the individual belongs in a stratum of his nature lying more deeply than that in which he belongs to any empirical community. To him if we are centred in the spiritual reality, we shall be free from the greed and fear which are the bases of our society which is anarchic and competitive. Furthermore he also emphasised that to change it to a human community in which every one's physical and psychical advance is possible, we have to enlarge our consciousness, increase our awareness, recognise life's purpose and accept it in our works which require the purgation of the self. He says "we must free the consciousness from the distortion of greed and fear, from the illusion of egotism; and when we possess purity and single-heartedness, we get changed. We become what we see, are re-natured, understand the character and purpose of the world, and are able to live in this world as God wishes us to live."⁵⁶ Thus Radhakrishnan in his interpretation of religion emphasised that purpose of religion is the evolution of human life, the re-making of

man. As he says "we cannot hope to change human life and society without a change of human nature."⁵⁷

Hence Radhakrishnan affirms that we need today a profound change in man's way of life which can secure the future of this civilization. It is the change of response to the meaningful pattern we discern in history. It is the submission of the self to reality. It is the practice of religion which affirms that things spiritual are personal, and that we have to reflect them in our lives, which require us to withdraw from the world's concern to find the real, and return to the world of history with renewed energy and certitude. He says "we suffer from sickness of spirit. We must discover our roots in the eternal and regain faith in the transcendent truth which will order life, discipline discordant elements, and bring unity and purpose into it."⁵⁸

Radhakrishnan points out that presently religions are inadequate in moulding the social relations due to disparity between outward allegiance and inward betrayal among the people. Religion is confused with the mechanical participation in the rites or passive acquiescence in the dogmas. Many people observed the forms of religion, the gesture of faith, the conventions of piety, but they do not model their lives on the precepts they profess. He says "we keep up the forms of religion, which seem to be of the nature of play-acting"⁵⁹. According to Radhakrishnan religion insists on behaviour more than on belief. We must live religion in truth and deed and not merely profess it in words. He observed "we believe that our faith is widespread and its adherence are conforming their acts to the ideals they profess, then the conclusion is inevitable that religion is invaluable as a means for the improvement of the individual and society."⁶⁰ Hence for religion, in order to be an effective force in social relation, there should be no difference between our belief and our behaviour. Belief and behaviour must go together.

Radhakrishnan was against the assumption that spiritual life is different from the ordinary social life. We cannot draw a sharp line of distinction between religion and social life. Social organisation rests ultimately on a series of decisions taken by human beings as to the manner in which they and their followers shall live. These decisions are the matter of spiritual discernment which can be implemented by improving the technical knowledge and social sense. Under the concept of Dharma, Radhakrishnan brings the forms and activities which shape and sustain human life. We have diverse interests, various desires, conflicting needs, which grow and change in the growing. To round them off into a whole is the purpose of religion. He says "A stable social order is the ground work of civilised life. Religion is social cement, a way in which men express their aspiration and find solace for their frustration."⁶¹ According to Radhakrishnan we seek religion as a defence of the established order. All religion is conformist in spirit and tries to appease those who hold power in the world. Religion insists on compassion to the suffering. Referring to Christianity which asks us to do good to them that hate us and despitefully use us, Radhakrishnan says "there is nothing special in loving those who love us or who are themselves lovable. Jesus asks to love our enemies in the hope of reawakening their humanness, their potential capacity for love"⁶²

Radhakrishnan observed that religion is generally condemned as imposture kept alive by its alliance with vested interest. Religions have certitude to the promotion of culture, art, and spiritual life; but they have also been vitiated by dogmatism and fanaticism, by cruelty and intolerance and by intellectual dishonesty of their adherents. Those who revolt against these practices are the truly religious people as Radhakrishnan believed. We deem ourselves religious even when we plan deliberately the destruction of innocent millions. No religion has a claim to our allegiance if it does not produce a tradition of humanity and social responsibility. Thus, it is evident that Radhakrishnan

emphasised more on social aspect of religion which can be a cementing factor of society and foster social unity.

Conclusion :

Hence on the basis of above discussion it may be said that religion plays a pivotal role in society as well as in social relations. Both from Indian and western perspectives religion is treated as a part of human society. It an integral part of society. In west social aspect of religion is treated from materialistic perspective of human life, on the other hand in India social aspect is look at from wholly idealistic perspective of life. Religion primarily is concerned with enhancing and fostering values among the individuals of the society which bind society together.

Religion, being an element of human culture is closely associated with the society. Religion is one of the most powerful, intensely felt, and influential forces in human society. It has shaped people's relationship with one another influencing family, community, economic and political life. Religious values motivate human action and religious group organise their collective religious expression. Thus, religion is a significant aspect of social life and the social dimension is an important aspect of religion.

Three classical western paradigms that had the strongest impact on the sociological study of religion in the west are Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Marx Weber. They together did not expect that religion will disappear in due course of time, but they assumed that it would be transformed in the modern world. Religion is the eternal element of society. It is the ever-evolving spirit of society and guides the order of the society. So it is found that in classical western perspective religion is conceived as having strong social significance but they did not emphasise any more on the inner as

well as spiritual aspect of religion, they confined only to the material world keeping aside transcendental realm of human personality in which sacredness of mind consists.

It is found that according to Indian world view, as a social being, a person has no existence outside his network of relationship. According to them the interrelationship between man and society is presumed to be complex and hierarchical, transcending the boundaries of the material world. The ego identity in this sense is considered to be a social construction, something which is contingent on one's life experiences and social background. Thus one's social self exists only in the mind of the person, not in reality. Self development lies in realizing this unreal existence and in promoting one's Dharma without a attachment. Thus, this view of religion (Dharma) provides 'ideal image' of life in Plato's sense and deals with prescriptive social behaviour for the sustenance of society. According to Indian view in its social implication, religion or Dharma is an inherent force in human being which holds the individual and society together, in other words, the force which makes individual and society hold each other together. Thus, philosopher's of ancient India speak of a universal religion based on solidarity with the earth and all beings. They stress on an understanding of the intrinsic interdependence of all beings. According to them, such an understanding is essential for grasping the truth of the interconnectivity of all life. Hence, the religious thinkers of ancient India are known for accommodation, conciliatory and synthesizing attitude of the mind.

S. Radhakrishnan's social philosophy is wholly pervaded by his religious ideas. Radhakrishnan bases his conception of religion on idealism. His approach to religion is synthetic in nature. His thoughts are the harmonizing force in the world of religion. His synthetic approach to religion is meant to achieve harmony between the old and new, between wisdom of the ages and the forces of rationality, science, progress etc. So, Radhakrishnan did a very excellent job by presenting Indian treasure of wisdom in

contemporary terms to the cause of interreligious and intercultural understanding. The spirit of Radhakrishnan's religious philosophy consists fundamentally in the attitude of synthesis or the concept of organic unity which has intrinsic value in interreligious dialogue of present society. Arnold Toynbee⁶³, a modern historian, philosopher, concludes that history of mankind does not progress in a straight line, but is the sum of civilizations that are held together by a common culture which is religion. It is observed that with the rise of globalization people of the world become close to one another as a result of which faiths of the world become one, so the synthetic religion of Radhakrishnan is gaining much more importance in present context of religious study.

So, it can be concluded that religion has been conceived as that, which maintains or sustains human society and the world. Dharma sustains human society in the sense that it governs the conduct and behaviour of the people and thus maintains order and balance in society. Society enjoys security, peace, order and harmony when the people act and behave in accordance with the moral and spiritual values laid down by Dharma in their personal, social and professional life.

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