

# ROLE OF RELIGIONS IN DEVELOPMENT OF INDIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

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## ABSTRACT:

*As we all know India is land of religions and religious activities. In India, our ancestors followed the the unique tradition while educating their young ones. They had adopted the "Gurukul" system for the education purpose which is much more related to modern day boarding schools. The students from the top three Varnas of that time Indian society which are Brahman, Kshatriya and Vaishya are allowed to educate themselves by this Gurukul system. Vedas were the common books for the Gurus (teachers) in that Gurukuls while teaching to their Shishyas (students). Most of the times, Gurus used to have their own Gurukul in their own house and the students from the different villages used to come in their Gurukuls for the education purpose. In Christianity, their missionaries have started to teach Bible as well as other scriptures in their religion to the students and they are doing it quiet regularly and without any resistance. In Islam, they have also started to teach Qur'an to their students. We also started to teach our great scriptures to our students, like Mahabharata, Ramayana, Bhagvad Gita, Upanishads, Vedas and other ancient scriptures. Three came out of the Middle East (Judaism, Christiamity, and Islam). The other two came out of India (Hindism and Budhism). There have been periods of intolerance such as the Mogul Muslim rulers following Akbar (17th century) and the terrible out breaks of communal violence with partition of the Raj (1947-48). India today is a vibrant multi-religious and higly tolerant society. Indian people of all religions live in peace and harmony. This is an important part of the identity of the Indian nation. India is a predomintntly Hindu nation, but there is a substantil Muslim minority as well smaller number od many othef religion. There is complete religious freedom for all of these groups. Muslim leader Muhammad Ali Jinnah did not think this was possible and demanded partition to crate a separate Muslim state. This was the genesis of Pakistan. But in Pakistan the tolration and religious diversity of India was lost. Ironically, there is more toleration and religious freedom for Muslims in India than Pakistan.*

## INTRODUCTION:

Religion and Education, two of humankind's most ancient endeavours, have long had a close relationship. Historians and social scientists have written about this relationship and about how the two may influence each other.

This research presents a broad overview of scholarly research into the ways religion can affect educational achievement. It is not an exhaustive survey of the academic literature, but instead a brief summary of some explanations proposed to account for attainment differences among religious groups. Religion is certainly not the only reason for this variance; many other factors may play an equal or greater role, including economic, geographic, cultural factors and political conditions within a country or region.

The chapter begins with an historical look at ways in which scholars suggest that various religions have influenced education, especially the spread of literacy among laypeople. This section also explores how historical patterns sometimes help explain contemporary patterns in educational attainment. Next, this chapter considers hypotheses about how the cultural norms and doctrines of a religious group may affect educational attainment. It concludes with a look at some leading theories for the stark differences in educational attainment between Christians and Muslims living in sub-Saharan Africa.

Looking to the past:

Contemporary access to schooling – a solid pathway to educational attainment – depends on a country's educational infrastructure. In many instances, the foundations of that infrastructure are based on facilities

originally built by religious leaders and organizations to promote learning and spread the faith.

In India, the most learned men (and sometimes women) of ancient times were residents of Buddhist and Hindu monasteries. In the Middle East and Europe, Christian monks built libraries and, in the days before printing presses, preserved important earlier writings produced in Latin, Greek and Arabic. In many cases, these religious monasteries evolved into universities. Other universities, particularly in the United States and Europe, were built by Christian denominations to educate their clergy and lay followers. Most of these institutions have since become secular in orientation, but their presence may help explain why populations in the U.S. and Europe are highly educated. Apart from their roles in creating educational infrastructure, religious groups were foundational in fostering societal attitudes toward education.

### **ROLE OF RELIGIONS IN DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION SYSTEM IN INDIA-**

As we all know India is land of religions and religious activities. In India, our ancestors followed the the unique tradition while educating their young ones. Most of the times, Gurus used to have their own Gurukul in their own house and the students from the different villages used to come in their Gurukuls for the education purpose in Hinduism. Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, Animism and Christianity played important role to develop the education system among the society. Now we shall discuss these religion and their contributions to education system in India and world.

#### **1. Role of Hinduism:**

For Hindus, education vanquishes a fundamental source of human suffering, which is ignorance, says Anantanand Rambachan, a professor of religion at St. Olaf College. As a result, education has been highly valued in Hinduism since the religion's inception in ancient times. Hindu scriptures urge adherents to seek knowledge through dialogue and questioning, and to respect their teachers. "Learning is the foundational stage in the Hindu scheme of what constitutes a good and a meaningful life," Rambachan says. Since ignorance is regarded as a source of human suffering, he adds, "the solution to the problem of ignorance is knowledge or learning."

The Hindu esteem for education is reflected in different ways. To start with, the most authoritative Hindu scriptures are the Vedas, a word that comes from the Sanskrit root word vid, which means knowledge, Rambachan says.

University of Florida religion professor Vasudha Narayanan says Hindus regard two types of knowledge as necessary and worthwhile. The first, vidya, is everyday knowledge that equips one to earn a decent and dignified life. The second, Janna, is knowledge or wisdom that brings awareness of the divine. This is achieved by reading and meditating on Hindu scriptures.

Historically, the caste system in India was a huge barrier to the spread of mass literacy and education. Formal education was reserved for elite populations. But in the seventh and eighth centuries, the vernacular language of Tamil began to be used for religious devotion in southern India, which led to greater access to all kinds of knowledge for a wider group of people. "That is when you start having men and women of different castes composing poems of praise for God, poems that are still recited in temple liturgy today," Narayanan says.

Later, in the 18th and 19th centuries, both secular and religious education came to be seen by Hindus as a universal right, and it gradually began to be extended to all members of the faith. Still, today, the vast majority of Hindus (98%) live in developing countries – mainly India, Nepal and Bangladesh – that have struggled to raise educational standards in the face of widespread poverty and expanding populations, which helps explain why Hindus have relatively low educational attainment compared with other major religious groups.

#### **2. Role of Buddhism:**

Scholars of Buddhism note that Siddhartha Gautama, the religion's founder, often is called "teacher" because of his emphasis on "the miracle of instruction." He considered learning essential for attaining the Buddhist goal of enlightenment.

"In many ways, Buddhism is particularly dedicated to education because unlike many other religions it contends that a human being can attain his or her own enlightenment ('salvation') without divine

intervention,” writes Stephen T. Asma, a professor of philosophy at Columbia College Chicago.

Buddhism is “also extremely empirical in its approach, suggesting that followers try the experiment of dharma (i.e., Buddha’s Four Noble Truths) for themselves to see if it improves their inner freedom,” Asma notes, adding: “Because the philosophy of Buddhism takes this pragmatic approach favouring education and experiment, Buddhism has little to no formal disagreement with science (as evidenced by the Dalai Lama’s ongoing collaboration with neuroscientists).”

This theoretical openness to scientific knowledge, however, did not always play out at the practical level within Buddhist communities, Asma contends. “Powerful Buddhist monasteries, especially in China and Tibet, frequently resisted modernization (including science) for fear of foreign influence and threats to entrenched Buddhist power structures,” he writes.

Despite this tension between theory and practice, Buddhism has been a major influence on the educational systems of many places, especially India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos and Tibet. From around the fifth century onward, Buddhist monasteries emerged as centres of education, not just for monks but also for laymen. Several monasteries became so large and complex that they are considered prototypes of today’s universities. In India, the most famous of these educational centres – Nalanda, in what is now Bihar state – is said to have had 10,000 students from many different countries, and offered courses in what then constituted philosophy, politics, economics, law, agriculture, astronomy, medicine and literature.

In Thailand, monastic schools located in Buddhist temples were the main source of education for male children for many centuries, though they offered primarily religious education. When the Thai government introduced Western-style, secular education around the beginning of the 20th century, it used monastic schools as the vehicle for reaching the wider population. As of the 1970s, “almost 50 per cent of Thailand’s primary schools [were] still situated in Buddhist monasteries.”<sup>47</sup> Similarly, in Japan the Buddhist monastic education tradition was so influential that one 19th-century scholar of Japan wrote that “Buddhism was the teacher under whose instruction the nation grew up.”

### 3. Role of Jainism

Jainism is an off-shoot of Buddhism. It was in many ways a protest against Hinduism, but also influenced by the long Hindu traditions. Vardhamana Mahavira (599-527 BC) was a contemporary of Buddha. He claims to have achieved enlightenment (about 557 BC). He founded Jainism that came to a major competitor with Hinduism at a time of great religious ferment in India. The final and maximum law of Jainism is ahimsa (non-violence). Jain tradition teaches a succession of 24 Tirthankaras (Saints) who are the foundation of the religion. The last Tirthankara was Vardhamana who is called Mahavira (the great hero) and Jina (the victor). The Jains believe that all matter and spirit in the universe are eternal. Jains believe that spirits retain consciousness of identity through successive incarnations. These incarnations were determined by one’s conduct. The goal of life is to reach Nirvana which is release from body and matter. Jains believe that an individual can reach Nirvana after nine reincarnations.

### 4. Role of Judaism:

High levels of Jewish educational attainment may be rooted in ancient religious norms, according to some recent scholarship. The Torah encourages parents to educate their children. This prescription was not mandatory, however, until the first century.

Sometime around 65 C.E., Jewish high priest Joshua ben Gamla issued a religious decree that every Jewish father should send his young sons to primary school to learn to read in order to study the Torah. A few years later, in the year 70, the Roman army destroyed the Second Temple following a Jewish revolt. Temple rituals had been a pillar of Jewish religious life. To replace them, Jewish religious leaders emphasized the need for studying the Torah in synagogues. They also gave increased importance to the earlier religious decree on educating sons, making it a compulsory religious duty for all Jewish fathers. Over the next few centuries, a formal school system attached to synagogues was established.

These developments signaled “a profound transformation” of Judaism, according to economic historians Maristella Botticini of Bocconi University and Zvi Eckstein of the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya. Judaism became, they write, “a religion whose main norm required every Jewish man to read

and to study the Torah in Hebrew and to send his sons from the age of 6 or 7 to primary school or synagogue to learn to do so. ... Throughout the first millennium, no people other than the Jews had a norm requiring fathers to educate their sons.”

This religious obligation meant that male Jews, to a greater degree than their contemporaries, were literate, which gave them an advantage in commerce and trade. Jewish scholarship was enhanced in the early Middle Ages, beginning in the late sixth century, by the emergence of Talmudic academies of Sura and Pumbedita in what is now Iraq. In the late Middle Ages, centers of Jewish learning, including the study of science and medicine, emerged in what is today northern Spain and southern France.

Until the early 19th century, however, most education of Jewish boys was primarily religious. That began to change with the Haskalah, the Jewish Enlightenment movement initiated by East and Central European Jews. This intellectual movement sought to blend secular humanism with the Jewish faith and to encourage openness to secular scholarship among Jews. It revived Hebrew as a language of poetry and literature, which reflected the reformers’ appreciation of their Jewish religious heritage. At the same time, they were strong proponents of reforming Jewish education by including secular subjects, such as European literature and the natural sciences. This educational project often brought the reformists into conflict with more orthodox Jewish religious leaders.

## 5. Role of Islam:

There is considerable debate among scholars over the degree to which Islam has encouraged or discouraged secular education over the centuries. Some experts note that the first word of the Quran as it was revealed to Prophet Muhammad is “Iqra!” which means “Read!” or “Recite!”; they say Muslims are urged to pursue knowledge in order to better understand God’s revealed word. Early Muslims made innovative intellectual contributions in such fields as mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, medicine and poetry. They established schools, often at mosques, known as Katatib and madrasas. Islamic rulers built libraries and educational complexes, such as Baghdad’s House of Wisdom and Cairo’s Al-Azhar University, to nurture advanced scholarship. Under Muslim rule, southern Spain was a center of higher learning, producing such figures as the renowned Muslim philosopher Averroes.

But other scholars contend that these educational attainments, and the regard that Muslims had for intellectual inquiry in realms outside religion, were gradually attenuated by a complex mix of social and political events over several centuries. These events included foreign invasions, first by the Mongols, who destroyed the House of Wisdom in 1258, and then by Christians, who pushed Muslims out of Spain in 1492. Some scholars argue that the educational decline began earlier, in the 11th and 12th centuries, and was rooted in institutional changes. In particular, contends Harvard University Associate Professor of Economics Eric Chaney, the decline was caused by an increase in the political power of religious leaders who prioritized Islamic religious learning over scientific education. Their growing influence helped bring about a crucial shift in the Islamic approach to learning: It became dominated by the idea that divine revelation is superior to other types of knowledge, and that religious education should consist of learning only what Islamic scholars had said and written in the past.

In the view of some historians, this shift severely constricted intellectual inquiry in the Muslim world as the natural sciences, critical questioning and art were downplayed. Education became primarily the study of established, traditional religious and legal canons. This change also tightened religious scholars’ control over the education of Muslims in Africa and the Middle East – a hold that was not broken until colonial governments and Christian missionaries introduced Western-style educational institutions.

Some scholars argue that the decline in secular learning and the narrowing of intellectual inquiry among Muslims have been exaggerated, or did not take place. Columbia University history professor George Saliba writes: “In particular, the decline of Islamic science, which was supposed to have been caused by the religious environment ... does not seem to have taken place in reality. On the contrary, if we only look at the surviving scientific documents, we can clearly delineate a very flourishing activity in almost every scientific discipline” after the 12th century.

Nowadays, Islamic religious leaders and religious schools still have great influence on education in some Muslim-majority countries, but they compete with government and private schools offering secular topics.

## 6. Role of Christianity:

In the view of some scholars, the 16th-century Protestant Reformation was a driving force for public education in Europe. Protestant reformers promoted literacy because of their contention that everyone needed to read the Bible, which they viewed as the essential authority on doctrinal matters. Driven by this theological conviction, religious leaders urged the building of schools and the translation of the Bible into local languages – and Reformation leader Martin Luther set the example by translating the Bible into German.

Some scholars, however, argue that the “Second Reformation” of the German Pietist movement in the 17th and 18th centuries was even more influential in promoting literacy. Historians Richard L. Gawthrop of Franklin College and the late Gerald Strauss of Indiana University note that in addition to stressing the need for personal Bible reading, the Pietists persuaded German authorities to mandate Bible reading as “the chief instrument of religious instruction in primary schools, [which was] a powerful impetus to the spread of mass literacy.”

In more recent times, religion was a prime motivator in establishing U.S. schools run by faith groups – including Quakers, Protestants and Catholics – that educated generations of immigrant families.

Historically, however, Christianity and science often have come into conflict with each other, as illustrated by the 17th century clash between astronomer Galileo Galilei and the Roman Catholic Church, as well as the condemnation by prominent religious leaders of Charles Darwin’s 1859 theory of human evolution. The Scopes Monkey trial in 1925 further highlighted the rift between science and some branches of Christianity over the theory of evolution, a contentious relationship that endures even today.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, meanwhile, scholars describe how religious missionaries during colonial times were the prime movers in constructing educational facilities and influencing local attitudes toward education. These missionary activities, the scholars conclude, have had a long-lasting positive impact on access to schooling and educational attainment levels in the region.

Research by Baylor University sociologist Robert D. Woodberry, for instance, suggests that Protestant

missionaries in Africa “had a unique role in spreading mass education” because of the importance they placed on ordinary people’s ability to read scripture. As a result, they established schools to promote literacy wherever they went and translated the Bible into indigenous languages.

Harvard University economics professor Nathan Nunn, who contends that education was “the main reward used by missionaries to lure Africans into the Christian sphere,” says that in addition to establishing schools, “missionaries may have altered people’s views about the importance of education.”

Woodberry and Nunn conclude, however, that Protestant and Catholic missionaries had differing results. Except where they were in direct competition with Protestant missionaries, Catholic missionaries concentrated on educating African elites rather than the masses, Woodberry observes. And Nunn notes that Protestant missionaries placed greater stress than Catholics on educating women. As a result, Protestants had more long-term impact on the education of sub-Saharan African women.

## 7. Role of Sikhism:

Sikhism is a monotheistic religion. Islam further intensified the religious ferment of the sub-continent. The Islamic prohibitions on idolatry was particularly significant. New religious sects preached against idolatry as well as polytheism and caste. Here the Sikhs were especially important. Nanak (1469-1538) founded Sikhism. He was a Punjabi, born in Talwandi Lahore which is now part of Pakistan. Sikhism is an attempt to reconcile the two main religions of India, Hinduism and Islam. Numbering approximately 23 million worldwide; over 60 percent of Sikhs live in the Indian state of Punjab, where they form about two-thirds of the population. Men and boys don't cut hair, but they roll up and cover it. The adults wear the characteristic turban, the boys a cloth.

## 8. Role of Animism:

Animism is the belief that all of nature (including inanimate objects) is actually alive and have a soul or spirit. This religious belief is very common with many if not most indigenous people expressed in tribal, pagan, and shamanistic religions. The primitive people of India were animists and tribal groups in India still practice animism. This set of beliefs, however, has been much more influential. The animism early India has been into

mainstream Hinduism and survives as a range of local traditions. The same has occurred with Shintoism in Japan.

#### CONCLUSIONS:

The principal religion of India is Brahmanism/Hinduism. Hinduism is a religion almost uniquely associated with

India and neighbouring Nepal as well as the East Indies (especially Java) where it was carried by Indian traders. Hinduism is a mystery to most westerners and many Muslims view it as an idyltrious religion. Gandhi had virtually insane economic ideas, but his philospical ideas have inspired people around the world, including Martin Luther King in America and invigorated the Civil Rights movement.

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