

PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGION: COMPARING KARL MARX AND SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore the true nature of religion comparatively through the lens of the contemporary philosophers Karl Marx and Swami Vivekananda. Religion has a great impact on our society, positively as well as negatively. Positively, it provides a framework for us to lead a good life in our society. It has played a crucial role directly or indirectly in bringing together human beings in society till now. In religion, people are allowed to share common principles and aims, which make them feel themselves under the umbrella of the same principles. However, we are witnessing a more negative impact of religion than a positive impact throughout history. Many wars and social conflicts have come into existence in the name of religion throughout world history. As a result, religious extremism and fanaticism are growing day by day. This paper will answer the following questions: how do materialistic Karl Marx and spiritualistic Vivekananda treat religion? Is religion man-made, or is it a necessary aspect of man? Does religion help people to spread humanity and universal love, or is it used as a tool to exploit the lower classes by the upper classes in our society? Is it just a doctrine, or dogmas or arguments of any book or anything else? Does it help to be true to one's nature or not? Is it able to abolish social conflict and inequality in the present era?

Keywords: Dialectical, Materialism, Opium, Aroma, Brahman, *Vedānta*.

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Introduction

The term 'religion' is complicated. It is difficult to define. It is difficult to translate into another language. In Hinduism, it is used as *dharma* (*Sanātanadharma*). There is a broad correspondence between what Westerners call religion and what Hindu Indians call *dharma*, but they are not the same. However, the term '*dharma*' refers to other concepts within its range of meanings in various contexts. Generally, religion refers to several different practices in a way that presumes a reality beyond us, either in the form of a Supernatural Being or a God or an Impersonal Principle or a law. It has a great impact on our society, positively as well as negatively. Positively, it provides a framework for us to lead a good life in our society. It has played a crucial role directly or indirectly in bringing together human beings in society till now. In religion, people are allowed to share common principles and aims, which make them feel themselves under the umbrella of the same principles. It allows us to believe in a supernatural being that loves and protects us in every situation. It teaches us to be kind not only to human beings but also to every animal by promoting serving others. In this way, it promotes humanity, gratitude, and brotherhood all over the world. While in the twenty-first century, science and technology hold an important role in

progressing human society, religion continues to hold paramount importance in our everyday existence by helping in building values like love, empathy, respect, harmony, etc. These are all about the positive impact of religion.

However, we are witnessing a more negative impact of religion than a positive impact throughout history. Many wars and social conflicts have come into existence in the name of religion throughout world history. As a result, religious extremism and fanaticism are growing day by day. Religion is turning societies against each other. We see how many political conflicts have happened relating to religious beliefs all over the world, including in India.

In this regard, an Indian contemporary philosopher, Swami Vivekananda, claims that "There is nothing that has brought to man more blessings than religion, yet at the same time, there is nothing that has brought more horror than religion. Nothing has made more for peace and love than religion; nothing has engendered fiercer hatred than religion. Nothing has made the brotherhood of man more tangible than religion; nothing has bred more bitter enmity between man and man than religion. Nothing has built more charitable institutions, more hospitals for men, and even for animals, than religion; nothing has deluged the world with more blood than religion."ⁱ This paper will try to

explore the true nature of religion comparatively through the lens of the contemporary philosophers Karl Marx and Swami Vivekananda.

Karl Marx's Perspective on Religion

Karl Marx is a German philosopher and economist who claims that religion has only a negative impact on our society. He developed his opinion on religion from a dialectical materialistic point of view. He developed his dialectical materialism with the help of Hegel's dialectical method of idealism. Hegel's method is described by a three-step process of thesis (an initial state of understanding), antithesis (the contradiction of the initial idea) and synthesis (a new, more comprehensive idea emerges from the conflict between thesis and antithesis). Synthesis incorporates elements of thesis and antithesis by resolving the contradiction between them and becomes a new thesis for the next development of the dialectic. In this way, Hegel's idealism shows how the movement of abstract ideas toward greater rationality is possible through ideas and consciousness. It asserts the world as the embodiment of a "universal spirit". Here, Karl Marx accepted only Hegel's dialectical method and changed dialectical idealism into dialectical materialism by arguing that material and economic conditions drive historical development. To Marx's materialism "The world is by its very nature material, that the

multi-fold phenomena of the world constitute different forms of matter in motion, that interconnection and interdependence of phenomena, as established by the dialectical method, are a law of the development of moving matter, and the world develops in accordance with the laws of movement of matter and stands in no need of a "universal spirit".ⁱⁱ In this way, he directly opposed Hegel's Idealism by claiming that the idea is nothing other than the material world reflected by the human mind and translated into forms of thought.ⁱⁱⁱ To study society and its history, he developed historical materialism with the help of the principles of dialectical materialism. It shows how history progresses through a class struggle between opposite classes, such as the bourgeoisie (capitalist class) and the proletariat (working class), where one class exploits another class.

To Karl Marx, the religious world is but the reflex of the real world. Religion has no independent history without man. Man makes religion; religion does not make man. Man developed it through his imperfect self-awareness. It is a man-made social constitution, dependent on the material and economic realities of a given society. Here, Karl Marx does not refer to man as an abstract being, but to man as a human collective or society. Men do not come outside the world; rather, they are an

integral part of it. They exist through their material conditions, including their economic conditions. They make society, and the inverted society of men produces religion, which is nothing other than an inverted world-consciousness. It is the general theory of that world. It is not timeless because it is created by the society of men.

In support of Karl Marx, Frederick Engels claims, "All religions of antiquity were spontaneous tribal and later national religions which arose from and emerged with the social and political conditions of the respective peoples."^{iv} It means that religion is a man-made phenomenon which remains so as long as men exist at all. Frederick Engels, like Karl Marx, also claims that "Religion arose in very primitive times from erroneous, primitive conception of men about their own nature and external nature surrounding them."^v

To Karl Marx, all ideologies, including religion and their corresponding forms of consciousness, are not independent, because men produce them with the material and economic conditions of their society. Therefore, Consciousness is determined by life, but life is not determined by consciousness.^{vi} Consciousness is from the very beginning a social product and remains so as long as men exist at all.^{vii} Karl Marx does not accept humans' spiritual essence as an inherent

quality of man in the material world. To him, humans' spiritual essence has no true reality, and religion is the fantastic realisation of that human essence.^{viii} To him, "The struggle against religion is therefore indirectly a fight against the world of which religion is the spiritual aroma."^{ix}

In India, we see how religion provides a platform for the upper class to exploit the lower caste. We often witness the collective punishment of the lower caste by the upper caste based on religion. The caste system supports the lower caste's suffering by justifying that they are born in a specific caste due to their past life. Their bad deeds in their past life led to their lower caste birth. We also see, all over the world, women are being tortured and raped in the name of religion. The history of the medieval period of Christianity in western countries asserts how kings and queens were treated as God's representatives, as their authority came directly from God based on religion. After gaining a deep and comprehensive understanding of religion, Karl Marx leads to a specific conclusion that religion acts in society as a function to serve the interests of the owner class. Religion perverts people's minds to understand their reality about their pain and suffering. Ruling classes use it as a tool to divert the lower classes from their real miseries. They try to comfort the poor by saying that their poverty and misfortune are divinely

approved as punishment for their past works. In this way, they use religion to create false consciousness to make the poor feel comfortable in their lives. In other words, religion is used as a tool by the oppressed creatures to make poor people feel better about their distress, which they experience due to being exploited. In this way, the upper caste legitimises their wealth and the poverty of the poor. Thus, it boosts the stability of the capitalist order. That is why Karl Marx asserts that "Religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and also the protest against real distress."^x

Moreover, Karl Marx claims that religion is nothing other than an illusion by which the exploiters provide irrational excuses to keep society functioning just as it is. It is irrational in the sense that people rely on and worship an unseen spiritual truth to avoid the reality of practical situations. It is masking the reality and misguiding the people. He does not believe in unseen truths in the material world. To him, religion is 'the hearth of the heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions.'^{xi}

To Karl Marx, Religion's function is similar to the function of opium. Opium is a highly addictive drug. It reduces acute pain and produces a feeling of pleasure and relaxation. Engrossed in the opium drug, one lives in another illusory world. He has

no consciousness of what is happening in the real situation, and what pain he is going through. According to Karl Marx, religion, like a drug, works in our society. Religion does not reduce people's real suffering; it creates illusory circumstances so that the poor classes accept their pain and suffering as their fate. It creates illusory happiness. It helps them forget why they are exploited. It diverts attention away from their real material conditions of oppression and exploitation. It encourages them to look forward to an illusory future and to accept all irrational social systems. In this way, Religion defines the worst situations to relieve the lower class from their painful suffering. That is why Marx asserts that religion is the *opium* of the people.^{xii} So, to abolish religion is to demand their real happiness. Now, a question generally arises: how can one stay away from religion?

According to Karl Marx, reason is the only weapon by which one can disillusion oneself, nothing else. Reasonable criticism of religion disillusion man into thinking, acting, and shaping his reality according to the social and economic conditions in the material world. As a result, man can become the master of his own destiny. He shapes his reality based on reason and action in the material world, rather than relying on an unseen truth. He can become his own centre by recognising himself. He will revolve round himself and therefore

round his true sun. Religion, therefore, is only the illusory sun which revolves round man as long as he does not revolve round himself.^{xiii} "The religious reflex of the real world can, in any case, only then finally vanish, when the practical relations of everyday life offer to man none but perfectly intelligible and reasonable relations with regard to his fellowmen and to nature."^{xiv}

Swami Vivekananda's perspective on religion

According to Swami Vivekananda, "Is it real?" Religion begins with the question and ends with its answer.^{xv} We are always dissatisfied with our senses and reason. As a result, we always try to go beyond our senses and reason by leaning on some supernatural element. That is religion. It may be either an infinite power or absolute reality, or God, or the law or destiny, etc. Thus, religious facts are more or less abstractions as it is trans-empirical and trans-rational. We have an ideal of infinite power or pleasure. Consciously or unconsciously, we are struggling with this. As long as we think, this struggle must go on, and for so long, we must have some form of religion. With the help of this struggle, we enjoy peace and bliss in our lives by rising above the ordinary evils and ills of the world. This struggle has been in us from the very beginning of humanity. It leads to a struggle; without seeking it, we

are unable to live. This craving is called religious craving. Thus, religion does not come from without, but from within. In this regard, Vivekananda claims that "Religious thought is in man's very constitution, so much so that it is impossible for him to give up religion until he can give up his mind and body until he can give up thought and life."^{xvi} No one is born into a religion, but each one is born for religion.^{xvii} It is a necessary aspect of our lives.

To him, there are three elements in every great religion: Philosophy, mythology and ritual. Philosophy presents the whole scope of any religion by setting forth its basic principles and the means to reach the goal of that religion. Mythology illustrates and explains philosophy using legends relating to stories of supernatural great beings like Gautama Buddha, Lord Krsna, Prophet Muhammad, the Lord Jesus, etc., and so on. Ritual consists of various physical attitudes, physical ceremonies, incense and so on that appeal to our senses. We present ourselves religiously in our society through physical ritual ceremonies. Ritual also helps us to create a powerful religious organisation. According to Vivekananda, every great and recognised religion of the world is quarrelling because they do not accept these three elements universally, as some give more or less importance to philosophy, mythology or ritual. To him, they are not only

quarrelling with each other, but also, they are multiplying into hundreds of millions of sects all over the world based on the above-mentioned three elements of religions. Each claim to be the true one and the other is wrong. One of them may contradict the other sects. However, despite all quarrels, almost all great and organised religions, including their sects, are living today, and each one of them is progressing. They are multiplying and progressing because everyone in our society is free to choose their goal, and their whole life is a struggle after it.^{xviii} We are free to think in our own way. If we all think the same thought, then there would be no thought that remains for us to think. To him, so long as mankind thinks, there will be sects. Variation is the sign of life, and it must be there.^{xix} If there is the same philosophy, mythology and ritual for all great religions, then our society would be destroyed, because variety is the first sign of life. What makes us formed beings? Differentiation. Perfect balance would be our destruction.^{xx} In our society, different phenomena are the result of variations in thought. Vivekananda accepts all religious sects by saying, "I want sects to multiply in every country, that more people may have a chance to be spiritual."^{xxi} If there are more religious sects, then it means that there are more opportunities to make 'successful appeals to the divine instinct in all men.'^{xxii} To him, different religions may

go on multiplying more and more to become men's spiritual. Religion is developed in our society to make a wide variety in the religious world. As a result, different religious sects come into existence. Each religious sect passes through its different stages for its development and never goes from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from lower truth to higher truth. It means every stage of religious progress is true, and its sects are also true. Every sect expresses the Universal truth or God from its own standpoint. It leads that we look at universal truth or God from our standpoint, i.e., according to our birth, education, surroundings, and so on.^{xxiii} We are free to grasp God with our mental position. This is the main cause of making various religious sects. If one religious sect is true, then all the other must be true. Every sect may represent contradictory or partial ideas about the Universal Truth, but at last, they all come into the Universal Truth or God as "different rivers, taking their start from different mountains, running straight, all come and mingle their water in the ocean."^{xxiv} Thus, all religions belong to the Supreme Being. He is the subject of all religions, including their sects. Every religion, including its sects, is struggling toward God. It means our every vision of truth is a vision of God and none else. Vivekananda illustrates this point with the help of a water vessel. When we fill many

vessels of different shapes with water, then the water of every vessel takes the form of those vessels. Water and nothing but water is in every vessel. In this way, in the case of religion, our minds are like these vessels. Here, we try to understand God from our standpoint. 'God is like that water filling these different vessels, and in each vessel, the vision of God comes in the form of the vessels. Yet He is one. He is God in every case. This is the only recognition of universality that we can get.'^{xxv} It means the internal soul of every religion is the same. It is the real common basis of all religions. All religions are united based on this internal soul. All religions are true, and they all are not contradictory but supplementary to each other.

To Vivekananda, universal religion already exists as the universal brotherhood of man, and an abstract humanity exists there, but most of us are unable to notice their presence. Universal brotherhood speaks about the equality of all men. We hear about it, but we cannot show its location and time. The abstract humanity is common to all men. We belong to humanity despite different differentiations among us. Universal religion, like this abstract humanity, is common to all the various religions of the world in the form of God. Universal religion runs 'through all the various religions of the world in the form of God; it must and does exist through eternity.

"I am the thread that runs through all these pearls," and each pearl is a religion or even a sect thereof. Such are the different pearls, and the Lord is the thread that runs through all of them; only the majority of mankind is entirely unconscious of it.'^{xxvi} He again claims that "The end of all religion is the realising of God in the soul. That is the one universal religion. If there is one universal truth in all religions, I place it here-in realizing God. Ideas and methods may differ, but that is the central point."^{xxvii} Here, the term God is used in its most comprehensive sense; it may be a universal truth, a spirit, an essence, or an Impersonal Being. Thus, universal religion is an ideal concept in nature. It has no location in place or time. It is the realisation that God may be expressed in a million ways, and each of these is true as far as it goes. In this way, Vivekananda makes a common ground between all the religions of the world, the highest as well as the lowest.

To Swamiji, there is one watchword that is 'acceptance' for this universal religion. With the help of this watchword, he accepts all religions, including their sects that were in the past, and worships them. He worships the universal truth in whatever forms others worship Him. He can enter all religious places (church, mosque, temple and forest) to offer his prayer to those who want to see the light which enlightens the heart of everyone. With the help of this

watchword, he also kept his heart open to accept all that would come in the future. It means he is ready to open an infinite number of unfolded pages of the scriptures of all religions to learn something from them. In this way, with the help of this watchword, he gives a rational solution to the problems of all religions, including their sects. Therefore, universal religion conforms to all religions of the world. It is broad enough to include all the ideas.^{xxviii} It is not limited to any book, creeds, sects, or the vanities of the world. It is broad and large enough to supply food for all minds.^{xxix} In this way, universal religion is equally acceptable to all minds.

Practical Vedānta and Universal Religion

According to Vivekananda, *Vedānta* Philosophy unfolds in three stages based on the Sutras of Vyāsa: i) *Dvaita*: Madhvācārya and his disciples have been the great preachers of it, ii) *Viśiṣṭādvaita*: Rāmānuja is the last representative of *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, iii) *Advaita Vedānta*: Śaṅkara is the great preacher of *Advaita* all over the world, but *Advaita Vedānta* existed ages before Śaṅkara appeared. To Śaṅkara, Brahman is the ultimate reality. It is pure consciousness. It is the soul. *Māyā* is the power of Brahman. Due to *Māyā*, Brahman appears to us as God, the creator and destroyer of this world and Brahman is also reflected in many as *Jīvas*. From the absolute

standpoint, God, the world and *Jīvas* are ultimately false. There is no difference between *Jīva* and Brahman.^{xxx} Due to *Māyā*, *Jīva* forgets his true nature. *Jīva* becomes Brahman as *Sat-Chit-Ānanda* with the help of the knowledge of Brahman.

To Vivekananda, aforesaid, the three stages of *Vedānta* are not contradictory to each other but necessary to each other. The three stages develop one after another to fulfil spiritual growth in us to reach the ultimate goal, which is *Tat Tvam Asi* (That Thou Art). All religion is contained in these three stages of *Vedānta* philosophy. Swami Vivekananda, like Śaṅkara, claims that Brahman is *Sat-Chit-Ānanda*. It is the ultimate reality. He, like Śaṅkara, claims that *Māyā* is a power of the creator and it is the principle of change, a *śakti* that makes creation possible.^{xxxi} But Vivekananda differs from Śaṅkara's views in some points. Let me mention. First, to Śaṅkara, God, *Jīva*, and the world are the appearances of Brahman, as they are ultimately false. But to Vivekananda, God, *Jīva*, and Brahman are synonymous. Brahman is viewed from the religious point of view as God. "He is the One Infinite Being of the universe, and that being we are. I am that, and you are that. Not parts of it, but the whole of it."^{xxxii} Second, to Śaṅkara, the world is created by *Māyā*. It is neither real nor unreal. It is *mithyā*. But to Swamiji, God has become the world through time, space, and

causation. God is the individual and universal at the same time. The whole universe is God. He is the eternal soul of everything. He is universally one. "The whole universe is a play of differentiation and oneness; the whole universe is a play of the finite in the infinite."^{xxxiii} It is the expression of the oneness of the whole universe. The world is the manifestation of Brahman or God. It is real as God, not *mithyā*. Third, to Sankara, *Māyā* is the Divine *śakti* to create the illusion that the world appears real to us. But to Vivekananda, "*Māyā* is a statement of the fact of this universe, of how it is going on."^{xxxiv} Fourth, Vivekananda, unlike Shaṅkara, claims that one can get *Mokṣa* not only through *jñāna yoga*, but also through *Karma yoga*, *Bhakti yoga* and *Rāja yoga*.

Vivekananda does not want so much spirituality; rather, he wants to bring *Advaita* into the material world by saying first bread and then religion. To him, if People are stuffed with too much religion, then they have been starving. No dogmas will satisfy the craving of hunger.^{xxxv} 'It is an insult to a starving people to offer religion.'^{xxxvi} According to his *Vedānta*, the highest form of spiritual practice is to serve the poor, including stray animals, because all are divine beings in a body covering. All beings of this universe, including man, are the manifestation of Brahman. Brahman is the soul of everything. Everything in this

universe differs from each other only in manifestation, not in soul. In this way, Vivekananda preaches 'the brotherhood of universal life, of animals, and all life down to the little ants.'^{xxxvii} It may be treated as the Brotherhood of all Souls. Therefore, the soul of Kṛṣṇa, of Mohammed, of Jesus, and of any being is the same. The end of all religion is the realisation of Brahman in the soul. That is the universal religion.

To him, caring for and helping starving creatures is more divine than theoretical spiritual practice. Religion is not just meditating but serving and helping the poor and hungry, including stray animals. In this regard, he claims, "As long as even a stray dog of my country remains without food, my religion will be to feed and take care of him. All else is either non- religion or false religion."^{xxxviii} Again, he claims that 'to stake one's whole life and soul to save thousands who are dying of starvation- this is the essence of the religion of the *Vedānta*.'^{xxxix} It means that to be religious, we have to serve and help humanity as much as we can. Thus, the true service to God lies in love and compassion for the living being. In this way, he applied *Advaita* (non-dualistic) philosophy to uplift and strengthen humanity on a practical ground. That is why Vivekananda's *Vedānta* is called Practical *Vedānta*.

To Vivekananda, the whole universe is full of the Infinite Soul. Brahman is the

one Infinite Being of the universe, and that being we are. I am Brahman, and you are Brahman. Not parts of it, but the whole of it.^{xi} Thus, all things of this universe are of divine origin and deserve to be loved.^{xii} So, we have to love everything. It is treated as universal love. It represents the essence of universal religion. "Love everyone as your own self, because the whole universe is one. In injuring another, I am injuring myself; in loving another, I am loving myself."^{xiii} The realisation of Brahman within oneself is called Universal Religion. It is to be true to one's nature as *Sat- Chit - Ānanda*. It means religious knowledge becomes complete when someone discovers he is Brahman. To Vivekananda, universal religion is the realisation of spirit as spirit.^{xliii} It is the manifestation of the Divinity already in man.^{xliv} "It is being and becoming, not hearing and acknowledging; it is the whole soul becoming changed into what it believes. That is religion."^{xlv} In this way, he sees the harmony in all religions, as they are all part and parcel of one eternal religion.^{xlvi} Therefore, one should not disturb anybody, even if he has attached himself to a lower form of worship.

To Vivekananda, it is good to be born in a church and a temple. It is the kindergarten of religion. It is good for beginners, but it is not the ultimate end. The ultimate end of our lives is to realise Brahman. To be religious, no need to enter

the gate of any organised religion. They do a hundred times more evil than good, because they stop the growth of each one's individual development.^{xlvii} Religion is a matter of growth, not a mass of foolish words. It means to be religious, no need to be organised, because organising teaches us to love only our own people and hate other organisations. If you love only your own people, it will make you brutes by encouraging selfishness and brutality. To be religious, we have to be natural, to be free to think in our own way, because religion is a process of realising the true spirit. Thus, the ultimate end of all religions, including their sects, is to reunite with God. Although the aim of all religions is one, the method of attaining it may differ with our different temperaments.^{xlviii} In this way, Vivekananda's universal religion includes all religions, including their sects that now exist in the world. Therefore, the universal religion is broad enough to include all the ideas of religion that already exist in the world in the present and all ideas that are to come in the future. To Vivekananda, the method of attaining universal religion is called *yoga*. There are various forms of *yoga*, but he classified them into four heads: *Karma-yoga*, *Bhakti-Yoga*, *Raja-Yoga*, and *Jñāna-Yoga*. With the help of one yoga out of four, we can make a successful appeal in us to realise divinity in us.

A Comparative Study between Karl Marx and Swami Vivekananda

From the above discussion, we can say that there are some similarities and much dissimilarity between Karl Marx's and Swami Vivekananda's philosophies based on religion. Let me first mention the similarity between them.

1. We have seen that both Karl Marx and Swami Vivekananda opposed religious superstition. Both accepted that religious superstition is a great enemy of human society and causes social degradation.

2. Both Karl Marx and Vivekananda accepted that organised religions do evil in our society. According to Karl Marx, ruling classes organize to create religion to serve their interest. The ruling classes use it as a tool to divert the lower class from their real miseries. The ruling class uses it to exploit and misguide people. To him, religion is the *opium* of the people because the function of organised religion is similar to the function of opium. Organised religion, like drugs, works in our society as it does not reduce people's real suffering, but rather creates an illusory happiness. It helps people to forget their real pain and suffering. That is why, to him, no need to organise religion to run society smoothly.

On the other hand, Vivekananda, like Karl Marx, claims that to lead a good life, we do not need to enter the gate of any

organised religion. Organised religions do a hundred times more evil than good, because they stop the growth of each one's individual development. Organised religion teaches us to love only our own people and hate other people. It leads to social inequality, and it leads to exploitation in our society. To him, nothing has engendered fiercer hatred than religion, nothing has bred more bitter enmity between man and man than religion, and nothing has deluged the world with more blood than religion. Thus, both rejected the exploitation and social inequalities in the name of religion.

There is some dissimilarity between Karl Marx and Vivekananda on the perspective of religion. These are mentioned below.

1. Fundamental vision: Karl Marx develops his religious opinion based on dialectical materialism. According to this materialism, the world is by its very nature material. The world develops in accordance with the laws of movement of matter. He does not accept any type of spiritual essence of man as an inherent quality of man in the material world.

On the other hand, Swami Vivekananda's religion would be characterised as spiritualism, because he develops his religious opinion based on *Advaita Vedānta*. According to his *Vedānta*, the ultimate reality of this universe is Brahman. Everything in this universe, from

the smallest to the largest, is an expression of Brahman. It means that all beings and things are essentially connected to each other based on divine spiritual essence. Everything in this universe is of divine origin.

2.Origin of Religion: According to Karl Marx, man makes religion by his imperfect self-awareness. It is a man-made social construction, dependent upon the material and economic realities in a given society. In an inverted society, men produce religion, which is nothing other than an inverted world- consciousness. It is not timeless, as it is a general doctrine of the world.

On the other hand, to Vivekananda, religion is not an adherence to doctrines, dogmas, or intellectual argumentation of any book; it is a realisation of divinity, being and becoming. It is not just believing something but realising divinity through *yoga*. It is a necessary aspect of our life because we are divine and we have an ideal of infinite power. Consciously or unconsciously, we are always struggling with this. As long as we think, this struggle must go on, and for so long, we must have some form of religion. This struggle has been in us from the very beginning of humanity. This craving is called religious craving. In this regard, he claims, religious thought is in man's very constitution, so much so that he can't give up religion until

he can give up his mind and body, until he can give up thought and life. It permeates the whole of our life. It does not come from without, but from within. That is why he claims religion is the manifestation of the Divinity already in man. It is the inner transformation of the soul.

3.The Roles of Religion: According to Karl Marx, the upper classes use religion as a tool to exploit the lower classes. Religion's function is similar to the function of opium. Religion, like an opium drug, does not reduce people's real suffering, but rather creates illusory circumstances so that the lower classes accept their suffering as their fate. It encourages them to look to an illusory future and to accept all irrational social systems by diverting attention away from their real material conditions of oppression and exploitation. Thus, it aims to destroy humanity.

On the other hand, according to Vivekananda, the essence of his religion is to serve humanity. All else is either non-religion or false religion. Thus, to him, caring and helping for starving creatures is more divine than theoretical spiritual practice, because all living creatures are divine beings in body covering and deserve to be cared for.

4.Method to Escape from Religious Fanaticism: According to Karl Marx, reason is the only weapon by which one can escape oneself from religious fanaticism.

Reasonable criticism of religion disillusioned man. It helps man to shape himself according to his social and economic conditions of the material world, rather than relying on an unseen truth. To overcome religious reflex, we have to be reasonable persons to establish reasonable relations concerning our fellowmen and nature.

On the other hand, according to Vivekananda, to escape ourselves from religious fanaticism, we have to follow one yoga out of the said four *yogas*, according to our mind's nature.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude that Swami Vivekananda did not talk about religion

in the way Karl Marx understood it, because Marx treats religion as manmade dogmas or arguments of any book. To him, it destroys humanity. But Vivekananda claims that religion alone can sustain humanity. To him, the essence of universal religion is to serve humanity. It is not just meditation, but serving the needy. All else is either non-religion or false religion. To be religious, we have to serve humanity as much as we can. If we want to uplift and strengthen humanity with the help of love and compassion in our society, then we have to go through Vivekananda's teachings.

ⁱ Vivekananda, Swami, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 2 Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata, 2021, P. 352.

ⁱⁱ Stalin, Joseph, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, international publisher, New York, 1972, P. 15.

ⁱⁱⁱ Marx, Karl, *Capital, A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production*, Volume 1, progress Publishers, Moscow, 1954, P. 19.

^{iv} Marx, Karl and Engels, Friedrich, *On Religion*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1957, P. 176.

^v Ibid., P.229.

^{vi} Marx, Karl and Engels, Friedrich, *The German Ideology* Parts I & III, International Publishers, New York, 1947, P. 15.

^{vii} Ibid., P. 19.

^{viii} Karl and Engels, Friedrich, *On Religion*, op. cit., P. 38.

^{ix} Ibid.,

^x Ibid. P. 39.

^{xi} Ibid.

^{xii} Ibid.

^{xiii} Ibid.

^{xiv} Marx, Karl, *Capital, A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production*, Volume 1, op. cit., P. 79.

^{xv} Vivekananda, Swami, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 2, op.cit., P. 69.

^{xvi} Ibid., Vol. 3, Pp. 3-4.

^{xvii} Ibid., Vol. 5. P. 413.

^{xviii} Ibid., Vol. 1, P. 324.

^{xix} Ibid., Vol.2, Pp 355-56.

^{xx} Ibid., P.374.

^{xxi} Ibid., P. 360.

^{xxii} Ibid.,5, Vol. P.296.

^{xxiii} Ibid., Vol. 2. P. 358.

^{xxiv} Ibid., Vol. 4, P.177.

^{xxv} Ibid., Vol.2, P.375.

^{xxvi} Ibid., P.373.

^{xxvii} Ibid., Vol.1, P.314.

^{xxviii} Ibid., Vol.3 P.267.

^{xxix} Ibid., Vol.2, P.365.

^{xxx} Sharma, Chandradhar, *A Critica Survey of Indian Philosophy*, Motilal Banarshidass Publishers, Delhi, 2003, P.279.

^{xxxi} Lal, Basant Kumar, *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Private Limited, Delhi, 2005, P. 17

^{xxxii} Vivekananda, Swami, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 3, Op. Cit., P. 10.

^{xxxiii} Ibid., Vol.1, P.423.

^{xxxiv} Ibid., Vol. 2 P. 93.

^{xxxv} Ibid., Vol.3, P.445.

^{xxxvi} ibid., Vol. 1, P. 21.

^{xxxvii} Ibid., Vol. 3, P. 142.

^{xxxviii} Swami Vivekananda, *The Friend of All*, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata, 1991, P. 49.

^{xxxix} Ibid., P. 49.

^{xl} Ibid., Vol.3, P. 10.

^{xli} Ibid., P. 105.

^{xlii} Ibid., Vol. 1, P. 354.

^{xliii} Ibid., P.456.

^{xliv} Ibid., Vol. 4, P.349.

^{xlvi} Ibid., Vol. 2, P.387.

^{xlvi} Ibid., Vol. 4, Op. Cit., P. 182.

^{xlvi} Ibid., Vol. 1, P. 460.

^{xlvi} Ibid., Vol. 5, P. 295.