

Matha as Religious Institution

Ar. Amol Dahivadkar

University/Organization: Smt.KashibaiNavale College of architecture, Pune University.

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Abstract

It's a very rich traditions of India in the field of education. Evolution of Hindu religion always under influence of religious and economics. Vedas are the main source of our knowledge for our rich education systems. The education system in India come from the Vedas and their culture. There are Four major Hinduism thoughts as Vaishnavism (Vishnu), Shaivism (Shiva), Shaktism (Devi) and Smartism. Hindu education system developed and survived due to concept of Matha and various other religious institute established by Shankaracharya in four corners of India. This concept of religious institute establishments in medieval period helped, to survived Hindu religion in Maharashtra.

Maharashtra is a land of saints and Gurus where everyone spread the importance of religion and its values in various forms, in medieval period the Matha concept proven the importance of religious education. As this is a living heritage, it is still in continuation. Various patrons are taking the education system at higher levels. But in modern urban context the new needs and expansion are neglecting the importance of built heritage.

Keywords; Religious education, Patrons, Vedic education system, religious institutes

I. INTRODUCTION

Hindu traditions and cultures have been protected and given a secure form because of Mathas. They are pivotal organizations that have helped Hinduism withstand the onslaught of Islamic and Christian invasion to the Indian Subcontinent. The Mathas has proved their existence and worth by protecting and preserving the Hindu Tradition and culture. Historically, the mathas date back to about 700 to 1000 CE period. These mathas were doing **vedanta studies**. Some mathas in south india now comprising of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu Andhra Pradesh, Telengana , Kerala majorly focussed on Shaivism , Vaishnavism, military martial arts music painting or other fields education and areas of knowledge including subjects which are related to buddhism and Jainism.

A Matha is nothing but a religious place where temples or group of temples with arrangements made for preaching and education of religion. In other words these can term as monestries with deities too. The Matha is a place where

meditation, learning, practice of sharta such as vedas, upnishads, agmas, nigramas can be observed. In other words Mathas are cultural living practices where saints and spiritual seekers keep enhancing the importance of religion.

In India religion is the base on which the traditional education system grown. It teaches the way of life, the overall personality development and understanding the importance of values of life.

The major theories and concept of Indian lifestyle was completely based on the religious beliefs and cultural practices. The variation in the traditions and culture governs the ideals of life. The whole social structured framed around religious beliefs and religious atmosphere. The teachers in earlier time was saints and priests. Entire education system was developed as gurukul. This system derived from Vedic period where teachers and priest used to educate students on the basis of vedic literatures . There are four vedas, six vedangas, four upvedas, one hundred and eight upnishads. six systems of philosophies and Bhagwatgita and three smritis.

most important Vedas teaches the knowledge, arts, science. it represents the wisdom. it was a culture that students need to get education from the gurukul and need to finish it and after that they can get married. After that they should follow the rules of society.

After getting education from Gurukuls, students were empowered to get married and lead a family life. After marriage the civil life used to begin, from there onwards it became their duty to obey all the norms and values set by the society.

II. RELIGION -

The first question and thought what is religion?

According to **UNESCO** religion is a set of spiritual understanding systems about two key aspects of life—concern with the ultimate meaning of human existence; and an identification with a supernatural power beyond the limits of the human and natural worlds. (UNESCO)

The many different religions have different beliefs about these two aspects of life. However, religions generally have the following characteristics in common:

- A belief in supernatural beings, or gods;
- A code of morality believed to be sanctioned by the gods;
- Ceremonial and ritual acts which focus on sacred objects and symbols;
- Communication, notably through prayer, with the supernatural;
- Particular religious feelings, such as a sense of mystery, awe, adoration and reverence, that tend to be aroused in the presence of sacred objects or symbols, and during ceremonies and rituals associated with the supernatural;
- A particular world view, or a general understanding of the world and the individual's place in the universe, that shapes the religion's overall organization and style of life; and

A social group expressing the above features with and to which the individual identifies and contributes

There can be further two types of definitions of religion in terms of classic and modern terms

As per old theories and concepts –

In the late 18th century it is termed as religion, commonly translated as the feeling of absolute dependence.

various aspects that developed religion

- Belief
- Mythology
- Culture & practices
- Sects
- **Belief-**

In very common terms belief is nothing but to accept something is in existence without any proof or evidences.

Religious belief

Religious beliefs, the ideas generated from the super power who controlled the human life and maintain the control on the earth. So, to accept the existence, deities and such super power needs to be worshipped. To carry forward and strengthen the system spiritual leaders came in the picture.

How Beliefs Are Expressed?

Forms of religious belief

There are various form of religious beliefs as there are many religions and their own spiritual practices. There are some private and common religious beliefs which will never meet on a single thought. Hindu, Christian, Muslim and other religions have their own leaders who keep the religious belief in various sub forms.

III. MYTHOLOGY

Cultural practices always move around some old stories and myths. These are very much important to keep surviving the religion and the cultural practices. Mythologies are nothing the epic stories with events with super natural power and characters. Myths are always represented in the form of beliefs and values. Sometimes social events, history of peoples are involved in myth

Mythology means according to Greek as story of peoples.

These stories deal with sacred tales and part of history of cultural practices. The meaning of life and death. Origin of human life, animals, social values and traditions related to life.

IV. CULTURE & PRACTICES

What Edward T. Hall defined Culture is derived from the patterns which society has developed from generations to generations. The traditional ideas and their attached values plays vital role developing any type of culture. according to hall it is a program of collective minds which defines the different set of ideology of way of life than rest world.

V. SECT-

A group of people who's ideology is different about religious beliefs than the common adopted one. These group worships the same deity but the principles and ritual practices varies from others. Word sect means path, way. Religious groups which forms separate thoughts and belief systems can term as sect.

VI. HINDUISM

The actual term Hindu firstly mentioned in Persian geographical term like the people who lived beyond the river Indus. after that many foreign travelers who stated the term Hindu in their experience. Some practices of Hinduism must have originated in Neolithic times (c. 4000 B.C.E.). The worship of certain plants and animals as sacred

Main historical periods

Pre history and Indus valley settlement-until 750BCE

Vedic phase 1750 to 500 BCE

Classical Phase 200 BCE TO 1200 BCE

Pre-classical phase C 200 BCE TO 300 CE

During Gupta phase C 320 to 600 CE

Late classical phase C 650 TO 1250 CE

Medieval Phase C 1200 to 1500 CE

Early Modern Phase C 1500 TO 1850

Modern period phase i.e. British Raj and independence

Vedic Religion

Vedic period referred when the Vedas were composed. Earlier concept of vedas was regarding sacrifices and sacrificial meals with various gods. The meaning of sacrifices refers to Homa, yajna not in terms of killings of animals but to offering to fire (Agni). in Vedas elements are given most importance like wind, fire, sky, earth. In Vedas these are referred as gods who controls the atmosphere.

Periods and ages-classical and epic C500BCE TO 500 CE

Hinduism always expressed on the basis of epics and puranas. there are great texts known as dharma sutra and shashtras. Where the dharma sutra refers to source of dharm (vedas), traditions and laws of life.

From this time phase we can refer many elements in present Hinduism like bhakti (devotion)

This phase shown the development of literatures and poems, arts, texts. during this phase worships of various gods like Vishnu, shiva started.

There are three major currents founded in this phase like Vaishnavism, Shaivism and Skatism.

Medieval phase or period –

During 500 CE the bhakti movement have risen and started devotion for major deities like Vishnu, Siva and Devi. After the Guptas kingdom cholas supported Shaivism in south region.

Role of poets and saints, Gurus

In this phase the languages and literatures evolved with various theories. The saints and gurus developed Sanskrit and other vernacular languages for the preaching. Most noted saint in this duration was Vaishnav Alvar.

Afterwards acharyas or gurus framed the teaching methodologies for their own sects. (sampradaya)

Shankaracharya travelled all over the country and defeated scholars over Jainism, Buddhism and found new areas in India. He reframed the concept of Vedanta for development of traditions.

Bhakti (worship)

Bhakti

The word bhakti means devotion towards some deity. It has played a very important role in the development of socio-cultural history of India. It is said that this movement has been started by Shankaracharya in 9th century and it continued till 16th century. This word is very common in Hinduism.

The impact of spread of Bhakti movement can be seen in south India as it has been spread by Shankaracharya and by the end of 16th century it was like a spiritual force. Which resulted in rise of Maratha empire.

VII. RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

The ancient Indian System of education

Religious institute

The major development of Hinduism has seen the religious instructors like saints, gurus and Acharya, who started the concept which was earlier as Gurukuls. The institutes started termed as Mathas and became the place for religious education. The

most important aspect of religion is prayer and different sub classes of peoples belonging to various cast of society. In earlier phase society formed with various thoughts of supreme god controlled the development and spread of religion. Mainly concept of god framed was a fear to control the society and today the concept changed as hope of noble life.

To maintain the social integration religion is playing important role. Earlier religion concept was based on natural forces like life, birth, death, marriage and crops. According to stoop it is a well-balanced of socio economy. In earlier phase oral education system was in practice as chanting of vedas, mantras. The knowledge was passed from generation to generation from oral methods. Students need to understand the knowledge through listening which is called as Shruti and next was to remembering that is called as manana. Finally nidhysana was the final stage where use of all knowledge for life,

Main denominations which developed Mathas

Most practicing Hindus belong to a denomination or sect of Hinduism, which is a small sub-set of a larger tradition. The most famous of these sects, and those with the largest follow-ing, are Vaishnavism, Shaivism, Shaktism, and Smartism.

Let's look at each of these sects

•**Vaishnavism: Devotion to Vishnu**

•**Shaivism: Devotion to Shiva**

•**Shaktism: Devotion to the Great Goddess**

•**Smartism-Smartas treat all deities as same**

The most important ingredients of Hinduism are the bhakti movement, particularly in the context of Maharashtra, to see how the brahmanical institution, a vital element of classical Hinduism, was trying to readjust itself under the barrage of reformist movements in Hindu-ism. The most important point to be discussed in relation to the bhakti movement is: in what way did it contribute to the growth of a

sense of community identity? Although the chapter looks up the initial stages of these questions, but the discussion is equally well evident in subsequent chapters. This exercise is well intended to see the religio-cultural aspects of 'region' as well as 'community' along with its coordinates of power and authority.

It was the saints and poets of this tradition, of Hindu and Muslim origin, who were mainly instrumental in spreading the message of bhakti through their regional languages to all parts of India. The thematic and stylistic rites that draw together bhakti poetry from all parts of India cannot be gainsaid.

There was one very important thread of the bhakti movement, resulting sometimes in the growth of new structures articulated well into the emergence of Sikhs and Marathas as communities by around late 17th century.

All of them used regional languages for propagating Bhakti Tradition.

SAINTS	LANGUAGE
Dnyaneshwara	Marathi
Kabir, Surdas, Tulsidas	Hindi
Shankaradeva	Assamese
Chaitanya, Chandidas	Bengali
Mirabai	Hindi, Rajasthani

It is one of the regional variations of Bhakti cults of India that flourished in Maharashtra region. Vitthal is the chief deity worshipped by Varkaris. The etymology of Varkari reveals that it has been derived from Sanskrit Vari meaning group of devotees, going to Pandharpur.

Thevarkari are a sampraday (long standing religious tradition) based in western India, where Marathi is the dominant language, particularly in the state of Maharashtra.

Evolution of Varkari Sect

- Pundalik to Dnyaneshwar(Upto1275 A.D)
 - Dnyaneshwar and Namdev (1275-1350 A.D.)
 - Bhanudas and Eknath (1448-1599 A.D.)
- (Davalbhakta)

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

Education was not completely neglected in eighteenth century India. The primary objective of the religious reform movements, education systems and the faith-based organizations that emerged during the medieval period was, thus, to strengthen or consolidate their respective faith communities, drawing clearer boundaries between religious communities, fighting against the perceived 'social evils' in external communities, and gaining legitimacy and respect. The numbers of faith-based organizations not only grown during over the period. It was after the 1970s and during the 1980s and 1990s that their numbers began to grow in urban development. This rapid urban development forced religious institutes or Mathas to adopt the new construction techniques and materials to cater the constant increasing numbers of devotees and students. The religious institutes are not only serving education but at the same time celebrating the religious festivals as per social needs. Government level policies needs to be advertised or should reach to these Mathas.

Any understanding of Indian society without an understanding of the Hindu Matha, will be incomplete. So far, not many efforts have been done to see the Hindu temple as a living system, as a platform where arts, humanities and sciences came together with people from every walk of life and created an institution unprecedented in human history.

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