

Religion and Global Peace: The Instrumental Value of Religion

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Abstract

Religious believers claim their religions are peaceful and genuine believers are peacekeepers and peacemakers. In substantiating justification to their claim, they very often refer to religious scriptures. Yet, on the contrary, their claim is confronted by an opposite claim: many wars were fought and are being fought in the name of religion; and a great deal of violence can be ascribed to the religious believers. In addition, religious scriptures and history of religions do attest, to a certain extent, permissibility of using physical offence or defence. As a result, a question arises: Is the violence credited to religious believers, due to religions? Or is it because of certain secular causes in which religious texts get invoked very often? In responding to the question, the study relied on the theoretical criticism and justification. The study argued that religions, considering their historical inception, are fundamentally aimed at attaining holistic peace for their immediate subjects and subsequent followers, both spiritually and physically. The approval of violence attributed to religions is mainly relevant to safeguarding believers' existential safety and prosperity; therefore, maintaining and securing a safe human existential condition plays the rationale and stimulus for the violence which may be termed as religious, but in fact, is not so. Economical, political, and social reasons amount to the main reasons of conflict in which any community, in certain conditions including a religious community, could engage. In case of a religious community, the struggle caused by purely secular reasons use religion as an instrument for defiance, solidarity, and cohesion. In an absence of religion or ineffective appeal of religion or sectarian violence within the followers of the same religion, the combating factions very well use other appealing catchwords such as race, colour, tribe, nation, language, ethnicity, etc. The study by referring to major religions of the world generally and Islam particularly, lastly argued that in contributing to build global peace, religious believers can plausibly turn to primary peaceful intentions of the religions, if they are provided with a feasible atmosphere .

Keywords: religious violence, religious dialogue, religion and peace

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Some knowledge of politics, of international relations, of economics, is obviously necessary in order to understand the causes which lead to war. Philosophy, theology even, might come in usefully. (Woolf, 1992, p.157)

I. Introduction

It is a commonsense supposition that religious believers would always claim that their religions are meant to promote peace. They would always quote their religious sources in support of their claim. This claim is yet confronted by an opposite claim: many wars were and are being fought in the name of religion; and a great deal of violence can be attributed to religious believers. Considering these conflicting views, it seems an inquiry into the reasons of conflicts, the role of religion in making identities, primary concern of religions, and existential circumstances of religious believers would lead to some understanding of the issue. Therefore, in the subsequent parts the issue is laid out into brief sections. Firstly, the claim of religious believers is shown that it carries grain of truth in the authentic sources of religions. Secondly, the incidents involving followers from world religions are mentioned as illustrations to show that the violent incidents are caused by reasons having no direct bearing on religious faith. In the final part further information on Islamic perspective on peace is elaborated and it is shown how religious believers can contribute in building global peace.

II. World Religions on Peace

The commonsense claim of religious believers that religions are peaceful carry an authentic and genuine weight when looking at the genesis of religions and their basic sources of authority, which are mostly written sacred documents as scriptures and biographies of the founders of the religions. In an iconic and symbolic way, these religions have popular terms for peace. The Arabic word *salam*, a cognate of the Hebrew *shalom*, means "making peace." In classical Sanskrit, *shanti* is centred in the idea of *ahimsa*. These terms belong popularly to Islam, Judaism and Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism respectively. Widely professed religions do provide substantial support to these peaceful catchwords from their sacred sources and their historical events which occurred during certain times and feasible conditions.

The Old Testament, along the Ten Commandments, carries a utopian concept of peace which runs through out the scripture. For example, this utopian vision of peace is clearly described in Isaiah 2:2, 4, and Micah 4:1-3. Briefly, the scripture says that in the future nations will cease making war "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more". In a similar manner, the Bible and its account of Jesus' life is clear that the message of Jesus was of peace and reformation. He did not repudiate the old covenant but his message was based on love, forgiveness, and grace. The Bible states how Jesus was tempted, harassed, and how he resisted with patience, and so was his training and education of his immediate disciples. The Bible notes "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matt. 5:9), "Let him turn away from evil, and do good. Let him

seek peace, and pursue it.” (I Pet. 3:11), " But I tell you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who mistreat you and persecute you " (Matt. 5:44) . So then, let us follow after things which make for peace, and things by which we may build one another up (Romans 14:19).

Hinduism is such a religion where scholars feel difficulty in defining it and setting limits to its doctrines. It is a long history of Indian sages. This religion could be understood in two major ways. The first is that the methodology of its sages by which they were enlightened. These sages had renounced life in pursuit of spiritual enlightenment; they had taken path of non-violence. The other side of Hinduism is its diversity and inclusiveness. There are many groups in Hinduism with different rituals and gods; and these groups are equally Hindus. This is well described in Indian scripture such as Rig-Veda. It states, truth is one; wise men call it by different names (Rig-Veda I.164.46 as cited in Sahadat, 1997). “One should not behave towards others in a way which is disagreeable to oneself. This is the essence of morality. All other activities are due to selfish desire” (Mahabharata, “Anusasana Parva”, 113.8, as cited in Davis, 2006, p.40). The Shanti Mantra is particularly important to show that how peace is treated with greater importance in Hinduism. The Mantra is as follows:

I desire neither earthly kingdom, nor even freedom from birth and death. I desire only the deliverance from grief of all those afflicted by misery. Oh Lord, lead us from the unreal to the real; from darkness to light; from death to immortality. May there be peace in celestial regions. May there be peace on earth. May the waters be appeasing. May herbs be wholesome and may trees and plants bring peace to all. May all beneficent beings bring peace to us. May thy wisdom spread peace all through the world. May all things be a source of peace to all and to me. Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti (Peace, Peace, Peace). (Rig Veda)

Buddhism is popularly known as religion of non-violence. This is manifest in the life history of its founder, Mahatma Buddha who preferred a life of monkhood over the princely power. Buddhist Scriptures have explicit reference to non-violence and non-killing. Monks should not only themselves abstain from killing but should also refrain from encouraging—even out of passion—other people to kill themselves (Vinayapitaka III: 71-74). They should not even drink or pour out water containing tiny animals (Vin IV: 49). They should not even destroy seeds or plants (Vin: IV: 34).

Islam literally means peace and the greeting which Muslims interchange with each other in daily life is *Assalamualaikum* which means “peace be upon you”. The history of Islam and early Muslims shows that the religion emerged among the people who were at war with each other, it is why Quran reminds the early followers of Islam that “and by his grace you became brothers”. Islam prohibits killing of human beings without any discrimination. The Quran says “For this reason we prescribed for the Children of Israel that whoever kills a person, unless it be for manslaughter or for mischief in the land, it is as though he had killed all men. And whoever saves a life, it is as though he had saved the lives of all men” (Qur'an, 5:32). In the similar way in matters of conflict, Islam prefers

peace to violence, “But if they (the enemy) incline towards peace, do you (also) incline towards peace” (Qur’an, 8:61). Moreover, Islam recommends love and better behaviour to conflicting parties so a better human relationship could be created. Quran says, “And not equal are the good deed and the bad. Repel (evil) by that (deed) which is better; and thereupon, the one whom between you and him is enmity (will become) as though he was a devoted friend” (Qur’an, 41:34). Islam treats diversity of faiths as a natural condition and prohibits compulsion in religion. “And if thy Lord had pleased, all those who are in the earth would have believed, all of them. Wilt thou then force men till they are believers?” (Qur’an, 10: 99), furthermore “There is no compulsion in religion” (Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:256).

III. Religious Violence

The above mentioned brief description of details from religious sources demonstrates the support for religious believers who claim that religions are peace promoting. However, there appears a clear contradiction to the claim when considering the history of religions and approval of physical force for certain genuine reasons. The complicated part of this counter claim is that there seems difficulty in making a distinction between *history of religions* and the *history of the religious believers*. The further difficulty appears from the complexities related to making a distinction between parts of religious scriptures which set forth the principal message of religion and the parts which guide on responding the hostile conditions which religious believers face. In being careful on deliberating on violence which is ascribed to religions, it seems judicious to ascribe it to the followers of religion in the sense that any scriptural approval of violence is in its justification is *for* or *because* of the religious believers. The reasons of violence for or because of religious believers do not need to be necessarily religious. Furthermore, the violence which puts religious appeal at use does not make such violence religious. To understand the real nature of violence, it is relevant to refer to some of the acts of violence and conflicts which have been carried out in the name of religion or are popularly known as religious. In the same manner, it is also important to show how and why religion plays a role in the conflicts. Moreover, it is important to see how much could be considered as *war for religion* and *war for religious believers*. They are naively considered the same and equal; however, after serious reflections the equation becomes questioned.

Violence of Jews and Christians

Among many of the most unfortunate human tragedies of the modern world is the holocaust of the Jewish people and subsequently their occupation of Palestine. Occupying Palestinian lands, changing its demographics by vast immigration, and conducting human atrocities against Palestinian Muslims could be termed everything else except religious. Though there are religious affinities between Israel and those states that help planting it. The Jewish occupation of Palestine and ongoing conflict in the region is portrayed as a religious conflict,

thought the religious affinities do play a role, however, in actuality the issue has to do more with having habitat for Jewish people. The issue is multifaceted. The existential side of the issue is that Jewish people needed a safe place to live just like other nations and people, but should their desire of having a dignified and peaceful life come on the cost of suffering and pain of others, is a sad side of the issue. Their struggle for finding a place has displaced millions of others. Historically, there seems no justification for state of Israel to displace the Muslim inhabitants and continue construction of settlements on the land. The establishment of state of Israel has served western and American interests in finding a strategic presence for them in the Middle East. As long as Judaism is concerned it, in fact, had nothing much to do with creation of the state; this sentiment against the state is present in some Jewish religious groups. There remains to make a distinction between Judaism and Zionism; and it is Zionism which supported the reestablishment of a homeland for the Jewish people and it is a secular political movement.

After reflecting on Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it seems that the actual cause of the conflict is not what seems in a superficial understanding as mere religious. The history bears witness that Jews and Muslims lived peacefully with each other during the ages when Muslim empires had the centre stage in the world civilizations. Muslim kingdoms of Baghdad and Spain were very tolerant to Jews and many Jewish scholars made considerable contribution to philosophy and other areas of knowledge. The era of Muslim rule in Spain (8th-11th century) was considered the “Golden Age” for Spanish Jewry. Jewish intellectual and spiritual life flourished and many Jews served in Spanish courts. Jewish economic expansion was unparalleled. In Toledo, Jews were involved in translating Arabic texts to the romance languages, as well as translating Greek and Hebrew texts into Arabic. Jews also contributed to botany, geography, medicine, mathematics, poetry, and philosophy. A number of well-known Jewish physicians practiced during this period, including Hasdai Ibn Shaprut (915-970), who was the doctor for the Caliph (leader of Spain). Many famous Jewish figures lived during the Golden Age and contributed to making this a flourishing period for Jewish thought. These included Samuel Ha-Nagid, Moses ibn Ezra, Solomon ibn Gabirol Judah Halevi and Moses Maimonides (Weiner, 2009).

The Jewish and Muslim relationship was peaceful until the creation of the state of Israel. Therefore, it appears that the violence which is bloody and unending is not because of religion, it is rather because of the politics and securing a homeland. It is about the county, economy, and a safe homeland for both conflicting parties. The violence which has existed in the region since the declaration of the state of Israel could be related to religion only if the causes of conflict are sacralised as religious when in fact they have their reasons of being present on the basis of basic human needs and conditions. In a close scrutiny, it appears that a war or act of violence could be attributed to religion only if a religion is propagated or forced on others. Conflicts in which religious believers involve have their causes basically connected to them as human beings. Humans as humans can have many reasons for engaging in conflicts. In the abovementioned case, on the part of Jews it may be called survival for existence

and search for homeland; and on the part of Philistine Muslims a legitimate defence of their land and property. Considering the reasons of the conflict as secular, however, the presence of religious factor in the conflict cannot be simply disregarded. Jews on the one hand claim that the Israel is the Promised Land for them and by doing so they attract the support from the Christian and Jewish people around the world, whereas on the other hand the battling Muslims refer to the doctrine of *jihad* in Islam and therefore provide an appeal to religious sentiment among their own people and in the rest of the Muslim world.

The above objection could be responded by the analysis of the religion. Sociological meaning and significance of religion is relevant with the subject of peace and violence on the part of religious believers. According to Emile Durkheim, religion is, at its core, a social phenomenon. Religious beliefs are common to a specific group, every individual of the group receives these beliefs collectively, and these beliefs make the unity of the group. The members of the group feel themselves united to each other by the simple fact that they have a common faith (Durkheim, 1915, p. 43). Therefore, religion gives a common identity to the people. When any group of people is threatened, they use their common identity which has a strong grip on their motivation and solidarity; it can be nationally, religion, ethnicity, colour, and language. People turn to these identities to gain support and solidarity. It is why in the above conflict the conflicting parties turn to religious sentiment to gain the support for their cause. Therefore, in cases as such, religion does not amount to the cause of conflict, it rather contributes to the power and influence which keeps the combating community together. Therefore, religion does not cause violence; it rather helps to overcome the reasons which in first place lead to violence. Furthermore, even if these people had no religion, they would have invented some other identities, in the given circumstances, which could have helped them. It could have been Hebrew speaking and Arabic speaking division. They could have used ethnicity, colour, tribe, custom, tradition, and culture, anything which could have made them distinct from one another and could have gripped their unity. In presence of reasons for conflict, even if the conflicting parties believed in the same religion, the other reasons may have divided them and strengthened their factions. There are many historical events and war stories which demonstrate that the believers of the same religion could get into long and brutal clashes with each other because of the other reasons than the religion. Christian European wars, Irish and British conflict, and war between Buddhist Thailand and Burma would have not happen if merely religion had to anything with war and peace. In the modern Muslim world, the history of independence of Bangladesh shows that religion was irrelevant to the freedom struggle. Bangladesh was the part of Pakistan and it became an independent state in 1971 after a bloody war which left hundreds and thousands dead on the both sides (Rummel, 1997, p. 331). Both Pakistan and Bangladesh are majority Muslim states, if they had the same religion, then why did they fight? The reason is that people of Bangladesh felt mistreated by Pakistanis and they felt that their culture, rights, and language are threatened by the dominance of Urdu speaking people; therefore they fought their fight for their Bengali identity. Islam as a religion of both nations had no role in the war. Islam

as a religion was a shared identity of the both parties but it was not considered as a sophisticated and helpful instrument to mobilize support for confrontation or against it.

The histories of believers in Christianity have also record of violence. However, it remains a question how much of the recorded violence could be attributed to Christianity which Jesus preached and how much of it could be ascribed to the empires and religious institutions which were built in the name of Christianity. The advent of modernity, renaissance and reformation has separated state and religion in most of the western world. There are still many violent conflicts which Christian majority states engage in though the religiosity of theses acts is denied and they are presented as secular conflicts because the states are officially named as secular states. However, the Bosnian war is an example in which religiosity was clearly apparent, however in a deeper look the political factor being present , the ethnic factor was more crucial.

The Bosnian war happened because of the communist Yugoslavia. The former Yugoslavia consisted of six republics and two autonomous regions. Today Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, and Macedonia are independent nations. Serbia and Montenegro comprise the rump Yugoslavia. From 1991 to 1995, the former Yugoslavia was torn by a brutal war between the different ethnic/national groups contending for dominance in a post-communist world. The most protracted and vicious of these conflicts was in Bosnia as it dissolved into a three-way civil war between Orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croats, and Muslim Bosnians. The Bosnian nationalist goal of a united country, with Sarajevo as its capital and comprising all the religious groups, was tested in a drawn-out conflict that shocked the world and cast doubt on the stability of the new Europe. Bosnian war took toll of many lives; it is one of the sadist stories of the modern Europe. The three years of war and bloodshed left between 95,000 and 100,000 people killed and more than 2 million displaced. The 1990 parliamentary elections led to a national assembly dominated by three ethnically based parties, which had formed a loose coalition to oust the communists from power. Croatia and Slovenia's subsequent declarations of independence and the warfare that resulted, placed Bosnia and Herzegovina and its three constituent peoples in an awkward position. The reason for war was not religion, it was rather ethnicity.

Violence of Hindus and Muslims

Hindu population is largely located in India. The general perception of Hinduism is based on the changes and practice of Indian Hindus. The sectarian riots and violence has a long record in Indian history since the very day of the independence. The division of India into India and Pakistan left behind reasons which became time to time easy tools for interest groups, mostly for politicians to incite hatred among people and to gain political power. The sectarian causalities since the independence till today have been huge. Incidents related to cases of violence between Hindus and Muslims are deep rooted in history. The problem is historically deep rooted and politically manipulated. In the above case, we should look at the history of India, which in our times emerged from colonialism; and just before the independence, Indians disagreed with each other on the future of

the country and India and Pakistan came into existence. It was a two nation theory, according to which, Muslims and Hindus were supposed to have two countries. Because of the demographic distribution of both Muslims and Hindus such theory could not work well on the real ground. The two-nation theory was not practically possible and it was so catastrophic that in the first day after independence some five hundred thousand people were killed. This history of bloodshed left its psychological effects and political consequences for Indian Muslims, many of them were not able or did not want to move to Pakistan.

The Indian history since its independence is full of many sectarian accounts. The fight is of existence, on one hand Indian Muslims are educationally backward and under developed, and on the other hand some extremist Indian political parties use religious sentiment and irrational politics to take control of power. The Hindu extremist groups do not appeal to every Indian Hindu, there are Hindus in India who do not accept the extremism, that is why these extremists could not come in power for any longer time. The other aspect is that India as being a very large country the regionalism in some states is still strong. The sectarian conflicts in India are mostly motivated by political interest groups, and religion as such is not at the core of violence. However, being a Hindu majority country the political system of India has remained democratic and secular parties have mostly remained in power. Politicians and political parties which have relied on any kind of extremism have practically remained to a greater degree unable to make any big change because of the democratic system and constitutional check and balances. With growing literacy rate and economic development, it is expected that a better atmosphere will eventually evolve.

Buddhism is generally thought to have a great emphasis on non-violence and monks are even prohibited from killing any living beings including animals. However, the followers of Buddhism have engaged time to time into conflicts. The historical war between Thailand and Burma. In Sri Lanka the 20th century civil war between the majority Buddhist Sinhalese and the Hindu Tamil minority has cost 50,000 lives. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam commonly known as the Tamil Tigers, has waged a violent secessionist campaign since the 1970s to secede from the Sri Lankan state in order to create a separate Tamil state in the north and east of the island. This campaign has developed into the Sri Lankan Civil War, one of longest running armed conflicts in Asia. Due to the tactics employed by the Tamil Tigers, including the extensive use of suicide bombing and their recruitment of child soldiers, they are currently proscribed as a terrorist organization by 32 countries. However, after looking at the ground situation, we find that the war is rather ethnic than religious. The war is between Tamils and Sinhalese. Its also just not ethnic, it is about the political reasons, because Tamils are fighting for a separate state.

Violence of Muslims

Islam and its spread during the long history, its political dimensions , concentration of its major followers in the eastern countries, which have gone through the colonial struggle; all these factors have shaped much of the political outlook of the Muslims. Muslims have historically gathered under the religious

banner to fight the foreign occupation and colonial powers. In the present time, the current scenario is that there is violence at its peak in the Middle East, Afghanistan; and the hallmark of this violence is supposed to be the September 11, 2002, Al-Qaeda attacks on the United States. Religious violence received further boost after September 11, 2002, when Al-Qaeda allegedly accepted the responsibility of having carried out the strikes on the US in which the world trade centre and other important sites were targeted and around four thousand people died in the strikes beside property damage. Scale of violence increased in Muslim countries because of the American War on terrorism. The worst part in the case was the open responsibility which Osama bin Laden took in the name of Islam and Muslims. The series of events which followed the incident has brought religious violence in focus again. The seriousness of the issue and the concerns which people have regarding the global security can be very well understood by the increasing number of books and publications in almost every language of the world.

However, after reflecting on the above mentioned situation it appears that the violence which has spread in many countries and concerns of security which are felt in many corners of the world have in fact no bearing on religion. In a detailed analysis and neutral study of the cases, it will appear that the causes which have resulted in the violence are economical, political, and geographical. In the case of the Middle East, as stated earlier that the violence between Jews and Muslims is because of political reasons. A fair solution of Israeli-Palestinian conflict agreed on by all parties involved in the issue could pave way for peace; without resolving the conflict, no guaranties are possible to secure peace. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has not engaged the people and governments in the Middle East only, but it has affected whole Muslim world.

IV. Concept of Islamic Jihad

There are many terms in Islamic Shariah which refer to various kinds of struggle. Theses are *jihad*, *qital*, *bige*. Unfortunately, in the contemporary time these terms are mixed in a way that it becomes difficult for people to understand the nature of the struggle and to pass any theological judgement on it. In short, among these terms *qital* means literally war and physical fight. It is very interesting to see how, when, and why *qital* was allowed in Islam. More importantly, was *qital* approved to spread religion, convert people, or was it directly related to the religious believer's existential conditions.

Islamic history starts from the time when the early Muslims sustained the wrath of the majority non-believers; history shows that their faith was not tolerated. In the beginning many of them had to loose their lives until, they had to leave their hometown and they were forced out of their properties; therefore they took refuge in the neighbouring city, where their faith was embraced by the inhabitants of the city. Islamic early history also shows that early Muslims had to go through many small battles and a few major wars. The historians of Islam show that these wars were fought in defence. They were defensive resistances, rather than offensive adventures.

It is important to mention here the approval of *qital* according to Quran

was not made to spread Islam or convert people or to kill innocent people. Islam is clear that there is no compulsion in religion. Reasons which were behind the approval of *qital* are clearly mentioned in the Quran. The Quran states:

39. To those against whom war is made, permission is given (to fight), because they are wronged;- and verily, Allah is most powerful for their aid;-

40. (They are) those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right,- (for no cause) except that they say, "our Lord is Allah.. Did not Allah check one set of people by means of another, there would surely have been pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, in which the name of Allah is commemorated in abundant measure. Allah will certainly aid those who aid his (cause);- for verily Allah is full of Strength, Exalted in Might, (able to enforce His Will). (Surah 22. The Pilgrimage)

The above verses of The Quran are clear that *Qital* was approved in Islam for the reasons of the safety and security of the believers. The matters of safety and security are those which do not need any religious justification to be the legitimate reasons for the retaliation and struggle.

V. Unsettled Territorial Disputes and Muslim Freedom Movements

In the contemporary time, there are *Jihadi* movements which are reported in daily press. You would never hear that these movements converted people to Islam, in spite of that you would hear that the movements are fighting a foreign occupation. Among these movements you could also hear that not all these movements are interested in setting up a religious state or support political Islam. In more scrutiny, you would find why its so. Why some of them use Islamic doctrine of *jihad* whereas others among them do not do so, but advocate for their cause in the name nationalism or represent their cause as just a nationalist or purely political and non-religious. The matter remains once again of solidarity and of instrumental value. In case of Israeli-Palestinian, the doctrine of *jihad* works for *hamas* and secular state works for *al-fatah*. The same phenomenon could be found in many movements.

The movements which are fighting the foreign occupation in those countries where independence of those countries is not yet granted, the freedom struggle uses the religious doctrine of *jihad* and appeals to the religious community on the same basis. Their struggle for freedom is justified not only on theological grounds but on secular basis also because every nation invaded against its will has right to stand for its sovereignty. The problems of these nations need to be solved, the world politics and powerful nations have not sought yet to resolve these matters, if these matters are solved and reasons of conflicts are resolved and tackled on the principles of justice, the world could become more peaceful. Once these problems remain unsolved, the conflicts will remain continuously affecting the interests of related parties and their allies.

VI. Reaffirming Peace in Religion

Religious believers receive their purpose of being and becoming from the religion. Any motivation based on religious appeal goes beyond the worldly results. In delivering any moral judgement on actions and motivations goes beyond utilitarianism. The moral and ethical justification which religion gives to actions goes beyond worldly results in power, motivation and significance. This religious ethics could be more trusted and relied on than any foreign policy of superpowers. Foreign policies of political states are limited to short term and long term goals whereas actions inspired and justified by religions transcend temporality and are linked with eternity. Within this background, the history of religions does provide accounts of war and peace. The history of religions are made by its followers, historically wars and conflicts are found in the history of all religious people whether they be Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Christians, Muslims, etc. On the other hand, as described earlier, religions stress on peace. The above picture which is drawn shows that on one hand there are religious scriptures which clearly emphasis on peace and non-violence ; and on the other hand we see that violence has been there and in our contemporary time there is still ongoing violence which is being done in the name of religion. However, the causes of these violent incidents are not religions, but other factors, and religion is being mostly used to appeal for solidarity purposes.

One of the reasons which seem relevant to the present paper is related to the encounter of religious believers with their circumstances. Religions whenever they emerged, they were concerned about change; and it was the society, which was not in favour of these religions. The immediate response of the society shaped the early teachings of religion, helped to develop the religious consciousness, and affected the future interpretation of religion and its practice. For examples, Christians, Jews, Muslims all of these religions grew into a hostile environment. Lets take examples of these religions Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Moreover, examples of Hinduism and Buddhism.

Judaism's formative years start from Exodus, it was a religion revealed for a certain nation, which lived in a certain situation. Jews were under slavery; therefore, the situation formatted the attitude. On the other hand Christianity grew in the same house among own people among the same tribe, there was no intruder, no foreign message. Therefore, Jesus in spite of facing hardships and hostile behaviour from his people, did not loose his patience. He was for a change within the same people, he had not thrown away the authority of Old Testament, he had not come to break the covenant, he was sent to the lost sheep of Israel. The same conditions are true about Buddhism, Buddha born as Hindu, reformed the old teachings of Hinduism, the basic teachings of Buddhism are reinterpretation of the faith which people knew already. Buddha was changing his own people, so he took the way of debate and non-violence. Furthermore, he and his followers were not subjected to any violence; therefore, this environment affected the Buddha's teachings and the later interpretation of religion.

Islam and early history of Islam shows that that the message of Islam was clearly different from the society it grew in, the people worshiped many gods whereas Islam preached one God worship. The other teachings were also different

from what people believed then. Islam was different from the society in which it started and was nearer to other societies who had revealed knowledge. The emergence of Islam therefore faced a hostile opposition, some of the believers lost their lives and ultimately they were driven out of their houses and sipped off their properties. This earlier encounter of Muslims shaped history of Muslims.

It appears that the conditions in which religions grew formatted their teachings and attitude of their followers. But, what if religions had faced different circumstances and this is what brings the followers of religions to new reality in our contemporary time. Is the present world ready to provide the circumstances, which may suit to the religions, rather, tempting their followers to do the worst. Therefore, if religious freedom is ensured in the contemporary world, the peaceful interpretation of religion could prevail with ease.

In the contemporary time, which is to some people a time for post-modernity and pluralism, it seems that the feasible circumstances are possible, which will allow tolerance and peaceful coexistence of religious people. Globalization, free market, and international interdependence have potential for creating a peaceful environment. The shared interests have made holes in the walls standing between nations. The other development can be seen within the religious circles itself, calling for religious dialogue. These conditions are hopefully potential to make the world a peaceful place.

Religious believers are related to their religious scriptures in a dialogical way, in an existential manner, they try to receive the guidance from the religious sources and try to decipher the will of divinity by relating their situation with the scriptural teachings. They make dialogical connection between themselves and the scriptures and as their own place in the world keeps on changing their interpretation of the scripture keeps on guiding them.

Therefore, there remains a need which has two sides. On one hand it becomes necessary that the problems which attract religious motivations are called for are solved. It includes on the part of governments to approach problems without alienating religious believers. The alienation of religious believers is also because of secular institutions which disregard people's genuine problems because they think that religious believers use religion in their methods of supporting their cause. On the other hand, there is need of providing atmosphere to religious believers in which their constructive capacities are called forth. Mainly, religious believers can play a big role in promoting world peace by being inspired by the teachings of religion on peace.

VII. Conclusion

In conclusion, the researcher would like to put briefly the findings of this paper. The researcher believes that the religion promotes peace, and the violence, which is attributed to religion, is in fact because of many other reasons such as economical, political, and ethnical. In the beginning of this paper, the researchers showed that the major religions of the world have peaceful teachings written in their main scriptures and sources. By referring to these scriptures, the researcher has shown that these religions put high emphasis on peace and peace building. Therefore, it seems that peace is one important purpose of religion. However, the

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researcher also mentioned the definitions of religion from the sociologists and anthropologists; these definitions showed out the importance of society in religion. They also showed how religion can be useful in maintaining the society and showed the role of religious leaders.

In the following section, the research also showed many violent cases which are publicly and popularly attributed to religion and religious people; and these cases are treated as events of religious violence. The researcher made an analysis of these cases and showed that the reasons behind the events are not religion; rather the reasons are economical, political, and ethnical.

In the final part of the paper, the research showed that better circumstances if created can get a better response from religion and it can avoid misuse of religion. The contemporary world can provide better circumstances, because societies have grown now widely multicultural.

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