

Religiosity among Hindus: A Study of Lucknow City

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ABSTRACT

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Religion has been an integral part of human life in one form or the other. Generally speaking, it consists of a set of thoughts, beliefs and practices which are followed by people. Several religions have emerged in the world since ages. Hinduism is one of the major ancient religions in the world. It has evolved since ages in the country. Hindus live predominantly in India. Like religion itself, the texture of religiosity among Hindus has evolved over time, showing both continuity and change.

It is observed that there is no unanimity of views among scholars on the exact meaning and dimensions of religiosity. There is also found wide divergence of opinions on what is Hindu religion, particularly in the current Indian socio-political context of rising tide of Hindutva which presents Hinduism in a homogenising mould. There is observed increasing general popularity of spiritual gurus and 'babas' and performance of religious events and rituals in personal and public domains; though the popularity of such phenomena seen to differ across different sections of society. It was commonly held after Independence that Indian society would get gradually secularised and hold of religion over people will decline with onward march of modernisation and development in the country. However, there is witnessed increasing display of religiosity, involving even communal polarisations and conflicts in the period of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation. Hence, the issue of religiosity in India needs to be studied closely in the current context to have an objective understanding of the phenomenon which would be useful academically, socially as well as in policy terms. devotees, their religious knowledge, religious belief and practices. In fact, there are a number of studies on religion, but very few of these focus on religiosity and its dimensions in case of India. There is not much in-depth empirical analysis on components, modes and about its intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions of religiosity among Hindus. Hence, a study on religiosity among Hindus would be quite relevant.

Conceptual framework of the study: In every society, particularly in Indian society, religion plays an important role in an individual's life and generally many of his day-to-day decisions are guided by his affiliations to a particular religion. Religion influences an individual's activities or one can say that social behaviour of an individual

is with religious values, norms and practices. Religiosity is all about one's inclination and commitment towards a particular set of thoughts, religious belief and practices in day-to-day life. It refers to possession of scriptural knowledge, spiritual experiences and religious practices followed by an individual and community belonging to a religion. It is the intensity and consistency of practice of a person's or group's faith.

In the present study, the focus is mainly on three dimensions of religiosity, which includes intellectual/cognitive, ritualistic and experiential. Intellectual /cognitive aspect includes the knowledge part of an individual related to religion,i.e. how much he is interested in the holy scripture, religious books, mythological stories and events, the particular values of his/her religion. Ritualistic aspect, which is extrinsic includes the visible aspect of one's religious inclination which includes prayer, fasting, going on a religious tour, offerings in temples, organizing and participating in religious programmes. Experiential aspect includes personal faith, union with the divine, interpretation of the existence. Intellectual/cognitive and experiential aspects are intrinsic dimension of religiosity, whereas practices and rituals are its external manifestations.

Sociological theorists have presented various theories regarding religion and its impact. Sociologists have come to their conclusions by analytical reasoning, collection of data, observing people's behavior and then analyzing the data. People's view regarding these formulations can give some specific information regarding their religiosity. Scholars who study religion have altogether a different approach to study this area. The main thrust of scholars is not on the truth or falsity of a religious belief system, rather on how these system and institutions shape social behavior and attitude and this is something reflected in one's religiosity in society. The reason for religiosity differs from people to people and from their situations too. When people feel deprived, their sorrow and unhappiness create a need for religion, and to some the long-term training teaches them to be religious; while some turn to religion because they calculate the benefits or rewards which religion gives them, and then there are some individuals who follow religion to search for meaning and belongings to get answer for their existence. Thus, from the studies it is seen that there are multi-factorial causality of religiosity, when it is viewed from an eclectic perspective.

In the present study, religiosity is seen as a socio-psychological phenomena which includes both intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions. The study examines the socio-economic

status of the Lucknow is a multi-religious city. Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism are some of the religions practised by the people of Lucknow city. Since the majority of population follow Hinduism, this study is confined to Hindus for the purpose of the study. Lucknow city holds a rich culture and here a vibrant Hindu culture is visible in each households of the city. Another reason for choosing Hindu in the present study is their overwhelming proportion in the population. Individually and collectively, Hindus are often seen offering prayers, reciting holy hymes, chanting mantras, making costly gift to gods and goddess and thousands of godmen and women who are mushrooming in every nook and corner. Hinduism has come to include more and more beliefs in course of it development. It has become more and more accommodative. Some of the ways of worshipping and beliefs are going for changes. Infact, Hindus have been floating in a deep sea of religious and social tumult these days. Every other day a new guru, a new goddess or an avtar with a new sect comes up. Every one of them is preaching, propagating, and enriching own self and his or her own muth, temple or ashram. There has been a flourish of Hindu religiosity going by mushrooming of temples, the rise of new religious faiths, the assertion of a religious identity. Frequent Hindu mobilisation has become common in the recent decades causing social tensions and conflicts. So, it becomes very relevant to study the texture of Hindu religiosity in the current scenario.

Chapter scheme: The study is divided into seven chapters. Chapter I provides Introduction to the study. First, it briefly deals with the issues of religiosity and specifies the problem of the study, then follows a short deliberation on sociology of religion, perspectives on religiosity and review of literature. Thereafter, it sets out objectives and hypotheses of the study, methodology, description of the sample of the respondents and chapter scheme. Based on secondary sources, Chapter II discusses various dimensions of religiosity and the major theoretical perspectives used in the study of religiosity. Again, based on secondary sources, Chapter III titled “Trends of Religiosity among Hindus after Independence”, briefly highlights the historical development of Hinduism, its basic features and changes that have occurred in religiosity among Hindus after Independence in India. Chapters four to six are based on primary sources of data. Chapter IV is titled “Pattern of Religiosity among Hindus in Lucknow City”. It analyses the main religious beliefs and practices popular among Hindus of Lucknow city. Chapter V captioned, “Socio-economic Status and Religiosity among Hindus”, examines the relationship of religiosity with socio-economic status of the Hindus of Lucknow city. Chapter VI which

is titled “Recent Changes in Religiosity among Hindus”, probes mainly the changes that have occurred in religiosity among Hindus of Lucknow in the recent years. Chapter VII offers main findings and Conclusion of the study.

The present study has three **objectives** which include -

1. To know the trend of religiosity among Hindus after Independence in India;
2. To examine the nature of religiosity among Hindus in Lucknow city, including recent changes; and
3. To find out the relationship between their religiosity and socio-economic status.

Related to these objectives the study formulated three **hypotheses** which are -

1. There has been a change in the pattern of religiosity among Hindus in India after Independence;
2. There is an increase in religiosity among Hindus of Lucknow city in the recent decades; and
3. The nature of religiosity among Hindus varies across different sections of society in terms of caste, class, gender and age groups.

Methodology of the study: Broadly speaking, research methodology refers to the procedure of research/enquiry used for production of valid knowledge about the theme of study. Production of valid knowledge is a complex exercise. It requires a proper research design. The research design of the present study is descriptive-diagnostic. As religiosity has both objective and subjective aspects, the present study uses mixed methods research strategy, i.e. both quantitative and qualitative methods. The universe of the study is Lucknow City. The sample design is purposive random sampling. Four localities of Lucknow city having concentration of Hindus (one each from upper, middle and lower class colonies, and slums) are selected for the study. 25 households are randomly chosen from each selected locality for study. The study uses mixed method approach which combines both quantitative and qualitative strategies of research. Accordingly, two methods have been used to collect empirical data from the respondents – i) Questionnaire (the same used as Interview schedule in case of illiterate respondents), and ii) Interview guide. Data collected through use of these methods form primary source. Secondary sources used here include relevant books, research article in journals, reports,

newspapers etc. The data have been interpreted and analysed with the help of tables and figures. SPSS 22 version software was used for data analysis.

Findings and Conclusion

The analysis presented in the preceding chapters provides an understanding of the broad trend of religiosity among Hindus in India after independence in general and among Hindus of Lucknow city in detail, including recent changes. The main findings and conclusion of the study are as follows.

Religiosity after Independence: Hindu religion includes a wide canvas of religious scriptures, beliefs, sub-sects, gods, goddesses and religious practices. It is not considered similar to monotheistic religions. The basis for the Hindu religion and philosophy consists primarily of the Vedas and Upanishads, the epics and a host of other religious texts. Given its huge diversity it is regarded more as a 'way of life'. Hindus believe in many gods and goddesses and encourages prayer and worship of them. Hinduism does not recognise any particular religious belief and practice as being obligatory. The nature of religiosity among Hindus continued to remain diverse in itself and tolerant towards other religions for around four decades after independence. But thereafter certain new trends in Hindu religiosity have gradually become prominent in the country. These new trends include growing popularity of new age religious movements (symbolised by several "godmens", 'gurus' and "deras"), increasing public display of religion, commercialisation/commodification of religion, increasing assertion of religious identity, religious militancy among a section of Hindus, and politicisation of Hindu religion.

Pattern of religiosity among Hindus in Lucknow: The analysis of religiosity among the selected respondents of Lucknow city is done in terms of their religious knowledge, beliefs and practices associated with the Hindu religion. It is found that an overwhelming majority of respondents (84%) believe in Hinduism while barely (6.3%) do not believe in it. The caste system is one of the features of Indian religious and social tradition associated with rigid hierarchy. It is traditionally believed to be created by God, more specifically the Brahma. In this regard nearly half of the total respondents (43.3%) opine that society is the creator of caste-system, followed by one-fourth of the respondents (26.3%) believe Brahmins to be its originator, and around 23% think of God as its creator. Untouchability is believed to have been first mentioned in Dharmashastras and untouchables were not considered to be a part of varna system as their occupations and

habits were considered ritually 'polluting'. Even now 17% of the total respondents consider untouchability a religious practice while 38% informants don't consider it so. As regard prohibitions and discrimination in commensality among Hindus, it is found that more than half of the total respondents (53.7%) strongly agree that they don't discriminate while eating with people of other castes. But 42.3% seldom eat food with other castes while 34% informants opine that they have no problem with having food with people of other castes. Further it was found that more than half of the total respondents (58.3%) don't consider Brahmins to be at the highest position in the society. It is seen that about 43% of the respondents have knowledge about all the four ashrams while only 17.3% respondents believe in all of them. Contrary to this nearly half of the respondents (44%) don't know about the concept of Purushartha while the majority (59.7%) of respondents do not have any clear cut idea about it. Among the different paths in Hinduism, more than half-of the total respondents (54.7%) follow path of Karma to achieve one's goal of life (i.e. communion with God). Nearly 42% of the respondents said they have complete knowledge regarding Doctrine of Karma while 38% respondents told they partially knew it. In addition to this 34% of the respondents partially believe in paap-punya while 33% respondents always believe in it. Rebirth is also central to Hinduism and is associated with Karma. In regard to this, 33% of the respondents admitted that they have belief in it while close to this i.e. 29.7% of the respondents denied having any such belief. Majority of the respondents (61.3%) always believe in human destiny. A significant majority of respondents (65.3%) believe in god and goddess while little less than one-fourth (23.3%) respondents partially believe in it. A large majority of respondents (72%) completely believe in worship (70.3%) in idol-worship. Nearly half (46.3%) of the total respondents' main objective behind following Hinduism is worldly happiness while 29.3% respondents have both worldly happiness as well as salvation as their motive.

Further, the manifestation of religious beliefs is seen in different forms of religious practices of Hindus like worship, prayer, observance of fast, visiting temple and so on. In this connection, it was found that almost half of the total (47.7%) respondents worship God everyday while over one-fourth of the respondents (28.3%) do not often worship God. A large majority of respondents (85%) practice idol-worship while 29.7% respondents visit temple on a weekly basis and majority (39%) of the respondents do it on some special occasion. Going on pilgrimage seems to be popular among the

respondents. Nearly 41.7% of the respondents had been to pilgrimage while 27.3% respondents have planned to go to sacred sites in future. Vratas is an important religious practice in Hinduism. Around 40% keep fasts occasionally while 27.7% never keep fast. Majority of them (52%) never go for upanayan sanskar while 33.3% respondents perform this sanskar. Three-fourth of the total respondents (75%) perform marriage through religious rituals and customs while other 27.7% respondents perform both religious rituals as well court-marriage. Little less than half (40.75%) respondents strongly favour marriage among different castes while on contrary there are only 28.7% event of inter-caste marriages among the respondents. A large majority of respondents (79.7%) opine that only a son or a male member can perform the funeral rites while a very small fraction (4%) of the respondents opine that daughter or a female member can also perform it. Only some (15.7%) respondents agree that both can perform funeral rites. A large majority of respondents (88.7%) denied any incidence of divorce in their family while 11.3% respondents said yes to divorce in their families. Majority (71.7%) of the respondents perform shraddha annually. So, religion is a part of everyday life of the Hindus in terms of both beliefs and practices. But there is variation among them in terms of knowledge about the precepts and scriptures of Hindu religion, the extent of belief they have in Hindu religion and the practices of the religion they follow. Large number of them believe in Hindu religion fully or partially but some of them don't accept certain beliefs and practices of Hinduism.

Socio-economic status and religiosity: The analysis of empirical data shows the pattern of religiosity with respect to socio-economic status of the selected Hindu respondents of Lucknow city. In gender terms, it is observed that about 53.3% females worship God on a regular basis in comparison to 42% males while 32% male worship God sometimes and 24.7% females do so. 39.3% females keep fast always as compared to males with 14.7%. 44.7% males keep fast occasionally as compared to females 36%. About 40% women know doctrine of karma fully while 48.6% males have complete knowledge about it. Half of the total males respondents (50.7%) want to achieve worldly happiness while less than half (42%) females want to achieve that by following Hinduism. 30.7% females want to achieve both worldly happiness and salvation compared to males which is 28%. Out of all only 2.7% females and 6% males visit temple daily while 44% women and 34% men visit temple seldom. 46% men had already visited sacred sites in comparison to 37.3% women, while more number of females (36%) planned pilgrimage

visit in future than males (18.7%). Likewise, there is found age-wise difference in religiosity. Majority of the respondents (55.6%) in the age group of 35-59 years fully know about the doctrine of karma and only a very small of respondents (4%) in the age group of 15-19 years know about it. Majority of the respondents (50.3%) in the age group of 35-59 years want worldly happiness, followed by (46.7%) respondents in the age group of 15-19 years. More than half of the total respondents (55.3%) in the age group of 35-59 years worship God daily, and majority (36.7%) in the age-group 15-19 never worship God. Majority of the respondents in the age group 60 years and above visit temple weekly while majority in the age group of 20-35 years seldom visit it. Similarly, relationship between class and religiosity also varies. It was found that about half of the total respondents (49.2%) from upper-middle class are fully acquainted with the theory of karma and almost same ratio of respondents (48.7%) in the lower class partially know about it. Majority of the respondents (65.2%) from lower-middle class worship God daily followed by respondents of upper-middle class (47.3%). About half of the respondents (49.6%) in upper-middle class had already been to some sacred sites for pilgrimage; majority of respondents from lower-middle class (69.6%) planned to visit in future, and nearly half of the total respondents (49.2%) have not yet visited any such site. 42.3% from upper class, 39.5% from upper-middle class, 56.5% from lower-middle class and 38% from lower class sometimes keep fast and perform rituals. Further, relationship between main source of family income and religiosity is also found to vary. It is seen that 37.3% employed in government-sector fully know about the doctrine of karma, followed by respondents engaged in self-employment. Among labours, 12.2% partially know about it and among private job respondents 32.8% don't know about it. Majority of self-employed people (57.7%) want to achieve worldly happiness through following Hindu religion. Large majority of respondents (90.3%) among labours want to attain worldly happiness whereas majority of people engaged in business sector (60%), followed by government job (43.6%), want both worldly happiness and salvation through following Hinduism. Majority of the respondents in government job (53.8%) worship daily, and 41.4% respondents among self-employed visit temple on a regular basis. Likewise, religiosity is found to vary with respect to monthly family income of the respondents. In this connection, 39% respondents from all income groups are found to visit temple sometimes, followed by 29.7% respondents who visit weekly. 46.9% respondents in income group less than Rs. 15000 neither do fast nor perform rituals. 40.3% respondents from all income group sometimes do fast and perform rituals.

Maximum number of respondents from all income groups have already visited sacred sites of worship and only a small number of respondents (2%) said they will never go on pilgrimages. A varying pattern is also noticed in the link between religiosity and educational level of respondents. Nearly half of the total respondents from all educational levels want worldly happiness by following Hinduism, followed by 29.3% respondents who want to achieve both prosperity and salvation. Around 47.7% respondents among all educational groups worship daily, 4.3% respondents visit temple daily and 39% visit sometimes. 27% respondents always do fast and rituals among all educational groups while 40.3% do sometimes. Out of the total 42% respondents are fully acquainted with the concept of karma, while 38.3% respondents know partially about it, and 19.6% don't know about it. The link between religiosity and caste category is also observed. Out of all, 175 respondents don't consider Brahmins to be at the highest position in social hierarchy. 39% respondents from all category visit temples sometimes. Majority of the respondents (52.8%) from general category have already visited pilgrimage sites, followed by respondents from other backward class (35.2%). So, there is found considerable variation in religiosity among Hindus on the basis of differences in their socio-economic status.

Recent changes in religiosity: The analysis of empirical data pertaining to the selected respondents regarding recent changes in religiosity was done taking into account their socio-economic status, viz. gender, age, caste, class, income and educational level. In this connection, it was found that a little less than half of the total respondents (44%) fully favoured making India a Hindu rashtra. Around 37% of respondents fully favoured and 27.3% partially favoured demolition of Babri masjid while a small minority of respondents (15.3%) were in opposition to it. A large majority of respondents (75.3%) fully favour construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya. In addition to this, for construction of Ram temple it 40.6% respondents have contributed in monetary terms while 26% have propagated about it. Also there is seen a close interplay between religion and politics in the recent years. Nearly half of the respondents (48.3%) strongly agree that there is an increase in the link between religion and politics in contemporary time while more than one-fourth respondents (28.3%) partially agree over this. Further, around 56% respondents said they believe in tolerance towards other people's religions. More than one-third of total respondents (40.7%) fully believe in non-violence, followed by 33.7% respondents who partially believe in it. Gender-wise, it is found that almost half of the

total (48.3%) respondents (i.e. 38.6% females and 61.4% males) strongly agree that there is an increase in the link between religion and politics. Also, a change in religious sentiments of the respondents in recent years is observed. Majority of the respondents (53%) said that there is an increase in feelings and sentiments for Hindu religion. About 54% respondents said that there has been an increase in performing religious practice in recent years. It is seen that 41% respondents developed in recent years feeling of opposition towards people of other religions (particularly Muslims) while 43% respondents remain neutral. Further, the respondents also gave their views on some other changes in recent years. Around 32.7% respondents stated that there is an increase in political use of religion, 26.7% said influence of gurus has increased, 12% holds the view that there is an increase in pretention/ external display of religion, 15% stated that there is an increase in the commercialization of religion, and 9.3% held that there is an increase in all the above changes in Hinduism.

Finally, it may be concluded that there has been a marked change in the nature of religiosity among Hindus in the country after Independence, i.e. from being more pluralist, diverse and tolerant towards people of other religions for about four decades and thereafter getting oriented more towards assertion of Hindu identity, public display of religion, proliferation of new age godmen/women, and commercialisation and politicisation of religion. The recent shift which has happened at national level is also found to be there among Hindus in Lucknow city. The recent changes give an external appearance of increasing religiosity among Hindus, but not in intrinsic sense. Moreover, the empirical data show variation in the degree/level of religiosity with respect to socio-economic status of the Hindus in terms of gender, age, caste, class and education.