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# RELIGION AND SOCIETY

**B.S.O.E.-145**

**B.A. General - 5th Semester**

**Chapter Wise Reference Book  
Including Many Solved Sample Papers**

*Based on*

**C.B.C.S. (Choice Based Credit System) Syllabus of**

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Content

## **RELIGION AND SOCIETY**

Question Paper—June-2023 (Solved).....	1
Question Paper—December-2022 (Solved) .....	1
Question Paper—Exam Held in July-2022 (Solved).....	1
Sample Question Paper–1 (Solved) .....	1
Sample Question Paper–2 (Solved) .....	1

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<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Chapterwise Reference Book</i>	<i>Page</i>
--------------	-----------------------------------	-------------

---

### **BLOCK 1: UNDERSTANDING RELIGION**

1. Sociology of Religion: Meaning and Concept.....	1
2. Elements of Religion.....	10
3. Approaches to the Study of Religion .....	19
4. Religion and Rationalization .....	29

### **BLOCK 2: RELIGION IN INDIA**

5. Pluralism, Equality and Fraternity: The Constitutional Foundations .....	38
6. Hinduism .....	50
7. Islam .....	68
8. Christianity.....	78
9. Sikhism .....	90

---

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Chapterwise Reference Book</i>	<i>Page</i>
10.	Buddhism.....	101
11.	Religion among Tribes.....	111

**BLOCK 3: RELIGION, COMMUNITY AND STATE**

12.	Religious Pluralism and Syncretic Traditions.....	121
13.	Secularism and Secularisation.....	131
14.	Communalism and Fundamentalism.....	138
15.	Civil Religion.....	144



**Sample Preview  
of the  
Solved  
Sample Question  
Papers**

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# QUESTION PAPER

June – 2023

(Solved)

## RELIGION AND SOCIETY

B.S.O.E.-145

Time: 3 Hours ]

[ Maximum Marks: 100

Note: Answer any five questions. All questions carry equal marks.

**Q. 1. How is Philosophy of Religion different from Theology? Explain.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-1, Page No. 1, 'Sociology of Religion Different from Philosophy of Religion and Theology'.

**Q. 2. Examine the functional school to the study of religion.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-4, Page No. 30, 'The Functional School'.

**Q. 3. Discuss the intersection of religion and society in India.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-5, Page No. 40, 'Intersection of Religion and Society'.

**Q. 4. Is religion rational? Discuss.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-4, Page No. 29, 'Introduction' and 'Rationality and Religion' and Page No. 31, Q. No. 2.

**Q. 5. Explain the concepts of equality and fraternity with special reference to India.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-5, Page No. 39, 'Equality and Fraternity'.

**Q. 6. Examine the social order in Christianity.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-8, Page No. 79, 'Christian Social Order'.

**Q. 7. Discuss the concept of 'Supreme God' of the tribals.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-11, Page No. 115, Q. No. 3.

**Q. 8. Explain the concept of religious pluralism.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-12, Page No. 121, 'Religious Pluralism and the Occurrence of Religious Pluralism'.

# QUESTION PAPER

December – 2022

(Solved)

## RELIGION AND SOCIETY

B.S.O.E.-145

Time: 3 Hours ]

[ Maximum Marks : 100

Note: Answer any five questions.

**Q. 1. Examine the concept of religion as understood in the Western World.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-4, Page No. 29, 'Religion as Understood in the West'.

**Q. 2. Explain the concept of 'Superhumans' and its manifestations.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-2, Page No. 11, 'Superhumans' and Page No. 13, Q. No. 4.

**Q. 3. Discuss the psycho-biological elements in the origin of religion.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-3, Page No. 20, 'The Origin of Religion in Phycho-biological Processes'.

**Q. 4. Examine the relationship between the 'rationale of religion' and 'being in the world'.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-4, Page No. 29, 'Rationality' and Page No. 30, 'Being in the World'.

**Q. 5. Describe the institution of family in Islam.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-7, Page No. 69, 'The Family'.

**Q. 6. Discuss the essential elements of Buddhism.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-10, Page No. 102, 'The Essence of Buddhism'.

**Q. 7. Explain the different superhuman beings of tribes.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-11, Page No. 112, 'Different Superhuman Being'.

**Q. 8. Discuss the nature of syncretic tradition in India.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-12, Page No. 122, 'Syncretic Tradition'.

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# Sample Preview of The Chapter

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# RELIGION AND SOCIETY

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## BLOCK 1: UNDERSTANDING RELIGION

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### Sociology of Religion: Meaning and Concept

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#### INTRODUCTION

In public discourse, we often see, political parties use religion and secularism as a tool to gain public support. In this context, it is essential to understand how religion affects social and political thought and action today. The unit begins with a discussion of how religion is a relevant area of sociological analysis. It also distinguishes the sociology of religion from the philosophy and theory of religion. An attempt is made to define the next sociological definition of religion by enumerating and developing its characteristics. Followed by an overview of the development of the sociology of religion. Before we conclude, religion is differentiated and related to magic and science.

#### CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

##### RELIGION IS A FIELD OF A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Academically, sociologists consider religion a related field of study because religion is a social phenomenon. Furthermore, sociologists focus on issues that theologians and philosophers often overlook. Sociologists of religion focus on the connections between religion and other social phenomena such as politics, economics, science, and technology. A recent book on religion by Lawson and McCauley (1990: v) is dedicated to those who understand that "... religion need not be a frightening force or a dogma to be adopted, but only a life way" people. As far as religion is a way of life, it is the perfect field for sociological analysis. We will now see what this means.

##### Religion is a Social Phenomenon

We live in a world where every society has beliefs, rituals, and religious organizations. Religion often

affects our understanding of everyday life. Religion is also associated with political and economic activities such as production, distribution, and consumption. All religions teach love and universal brotherhood. Even so, why do people "fight" and "die" with each other in the name of religion? It is these questions and so on that sociologist's study. Whether a believers or non-believers, sociologists should do justice to how people experience religion. Through research, sociologists may be able to demonstrate that the rich use religion during a crisis to exploit the masses. Sociologists also study the relationship between religion and various other social institutions such as education, government, and the economy.

##### Sociology of Religion Differs from Philosophy of Religion and Theology

The sociology of religion, philosophy of religion, and theology differ in focus and analytical issues, they all contribute significantly to each other's development. Let's see how they differ in terms of focus and analytical importance.

1. The sociology of religion does not ask if God exists. In contrast, the sociology of religion asks, if people believe that God exists, "Why do they believe?" "How do they come to believe?" "How do they describe their God?" It should be remembered that sociologists seek to perform a sociological analysis of religion, not a religious analysis of society.

2. The philosophy of religion as an epistemologist has explored the possibility of knowing God in various ways. Philosophers of religion also focus on the relationship between religion and morality.

3. Theologians are necessarily believers. They believe in the existence of God (in any form) and try to



understand the nature of God by studying the beliefs of believers. Theologians are recognized religious leaders.

### **SOCIOLOGICAL DEFINITION OF RELIGION**

The following characteristics of religion have been identified to construct sociological definitions:

#### **Religion is a Group Phenomenon**

Religion includes a group of people. Religion is a shared system of beliefs and practices. Every religion emphasizes the need for corporate worship. Celebrations and ceremonies are occasions that bring people together. Durkheim (1912), corresponds that when you worship God, you worship your own society. In Durkheim's view, God is the creation of mankind and the creation of society. Many may criticize religion, while some of us may reject it outright.

#### **The 'Supernatural' and the 'Sacred'**

"Belief in supernatural existence" is the definition of religion by the famous anthropologist Tylor (1871). While the supernatural is "omnipotent", "infinite," and "beyond the senses," some people try to pretend it is a human being. It can be seen as an attempt to understand the paranormal. People also believe that they can receive blessings from the supernatural or power by appeasing them. Some scholars believe that there is a clear distinction between "sacred" and "secular." Durkheim (1912) says that the sacred is separated from the mundane and forbidden. Many scholars have criticized Durkheim's strict division between the secular and the sacred. This strict separation stems from an understanding of religion within a church or temple.

#### **Beliefs and Practices**

Beliefs explain the nature of the divine, God's actions, or words, and dictate the way humans communicate with God. Beliefs necessarily imply a sense of the past and speak of a tradition, in the sense of a custom that has been followed for a long time. Rituals are actions performed repeatedly according to tradition. It is ceremonial and formal. Usually, rituals have specific goals. Rituals are a series of symbolic acts with specific meanings associated with religious beliefs. Ceremony towards standardization, repetition, and concentration. In pre-modern societies, rituals were often so complex that even the smallest details were carefully observed to make the most of them. Rituals can be performed collectively or individually. There are debates in sociology or religion about the nature of beliefs and rituals. According to some scholars, the ritual appears to be an elaborate belief system. Durkheim is one of them.

#### **Moral Prescriptions**

When people define their relationship with the "divine", they also define their relationship with another human being. Certain patterns of behavior are prescribed as mandatory before a person is connected to God. Therefore, morality stems from religion. Religion is the source of moral values, and religion without moral precepts is almost impossible. Social systems are better at distinguishing right from wrong. A society's moral precepts come from many sources, such as family, education, and law. Those who follow a particular religion must also obey its moral precepts. Therefore, all members of the group share more prescriptions.

### **DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION**

Classical sociologists such as Durkheim and Weber studied the meaning of religion in different ways. Three movements can be observed in the sociology of religion:

1. Sociological interest in religion emerged after the "discovery" of pre-modern society by merchant travelers, missionaries, and colonialists. Here, both anthropologists and sociologists seem to be interested in religion.
2. After the Industrial Revolution in Europe, sociological interest in religion gained momentum. The Industrial Revolution was accompanied by the collapse of feudalism in the 15th century. Researchers in this movement is more interested in analyzing the "fate" of religion in the industrial world.
3. The sociological interest in religion is evident in studies that trace the development of religious revivalism in late-industrial and early post-industrial societies. Researchers in this movement are analyzing why religion exists.

#### **Pre-Modern Societies**

In the early days of the development of the sociology of religion, interest was mainly focused on the study of the origin and evolution of religion. Edward B. Tylor (1881) and Herbert Spencer (1882) can be called intellectuals because they believed that pre-modern man had to develop religion to explain the phenomena of dreams, echoes, and death. They argue that religion may disappear if its explanatory function is replaced by science. Durkheim's interpretation of religion includes the social dimension and functional necessities. Durkheim argues that religion has existed since ancient times, albeit in different forms; because it fulfilled a specific function for society – the main function being the "integration" of society. Some of

SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION: MEANING AND CONCEPT / 3

these functionalist arguments have been confirmed, elaborated, and reconstructed by many scholars including Radcliffe-Brown (1952), Talcott Parsons (1954), and Milton Yinger (1957).

**Industrial Societies—Generalized Map of World Religions**

Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Weber (1864-1920) were two important scholars who gave detailed explanations of religion in industrial societies. According to Marx, religion is a part of the superstructure (in a broad sense, the world of ideas), which is only a reflection of the foundation (in a broad sense, the mode of production composed of production relations and productive forces). There has always been a wide-ranging debate among Marxist and non-Marxist scholars as to whether basic or material conditions can determine the superstructure or domain of thought. While Max Weber agreed that religion would eventually die out, he demonstrated the power of religious thought as a developing force.

**Religious Revivalism**

More recently, fundamentalist Protestant denominations in the United States have continued to grow. There is a religious revival in many Asian countries, and religion is increasingly becoming a tool of political mobilization. At the same time, in some Latin American countries, Christianity has become a tool of resistance to exploitation. Some scholars put forward doubt about whether religion will disappear from human history. They analyzed evidence of religious rituals and forms of belief in so-called secular systems, such as the state, communism, and nationalism. Precisely, no one should be surprised if communism is analyzed as a religion.

**RELIGION AND OTHER RELATED SOCIAL PHENOMENA**

**Religion and Magic**

In both religion and magic, there are attempts to use certain techniques to channel supernatural forces to achieve specific goals. Malinowski and Fraser are renowned scholars who have made significant contributions to the understanding of magic and religion. In religion, people pray to the gods and implore them, while magic in magic manipulates supernatural powers. Religion makes people believe in supernatural powers. Instead, in a magical practice where believers believe their own powers can manipulate supernatural powers. It must be emphasized that religion and magic are not completely separate.

**Religion and Science**

Science is both an exploration of knowledge and a method of problem-solving. Human understanding

can also be interpreted from religion and science. Science insists that not all observed phenomena should be taken for granted. Its value and significance can be discovered through experimentation. Science is completely distinct from religion because it believes in neutrality and objectivity. Science is all about precision and measurement, which is absent when we talk about religion. Religion cannot be counted as par the level of observable phenomena.

**ACTIVITY**

**Q. 1. Is religious revivalism on the increase in almost all parts of the world? Give some examples of this phenomenon in India and abroad. In addition, write, in 250 words, your views on why religion is again popularly accepted and vigorously defended.**

**Ans.** Although many scholars predicted its eventual demise, the religion managed to survive. In fact, religious revivals are taking place in many parts of the world. More recently, fundamentalist Protestant denominations in the United States have continued to grow. There is a religious revival in many Asian countries, and religion is increasingly becoming a tool of political mobilization. Meanwhile, in some Latin American countries, Christianity is a tool of resistance. In India, there are many social groups coming forward in the name of religious reform which somehow is a threat to the social fabric of a very diverse country.

Even as religion seems to be reducing its grip on ritual participation, a particular religion seems to be emerging. In other words, personal interpretations of religious teachings are tolerated. Some scholars doubt whether religion will disappear from human history. They analysed evidence of religion in the form of rituals and beliefs in so-called secular systems, such as the state, communism, and nationalism. More precisely, no one should be surprised if communism is analyzed as a form of religion. Before concluding the answer, let me quote Turner (1967) summarizing the secret of religious survival: “Religion is not a cognitive system, not a set of separate dogmas, it is a meaningful, meaningful experience.”.

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Q. 1. Mark Yes or No against each of the following statements:**

**(a) A sociologist of religion need not necessarily be a believer.**

**Ans.** Yes.

**(b) Religion is a social phenomenon because it is a system of shared beliefs and collective practices.**

**Ans.** Yes.

**(c) Sociology explains religious beliefs and practices, in their social context.**

**Ans.** Yes.

**(d) Religion is the only source of moral values.**

**Ans.** No.

**(e) How is religion a social phenomenon? Explain in ten lines.**

**Ans.** Every society has beliefs, rituals, and religious organizations. Religion often affects our understanding of everyday life. The way we relate to each other is often influenced by our religious beliefs. Religion is also associated with political and economic activities such as production, distribution, and consumption. Religion can unite people, but it can also sow hatred among people. Religion has different effects in different places. For example one end of the world which is used for oppression and uneven distribution of resources. You may notice that the same religion is the reason to resist and fight oppression on the other side of the world. If religious beliefs are the same, how do you explain why people respond differently in different parts of the world? All religions teach love and universal brotherhood.

Believers or non-believers, sociologists should observe without prejudice the way people experience religion. Sociologists may be curious about the different ways rich and poor experience religion. Reality is not something that has just appeared before our eyes. Sociologists usually try to find explicit, external visible reality. But behind it lies an invisible trend – the growing criminality of partisan politics. Moreover, in times of severe crisis, a strong zeal for religious revival emerges. Through research, sociologists may be able to demonstrate that the rich use religion during a crisis exploits the masses, or the masses can invoke and revive religion during a crisis, as a measure of hope. You should have understood by now that religion is a social phenomenon, and therefore a sociological field of course.

**(f) Mention any two differences between the sociology of religion and theology. Use five lines for your answer.**

**Ans.** The sociology of religion does not ask, whether God exists. Rather, the sociology of religion asks, if people believe that God exists, why do they believe? How do they come to believe? Sociologists seek to perform a sociological analysis of religion, not

a religious analysis of society, whereas theologians are necessarily believers. They believe in the existence of God (in any form) and try to understand the nature of god by studying the beliefs of believers.

**Q. 2. What is a religious belief? Use five lines for your answer.**

**Ans.** Belief seeks to reveal supernatural, divine, or divine beings. Faith explains the nature of God, God's actions, actions, or words, and dictates the way humans communicate with God. Faith necessarily implies a sense of the past and speaks of a tradition, in the sense of a custom that has been followed for a long time. It tells the story of the communication between gods and people, thus giving meaning to the ritual. Rituals are actions performed repeatedly according to habit. This is the ceremony and formal. Usually, rituals have specific goals. Rituals are a series of symbolic acts with specific meanings associated with religious beliefs. Rituals are often standardized, repetitive, and condensed. In pre-modern societies, rituals were often so complex that even the smallest details were carefully observed to make the most of them. Rituals can be performed collectively or individually. Where is the ceremony? Group performances, either by everyone or only by experts, with the participation of the faithful Shamans, pujari, and priests are examples of ritual experts. They recite long prayers or chants (mantras) and perform them simultaneously in ritual behavior. There are debates in sociology or religion about the nature of beliefs and rituals. According to some scholars, the ritual appears to be an elaborate belief system. Durkheim is one of them.

**Q. 3. What is a ritual? Use five lines for your answer.**

**Ans.** Rituals are acts performed on various occasions and according to custom. It is ceremonial and formal. Usually, rituals have specific goals. Rituals are a series of symbolic acts with specific meanings associated with religious beliefs. Rituals are often standardized, repetitive, and condensed. In pre-modern societies, rituals were often so elaborate that even the smallest details were carefully observed to make the most of them. Rituals can be performed collectively or individually. Where is the ceremony? Group performances, either by everyone or only by experts, with the participation of the faithful Shamans, pujari, and priests are examples of ritual experts. They recite long prayers or chants (mantras) and perform them simultaneously in ritual behavior. There are debates