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Is Matua Religion, Hindu Religion?

Tejen Mandal

Scholar of Adamas University, Dept. of Political Science

Abstract

Yet most people do not realize the meaning of 'religion'. It does not mean that it is not done. When those who occupy state power, then they are driven by religion as their will. 'Religion' has great crises into the fury of capitalism all over the world; when they say what they say, the nature of religion is being done. As if, India's Hindu religion could not come out of it. In India, most people still live in agriculture-based and the education consciousness is weak. As a result, most of the rural societies can never raise their heads for the sake of small groups that is why they are seen; Religions are fed more and more. But they do not know what they eat. For the sake of religion, due to the miss-guide of the simple man, the arrival of Matua religion has come and it continues against Hindu religion.

Key words: Religion, Hinduism, Namah, Matuaism, Distinguish.

Among the religions of the world Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam are the most popular ones. Besides them, there are sects known as Balak Brahmachari Santan Dal, the Sat Sangha of Anukul Thakur, the Vaisnavism of Chaitanya Dev, Baul community, Brahma Samaj, Matua religion, which emerged in different parts of India at different times. Some of them are associated with the Vedas of Hinduism, some others are independent of the Vedas. Among those sects which are markedly different from Hinduism, Matua religion deserves special mention. It emerged nearly 175 years ago (when Harichand Thakur was 35 years old i.e. in 1846-'47). Some leaders of Vaishnavism want to call it a branch of Vaishnavism.(1) Some of them want to compare Guruchand Thakur with Lord Siva of Hinduism. But the ancient writers of the Matua religion have markedly differentiated it from Hinduism. They have never told that Matuaism is reformed Vaishnavism. In the Shri Shri Harililamrita of the Matuas it has been categorically stated that RamHari, KrishnaHari, ShriGaurangaHari, but Harichand himself is the real Hari (God). The emphasis has been laid here on the word 'real'.(2) It has further been stated that man depends on family life for survival. Buddhadev and many others (Krishna, Gora) made mistake by renouncing the family life. This grave mistake was corrected by Harichand.(3)

Prior to the independence of India, the religion of Matua was not much publicised as a separate entity. After independence the followers of the Matuaism began to stress on-- (1) the distribution of handbills, meetings, conference and organization, not only mahotsab, (2)

upholding of Harichand as a man of flesh and blood, not as a god, (3) the freedom in physical world than salvation after death, (4) and the fact that Matuaism is not a sect of Hinduism.(4) In the year 1907 Guruchand Thakur told the British Government to count the Matuas separately than the Hindus, the reason being that the rituals of the Matuas differed from those of the Hindus.(5) The principle of difference of the Hindu religion is noticed in the census report of 1931. In that report 5 to 6 crores of Indians have been marked as 'untouchables'. They were not recognized as Hindus.(6) Guruchand Thakur said--'Hindu by name only, but non Hindu in all other respects'.(7) 'so the Matuas have their own ideal'.(8)

In the 19th century three religions dominated in Bengal, namely, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. Because of the dominance of untouchability in the Hindu society the 'untouchables' were looking for something alternative for survival. Islam and Christianity were inviting them. At this crucial time the emergence of the religion of Matua took place. That the Namashudra community was formed of brave people was known to both Harichand and Guruchand. They were deprived of their mettle remaining under the spell of Hinduism. Matua religion united and strengthened the Namashudras. In the East Bengal there were-- 12 groups of Namashudras who belonged to the clan of Kashyap. They are -- 1. Halia (plough man), 2. Ghasi (grass cutter), 3. Kambo (palan quin bearers), 4. Karal (fish sellers), 5. Bari, 6. Berua, 7. Pod, 8. Baggal (hawkers), 9. Saralia, 10. Amrakadi, 11. Bachar, 12. Sandwipa. There were 6 classes in central Bengal--1. Dhani (makes of rice), 2. Jalia (fishermen), 3. Jiyani, 4. Karal, 5. Nunia (maker of salt), 6. Siali. And there were 11 groups in West Bengal who belonged to the clans of Bharadwaj, Lomash and Shandilya. They are - -1. Chashi, 2. Helo, 3. Jelo, 4. Keshor Kalo, 5. Kotal, 6. Majila, 7. Nalo, 8. Nunia, 9. Pan fule, 10. Saro, 11. Siuli (collectors of sap from the trees of date and palm). Guruchand Thakur unified them and dragged them out of Hindu religion. In course of time their rituals (Annaprashon, marriage, obsequal, pattern of rites)too assumed different forms.(9)

Harichand Thakur died in 1878 and under the leadership of his son Guruchand Thakur (1847-1937) the Matua people reached a new height in social, education, culture, Hygiene, economic, politics. As a result they came to be known as a separate entity.(10) Acharya Mohananda Haldar, in the preface of his book 'Mahanam Sankirtan' has said that 'Matuaism' is a separate religion.(11)

Now let us see what Hinduism is. Nearly 4000 years ago a branch of the Nordic race (Arya is the name of a language) entered India from Kirghizi Tarai region of Russia through the Ural mountain, Iran and Afghanistan. First they destroyed Indus Valley Civilization and imposed their own religion, culture, civilization and custom on the natives of that region. They composed the 'Vedas' for permanent plunder and exploitation, (1200 B.C. + 2018 A.D. = 3218 years ago) and next the Mahabharata (200 B.C. + 2018 A.D. = 2218 years ago) and the Ramayana (83 B.C. + 2018 A.D.= 2101 years ago).(12) The word 'Arya' occurs there, but the word 'Hindu' does not. The word 'Hindu' has been used since 1921. In the year 1822 the Brahmins of Nasik formed the 'Hindu Mahasabha', the RSS in 1825. In 1828 Rajarammohan Ray set up the 'Brahma Samaj' and in 1875 Dayananda Swarasbati formed 'Arya Samaj'. The word 'Hindu' was brought by the Parsians who defeated the inhabitants of

the Valley of the Indus. The Parsians called the defeated people 'Hindu' by replacing 'S' with 'H'.(13) Those who spoke Greek and Latin used the term 'India' and Herodotus used the term 'Indoi'. Kiran Talukdar in his book 'Viswa Mahamondole Matua Dharma' has said that the word 'Hindu' is the name of a place ; not community.(14) and the name of a culture, and it is a bad name used by the Mughals(15) Acharya Ramendra Sundar Tribedi has said that it is a society which follows the Vedas. It is ruled by the Vedas, the scripture of the Brahmin and composed by the Aryans. After the fall of the Pal dynasty in 1130 the Sen's ruled in Bengal for 682 years. At that time the Aryan culture prevailed in Bengal and it mixed with the non Aryan culture. This mixture came to be known as 'Hindu culture'.(16) Sanatan religion for the Brahmanic influence was gradually converted into Brahmin's religion. (17)

At present some people call the 'Hindu religion' as 'Sanatan religion'(the eternal religion). But the word 'Sanatan' does not mean 'Hindu'. The word 'Sanatan' means 'classical, catholic, eternal', orthodox, universal like soil, water, sunlight, wind and heaven or vast space. That the sun rises in the east and sets in the West is an eternal (Sanatan) and truth. But the principles of Hinduism are by no means eternal truth. Because they were written by the ruling class people for vested interest. They support Caste system and exploitation. These principles do not give importance to family life where men are born. So they can not be eternal truth. Religion means truth. In order to uphold the truth Harichand Thakur has laid supreme importance on family life and on honest living(honest character building, be sadhu without sadhu-dress). He advises man to live a happy and honest family life by cultivating the truth, paying respect to parents and also to womanhood. He has therefore said 'An honest family man is the greatest sage to be the Sadhu'. Family life means work and production, therefore there must be no renunciation of it. This is the eternal truth and that is broad Garhasthya Religion.(18)

Actually Harichand Thakur's Matuaism is a rational, progressive, humanism combination. The mid period in the 19th century Harichand and Guruchand Thakur for the moral and spiritual improvement of the lower caste people (specially Namashudras) of East Bengal by the modification of variety custom, mannars of Buddhism (Buddhist Sahajiya)+ Vaishnava (devotional Vaishnava)+ Sanatan Hindu religion created a 'Fine Sanatan Religion' or Matua religion.(19) It has been created as a protest against the Hinduism. So it is also called a Protestant religion.(20) Rasaraj Tarakchandra Sarkar in his book 'Shri Shri Harililamrita' has said that Harichand appeared in the world to teach people regarding this 'Fine Sanatan Religion'.(21)

Hinduism began to influence the Namashudras in India since 1937-'38. Thanks to the efforts of Hindu Mission, Swami Pranabananda of the Bharat Sevasram Sangha and the Sarbabharatia Hindu Mahasava, the Namashudras began to incline forwards Hinduism. Sarbabharatia Hindu Mahasava worked in the places like Jessore, Khulna, Faridpur, Bakherganj etc. The Hindu Mahasava tried hard to organize the schedule Caste farmers from 1939-'40. They were set up 65 centres in Bakherganj, 50 centres in Dhaka, 43 centres in Faridpur, 29 centres in Jessore and 31 centres in Khulna at rural areas. The famous centres among them took financial assistance from the Hindu Mahasava and their leaders

became interested to establish close relationship with the Savadipati (leader) Shyamaprasad Mukherjee of the Hindu Mahasava.(22)

If the exponents of the Hinduism are asked--How did the Hinduism originate? What is the brief of it? What is its ultimate aim? What are the important books of the Hinduism? What about its preachers? What do these sacred books deal with?' Then different exponents will answer differently. The origin of the Hinduism is lost in obscurity. It has no particular founder. It is divided in many sects. It has been explained different 'Brahma names' in different ages. It believes in idolatry and polytheism (33 crore god). They are more concerned with the salvation of the soul after death. There are unearthly, untouchability, casteism, superstitions and family pride in the Hindu society. There are sculpture puja, unembodied Sadhana, four Ashram system, rites, nobility, Brahminism. Low class people and women have no access to the temples of the Hindus. It is said have been originated from the mouth of God. The Brahmins too are said to have come from the same source. The Kshatriyas are said to have come from the God's arms, the Vaishyas from His thigh and the Shudras from His feet. It is laden with rituals, observances and expensive. There are systems of jag-joggo, huis, animal sacrifice, child marriage, polygamy(A information published in Gananweshan magazine on 20/04/1836, the 818 marriage of the 27 Kulin. Only the 37 marriage in Hooghly district in which Volanath Bandopadhyay done the 80 in the age of 55 years and Kali Kumar Mukhapadhyay done lowest the 21 in the age of 14 : Manoshanto Biswas, 134) and many other inhuman customs(violence occurrence, war, woman kidnapping, forcing, insulating to women, prejudice) in Hinduism. The God of Hinduism appears in the world not to help the people, but to suppress the sinners. It speaks of renunciation of physical pleasures and discourages the enjoyment of them. It has no clearcut economic policy, no coordination between action and religion. It is always conservative thinking. All men are not treated with equal respect. It speaks of the cult of personality, but does not speak about the uplift of the community as a whole. Hindus also believe that the guidance of a preceptor is also necessary in life.(23)

What about the founder of Matuaism? The answer is Shri Shri Harichand Thakur. What is the name of its most important book? The answer is Shri Shri Harililamrita. What are its secondary religious books? The answer is Shri Shri Guruchand Charit, Shri Shri Guruchand Charita Sudha, Guruchand Mahatma, Hari Sangit and others. Who are its preachers? The followers of Guruchand Thakur and uncounted Matua devotees, Gonsai, Pagol. What is the main speech of Matuaism? The answer is down with Brahmanism. The downtrodden must have access to emancipation. What is its main goal? To uplift the downtrodden. What is the discussing matter of religious books? Its religious books deal with religion, society, culture, education, health, economics, politics etc. Actually this religion has a particular founder. They believe in one God. It says that he who is bhakti by one is one's god,(Shri Shri Harililamrita,1) and one's god reclamations one. (Shri Shri Guruchand Charit, 572). Matuaism gives no stress on the salvation of the soul after death. It opposes the Vedas and Brahmanism. Harichand Thakur finds no fault in eating the leaving of a dog and disobeying the customs of the Vedas. (Shri Shri Harililamrita, 104). It is not divided into sects. 'It is

wrong to make difference between man and man.'(Shri Shri Guruchand Charit, 360). Matuas believe in liberal community living. They respect one another (lowest age and highest age everyone), (Shri Shri Guruchand Charit, 460). They do not believe in casteism. They think that all Namashudras are brothers. (Shri Shri Guruchand Charit, 454). They want equality, friendship and brotherhood. They treat man and woman equally. (Shri Shri Guruchand Charit, 350). Men and women from all communities may enter a Matua temple. Worship is made regularly. (Shri Shri Guruchand Charit, 573). There is super naturalism in the religion of Matuas. There is no strict ritual in it. Its religious slogan is 'Haribal'. There is no untouchability in it. It says that there is no wrong in sharing food with a man of fresh character. (Shri Shri Guruchand Charit, 570). It is devoid of strict rituals, family pride and polygamy. They believe in monogamy. It does not allow sacrifice, violence and enemy. Violent struggle is allowed only in case of self defence.(Shri Shri Guruchand Charit, 450). It speaks of the purification of body and mind. Family life has been given most importance in it, but renunciation of family life finds no sanction in it. Once is advised to live in one's family with a single wife. (Shri Shri Harililamrita, 8). Matuas believe in action, not in fate. It is said that all men are rewarded or punished for their action. (Shri Shri Harililamrita, 93). Or, He who gives up working is deprived of emancipation. (Shri Shri Guruchand Charit, 208). It has made a good coordination between religion and action. One must work at home and remain devoted to god. (Shri Shri Harililamrita, 8). They say that enjoyment of physical pleasures precedes the renunciation of them. How can one renounce while one has nothing to enjoy? (Shri Shri Guruchand Charit, 442). Matuas says that Harichand Thakur has appeared in the world to emancipate the downtrodden, to help all. Its principle is to develop the community as a whole. There is no personality cult in Matuaism. Matuas do not beg, they want to stand on their own legs. They never say that Money is the root of all evils. Guruchand Thakur has said that one does not even get a glass of drinking water without money. (Shri Shri Guruchand Charit, 102) Survival is impossible without money. Harichand Thakur has also said that agriculture is the best of all occupations and a family man should learn all trades. (Shri Shri Harililamrita, 50). In their opinion the world will be stagnant if there are no cultivation, no commerce and no other services.(24)

Matua religion does not bear much resemblance to Hindu religion. Both the religions may have some features in common, but they are by no means identical Matuaism has some distinct features. The unearthly avatarism of Hindu religion is found in Matua religion too, but it is doubtful. The book 'Shri Shri Harililamrita' by the poet Rasaraj Tarakchandra Sarkar was not printed in entirety. It was sent back from the press and poet Haribar Sarkar was told to revise it. At that time some portions were left and some additions were made. The avatarism might have been included at that time, otherwise the book was not printed.(25)

Poet Rasaraj Tarakchandra Sarkar was a famous poet and singer. A stage performer wants to enthrall the audience by quoting legends, and expressing his ideals through the medium of allegory. Some Hindu legends (Vedas, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Geeta, Purana, Chaitanya Charitamrita) and allegories were told. Hindu influence came in this way. Matua

religion says that metaphor is the habit of the poet. (26) So, the influence of the Hindu Brahmanism has remained in the Matua religious books. Again, there are explained regarding the Brahmin and the Vaishnava. The word 'Brahman' means a vagabond.(27) They are selfish, greedy and cheat.(28) Besides, said in that, the varieties books of the Brahmins are advertisement of their deviation, idealism etc. These Brahmins belittle others. They confuse people by telling allegories and creating many gods.(29)

All Hindu scriptures are written in Deva language (Sanskrit) which is understood by Brahmins only. Shudras do not know and do not right it. Harichand Thakur too did not know Sanskrit well. They have composed everything in the language of 'Chandali' which are not seen immediate composed in any Bengali dictionary. It is a separate entity.(30)

It is said in the Hinduism that God Himself has divided the human race into castes. He has divided man on the basis of works. But the Sambuka of the Ramayana and Karna, Ghototkoch and Ekalabya of the Mahabharata surpassed the average class people in many good points (Knowledge, intelligence, working strength, characteristic merits). Yet they were not treated with honour as Brahmin or Kshatriya in the Hindu society. There is the mention of a class which is even inferior to the Shudra. They are barred from access to locality. They are forced to live in forests and Moors which are inhabited by wild animals.(31) It is said by the leaders of Hinduism that the Ramayana had been composed before Ram was born. It is like the invention of a story before its enactment on the stage of opera, theater, cinema, drama ! But Shri Shri Harililamrita or Shri Shri Guruchand Charit are different kind of books, composed on the basis of rational, humanist, practical experience.(32) Matuaism has always cried against the injustice and the inhuman rituals of the Hindus. Matua means movement, a combination of social movement, educational movement, farmers movement and economic movement. And total frame of all others are political movement which is a unique feature, not found in any other religion.(33)

The Namashudras of Bengal are mostly farmers. In 1911, 78% of the earning Namashudras depended on cultivation. Out of them only 1.15% were able to pay tax. All others were day labours, agricultural labourers and cultivators. Land was mostly owned by the high class Hindus or Sayed Muslims. Most of the Namashudras lived in Dhaka, Rajsahi and Chitagang divisions where the population was composed of 80% -82%, high class Hindus or Sayed Muslims were 3.78%. As a result there was vast difference between those who enjoyed tax and those who paid tax. This Caste system swelled when the exploitation of the middle men enhanced. They imposed illegal taxes, increased tax and demanded tax in kind. It resulted in the creation of a feeling of separation in the minds of the Namashudras. They began to think how to crush the power and dominance of the upper class people. The dominance of the upper class Hindu vadralok (gentlemen) in the national politics alienated the Namashudras from it.(34) They opposed the national movement, criticised the Home Rule movement and maintained aloofness from all the movements(noncooperation movement, Civil disobedience movement, Quit India movement) led by Gandhiji, though Gandhiji tried hard to get their support.(35) Guruchand Thakur did not agree with the Hindu Congress leaders, the supporters of Brahmanism. They also objected to the system of taking

oaths by touching the Geeta, the sacred book of the Hindus. As the leaders of the national movement hailed from the rich and upper class people (Zaminders, Joddar, money lenders) who were exploiting, torturing them, the lower class people had no faith in them. They thought that they would not be much benefitted by boycotting foreign goods. They were obsessed by the thought of the development of their own community even in cooperation with the foreign rulers. They wanted to develop their community by accepting the facilities such as education, social dignity, better atmosphere, freely entered in the mandir, reservation in Govt. services, and sending S.C. and S.T. representatives in the assembly, offered by the British Government. In the second and third decades of the 20th century the Dalits (the widespread use of the term 'Dalit' started since 1954 : Monoshanto Biswas, 195) began to organize themselves in the interest of their own. It was realistic in conformity with parliamentary politics. Though they had division too with Hindu nationalised thinkers.(36) The colonial Government adopted a partial attitude towards the Muslim since 1906 and as a result the Namashudra leaders were encouraged. Though they were offered some advantages in education and Government services in the 1920s and the 1930s, they were not much improvement, because of the non-co-operation of the local Bureaucracy (Executive).(37)

The Namashudra farmers of East Bengal were at the same time responding to the Hindu politics and the politics based on class basic movement. Many Namashudras were driven out of their homeland in East Bengal as a result of the Hindu-Muslim riot following the partition of 1947. They came to West Bengal as destitutes. Later on they began to organize farmers organisation on the model of communism,(38) and came closer to the leftist political parties of West Bengal. But even during the Left front rule, lands(homeland, plough land), ration cards, voter cards, educations, Caste certificates were not distributed among them with even handed justice. They often became the victims of the caste system too.(39) The Left front leaders tried to get the support of the Namashudras towards the end of the LF rule. But the Matuas inclined towards the new Government.(40)

Neither Harichand nor Guruchand had faith in the religion which regards human beings even worse than beasts. Guruchand Thakur has said with grief-- 'Those who hate today will be hated tomorrow. They will understand their mistake and burst into tears. Hinduism will be destroyed as it is based on follies. The upper Caste Hindus are proud and indifferent towards the gravity of the problem'.(41) Dr. Ambedkar too had no faith in Hinduism. He proposed to ban the sacred books(Vedas, Geeta, Purana etc.) of Hinduism.(42) On the other hand Matuaism is open to revision. Guruchand Thakur advised to follow the path which is good.(43) Matuas keep it in mind and meetings (Shantisava) are regularly held on the Wednesdays of every third week of the Bengali month at Thakurnagar or Orakandi. In these meetings every issue is critically discussed. So it is a pragmatic religion.(44) They follow military discipline while going from one place to another. The symbol of victory is the Danka (Drum), the symbol of revolution is the Red Nishan(Flag), the symbol of success of fight is the Singa (Antlered).(45).

In the first phase of the Matua religion, only the Namashudra communities thought of good and bad, but later, other low Caste people also thought about it. All the fallen, exploited, persecuted people have been motivated with consciousness, have been partners with happiness and sorrow. Finding a new path to self-establishment as an alternative form of 'Hindu culture system'. They have been able to establish all the Dalit nation universal ideals beyond the locality. Religious thought has helped find the way to occupy society, education, health, agriculture, employment, business, culture, political power. As a result, the community of Matua religion has been flowing in different streams of contemporary religious movements.(46)

Hence it is proved that Matuaism did not originate from laziness and idealism. It is a progressive religion. In November 2018 the West Bengal Government has set up 'Namashudra Unnayan Parisad' and 'Matua Unnayan Parisad' in the interest of the Matuas very recently the BJP Government of the centre has called the Matuas 'refugees', not 'infiltrators'(about National Register of citizen). This decision has added a new dimension to the Matua religion of India.

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