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Beyond Religious Pluralism and Exclusivism

Master's Thesis in Philosophy

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INTRODUCTION

The present thesis is a work in Anglophone Philosophy of Religion which deals with the topic of Religious Pluralism; focused on John Hick's model of religious pluralism. Furthermore, with the help of Hick's model, I will discuss various religious positions like pluralism, exclusivism and inclusivism. The main purpose of the thesis is to assess different religious positions and bring out the problems these religious positions create in the society, I will discuss few examples from India showing what problems are caused in the society due to the identification with one religion, and because these problems I will propose my own model of religion and will give arguments in favor of my own model.

The whole existence is full of wonders and there are things that we still don't have answers for. We haven't yet been successful in making something parallel to a human body where when you eat something and it turns into blood and other life supporting things. Therefore, religion becomes that enquiry into, what is that's out there. The religion I will be talking about will be that enquiry into the nature of things and I will be doing this to solve the problems that are faced in the society and try to come up with the possible solutions

In this thesis I will begin by introducing the definitions of certain terms that I will use throughout the thesis and defining the context in which these terminologies will be used throughout the thesis. After attaining a level field, I will start with Hick model of religious pluralism and discuss the model throughout second chapter. John Hick was born in Christian family and his theological work has a lot to do with journey that he undertook during his academic years at different universities and meeting different people across different cities. Two things that shaped Hick's viewpoint are, exposure to various religions and thirst for a scientific knowledge as he believed that test of reason must be passed by the truth. During his academic career John Hick gave the idea of religious pluralism and he became the biggest proponent of such philosophy. The whole pluralistic model of Hick is a journey of his from his own religion to become a pluralist. Hick starts off by laying the foundation and going through religious history in order to explain how religions took shape. Hick claims that the different encounters with the divine are encounters with the same reality and he calls this as 'the Real'. The Real has a very pivotal place in Hick's model, in second chapter I will explain this in depth. Then in chapter three, after presenting Hick's model, I will discuss in detail about the criticism

that was faced by Hick's pluralistic model. In this chapter I will list Plantinga's and Johnson's criticism of religious pluralism and then in the same chapter I will discuss Hick's reply to the criticisms and also present my defense of religious pluralism against religious exclusivism. After defending religious pluralism against exclusivism then in the fourth chapter I will sketch a model of religion named as from small r religion to capital R Religion and using that model to I will show the problems that pluralism possesses, therefore arguing neither pluralism nor exclusivism. Then in the final chapter of the thesis I will list some possible arguments against the small r religion to capital R Religion and defend the model against those criticism.

CHAPTER 1 – CLEARING CONCEPTS

In this chapter, I will be clarifying concepts like religion, religious pluralism, exclusivism, inclusivism, etc.

1.1 WHAT IS RELIGION?

“Religion” is a very arbitrary word it’s open to millions of meanings and when someone uses it in a discussion, we tend to forget to mention what religion means to us and in what context we are using the term, which results in people talking past each other. To avoid this confusion, we will be defining religion. Ideally, a manual for the essence and account of the philosophy of religion would begin with a depiction or significance of religion. Sadly, there is no current concession to the specific depiction of the fundamental and satisfactory specifications of what can be considered as a religion (Taliaferro 2019).

While the agreement in exact distinctions is tricky, the following general portrayal of what considers a religion might be useful. Religion includes a public, communicable assemblage of lessons and endorsed rehearses about extreme, consecrated reality or condition of being that calls for veneration or wonder, a body that manages its experts into what it portrays as a sparing, enlightening, or emancipatory relationship to this reality through an extraordinary existence of supplication, ritualized reflection, or potentially moral practices like contrition and individual salvation. (Taliaferro and Marty 2010, 196-197). Given the realistic, indefinite utilization of the term "religion", the expectation is to try not to start our probe with a procrustean bed. There are numerous and different religions, religion itself is a theoretical idea—an overall class of human interest that shows itself in an assortment of routes in various societies, times, and places. It is sufficiently simple to make a rundown of various religions by name yet to club them all together in a solitary association (religion) and afterward attempt to depict or characterize what that association is, can be a fairly astounding errand. But a provisional, working definition is satisfactory for the current examination, which monitors traps on both sides.

Here, the question must be asked, is religion all that we do by going to churches, mosques and temples or there is some deeper meaning to it which entails the search for reality and discovering the highest, the real, the immeasurable or whatever one might call it. The

religion that I will be a proponent of throughout this thesis will be more existential in nature rather than the religions that are concerned with different metaphysical claims and luring people in by giving them promises of radically changing their lives. For me religion must change a person's life here and now rather than giving hope and a belief system to corrupt the intelligence that every human being has. Apart from this the main aim of religion should be the dissolution of the self. A religion must be one that helps a person to dissolve their ego and help them lose this fact of what's mine and what's not, as differentiation becomes the point where one steps away from unity and gives birth to a duality which entails in two positions, one in which something belongs to me or is related to me and the other end of the spectrum is this is not me or this doesn't belong to me. This reference point becomes the pedestal of this confusion and agony we humans live in. In chapter 4 I will sketch a model for this definition that I have provided here, and try to show that how a religion can achieve this reality centered path.

1.2 WHAT IS RELIGIOUS PLURALISM, EXCLUSIVISM, INCLUSIVISM?

In our perplexing world, we can't attest to one specific religion only and overlook others. Religious diversity is the reality of the contemporary world order and can't be overlooked. It is likely evident that there was never a time when any world significant religion existed in complete seclusion; their roots and improvements interlaced with those of different religions. Judaism built up its special particularism amid various Semitic religions. Christianity was an outgrowth of Judaism. Islam grew later in contact with both. Buddhism emerged in response to Hindu austere culture. While Hinduism itself was a combination of Aryan idea and Dravidic strict thoughts and practices indigenous to India. (Peterson 2013, 220).

Three types of approaches have been classified to this religious diversity.

(a) Exclusivism – A definitive objective of salvation or freedom can be discovered distinctly through one specific religion only. Even though there are truths in different religions, but one religion is solely obvious and only one religion is the right approach to salvation. The fundamental argument for exclusivism is theological. Many exclusivists hold that salvation can be achieved only by a divine act of grace.

(b) Inclusivism – Inclusivists holds that God can be experienced and his dexterity revealed in different manners through different religions. Inclusivists believe that you must act in accordance with the ethics of religion to get into ‘the good place’ but you need not believe in that religion. In other words, it can be said they believe there is more than one way. It’s a view that is contrasted with exclusivism.

(c) Pluralism – This is the view that all religions are each in their terms legitimate roads to God. God himself ordained various paths for various people in various cultures. In this view, if you are a Muslim you need to be a good Muslim and if you are a Hindu then you need to be a good Hindu. (Peterson 2013, 222).

CHAPTER 2 - HICK'S MODEL OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

Hick was quite an uncommonly extraordinary researcher, whose stir finds a way into neither the set-up orthodoxies of conservative Christianity nor of philosophical naturalism, his work has been both comprehensively convincing and by and large denounced. Hick took the instruments of an insightful way of thinking and shielded the soundness of religious practices. Also, when the way of thinking of religion was as yet overwhelmed by Western conversations, Hick presented strict variety as a genuine philosophical subject. Today no genuine conversation of religious language, religious epistemology, the problem of evil, Christology, or strict pluralism can overlook Hick's impact. The present chapter deals with John Hick movement from his own religion to this pluralistic approach and what this pluralistic approach is all about.

The theocentric paradigm of religions is the cornerstone of the John Hick model of religious plurality. Hick came up with the one-shot solution for the problem of conflicting truth claims and plurality of religions by putting forward theocentric model. This model is visible in his Copernican revolution, the term he adopted from astronomy. In astronomy the Copernican revolution marks the shift that sun is the centre and all the planets revolve around the sun rather than the idea that planets revolve around the earth and earth being the centre (Hick 1993, 131). By appealing to the Copernican shift, Hick hoped to demonstrate that, like the sun in the solar system, God is the centrepiece of all religions and all religions are structured around him. This viewpoint called into question the very foundations of Christian theology (Hick 1980, 36). For Hick the notion of God has lot to do with the cultures. Hick goes through what he calls 'religious history' and for him religions first took shape around two thousand BC i.e., they became structured, in the two main civilizations at that time. The civilizations were Mesopotamia and Indus Valley. In Mesopotamia, they had male deities only and in Indus Valley, the female deities also held a prominent place. Hick calls these developments as natural religion and claims that these appeared without any divine revelation or illumination. In other words, it can be said he is saying that it was humans creating God or humans coming up with the idea of God. This whole thing changes when we reach what we call as 'golden age of religious creativity' that occurs around eight hundred BC when written religious revelation and revelatory experiences became prominent and divine presence began to intervene. He then gives several examples of these Jewish prophets (Isaiah, Amos, Hosea), Zoroaster in Persia,

Lao-Tzu, and Confucius in China, the writing of Upanishads in India, Buddha, Mahavira, Bhagavad-Gita. (Hick 2004, 26). Hick's rationale is that he asks a question, is it more reasonable to think that God would make his revelation known in a single mighty act or a partial revelation in a variety of places. Hick thinks that the latter is more reasonable that God would do his best to reveal himself as much as possible to a wide variety of people and cultures that exist. He says the main religious movements i.e., Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism are not opponents. All things being equal, they started at various points and places, extended, and afterward balanced out. This happened due to the great varieties of cultures required different aspects of revelation, and that explains the differences among the world religions. The revolution sparked the belief that all the world's main religions are in communication with the Real. The geographical, cultural, and historical variances that exist amongst religions are the source of their differences among them.

The theological argument that the concept of God or divine is the basis of all religions is the common denominator in Hick's religious pluralism. Hick's views were confronted with the dilemma of contradictory truth claims in the pre-Kantian era, an era before he adopted Kant's philosophy at that time Hick came up with theocentric model of religions. The two things that brought Hick to this model are: (1) The moral and theological argument; (2) The phenomenological argument (Hick 1993, 21). The first factor that led Hick to the path of theocentric model is his concept of God's universal love or God as all loving (Hick 1993, 122). It looks like Hick borrowed a page from Christianity where God is portrayed as all loving and love is the dominant characteristics of God. Hick contends that the notion of God's unconditional love does not connect with the real world, in which "so many people, possibly the majority of humanity, are outside the historical impact of Jesus of Nazareth" and are either condemned or lost. (Hick 1970, 119). On these grounds Hick condemned the doctrine of no salvation outside Christianity and pointed out that it won't be a Godly act (Hick 1970, 119). This idea of God's universal love took Hick on a voyage to develop his pluralistic hypothesis where God's love is a chief characteristic. Hick asserts that if God is the God of love, then he should try and save the bigger part of humanity rather than saving a small chunk of Christianity (Hick 1993, 122). This moral argument took Hick to theocentrism. For second factor which is phenomenological in nature, Hick argues that one's is generally a product based on the accident of an individual's birth. If someone was born in Pakistan to Muslim parents then he or she is bound to be Muslim or if born in Tibet to Buddhist parents then the person will become Buddhist, as a result, religion is often a consequence of one's upbringing and birthplace (Eddy

2002, 152). Hick took theocentric route to show that merely on the basis of someone's birth in a specific geographical, cultural and ethnic setup it's not fair ground for claiming why someone's religion is better than the others. Hicks argues that everyone has the different piece of that very same puzzle, implying that every religion is taking about the same God from their own vantage point, which is influenced by the cultural, geographical and historical factors.

2.1 HICKS KANTIAN SHIFT

Hick adopted a Kantian perspective in early eighties. Hick's viewpoint influenced religious epistemology and became a popular answer to the dilemma of contradictory truth claims. (Hick 2004, 261). Hick appeals to the Kant's distinctions between phenomenon and noumenon or Ding an sich as the appearance of a thing in human consciousness (Hick 2004, 241). He borrowed a page from Kant and appealed to the distinction between the noumenal and phenomenal real (Hick 1995, 29). During this time, Hick experimented with a variety of words for God, including the Eternal One, the Divine, the Ultimate, and the Real, etc (Hick 1980, 41-59). Finally, he settled for his favourite one which is the Real as according to Hick it was more religiously neutral (Hick 1995, 23). Hick tries to keep the basic theistic structure of ultimate reality, and at the same time remove the theistic implications arising out of its use and broaden the previous views of this reality (Hick 2008, 4). Hick thereby appeals to this notion that whatever we say in regard with the Real differ phenomenologically not noumenally, as the latter is beyond human perception. The biggest road block for Hick's pluralistic philosophy was Christology. Hick therefore argues towards the rediscovery of the Christological question on the basis of the shift in the age-old model from Christ centred to God centred (Hick 1980, 19). Hick believes that the idea of divine incarnation should be viewed as a poetic expression of Christians' devotion to Christ rather than taken literally, and he bases his argument on the paradigm shift in worldview (Hick 1980, 19).

2.2 TRUTH CLAIMS AND DOCTRINE OF THE REAL

Hick accepts that there is major problem of truth claims among world religions. He says these truth claims are not even different rather conflicting in nature (Hick 2004, 242). Hick demonstrates the brilliance of his pluralistic hypothesis by accommodating Kant's distinction of phenomenon and noumenon also additionally appealing to the principle of complementarity. People whose religious activities are shaped by theistic traditions encounter the real as a

personal reality, according to the complementarity principle. Although people who function in relation to the real based on the conditioning by non-theistic traditions, they come across it as a non-personal reality (Hick 2004, 374-375). The great world religions, according to Hick's pluralistic theory, include many views, responses, and conceptions of the Real throughout human experience.

The centrepiece of Hick's philosophy is the Real or the divine ultimate reality. Before coining this term Hick went through all sorts of trouble to coin a suitable term and it is pretty much visible through-out his writings (Hick 2004, 10). He wanted to find a terminology that is neutral and is not confined to already laid out definitions, finally after weighing out things he was left with two choices, the Real and the Transcendental (Hick 2004, 11). The following quote shows why Hicks chose the Real instead of the Transcendental, Hick writes,

This phrase has the advantage of being universally recognized, despite the fact that it is not limited to any one tradition. It is easy to recognize God as the Real in Christian language because he is the only self-existent reality. Al Haqq, or the Real, is one of Allah's names in Islam. It is normal to think of the ultimate truth, Brahman, as sat or Satya, the Real, within the Hindu religious family. The Dharmakaya or sunyata is also known as tattva, or the Real, in Mahayana Buddhism. Zhen, the Real, is the ultimate in Chinese religious thinking. The Real' is, then, as good a generic word as we have for what is affirmed in the many types of transcendent religious belief, in my opinion. Because it is utilized in both theistic and non-theistic traditions, it is neutral in terms of their very varied ways of understanding, experiencing, and responding to what they affirm in these diverse traditions. (Hick 2004, 11).

Post giving this term Hick still believed that it's not possible to put out in a form of definition or encompass what exactly the Real is. However, this term doesn't affect any other religious tradition (Hick 1995, 18). Though Hick says this about the Real that "all we can say is to assume the Real in itself as the ultimate basis for intentional purposes of various forms of religious thought and experience. (Hick 2004, 350). The phenomenal world is the same noumenal world as it appears to our human consciousness, according to Hick's epistemological rule, which is based on his necessary postulate argument (Hick 2004, 241-249). Amidst all this chatter the question that surface is can we have any real knowledge about the Real? In order to answer this part, we must turn to Hick's distinction between phenomenon and noumenon. Remember the page he adopted from the Kant's epistemological insights to solve the puzzle that whether we can say anything regarding the Real or it's something that lies beyond our cognitive abilities. In the further section we will try and find the answer to this question by talking about the distinction between the noumenon and phenomenon.

When Hick argues that all major world religions say the same thing that doesn't imply that he is saying there are no differences among them rather he appeals to this distinction that what and how they perceive the Real is different. He further suggests that these differences

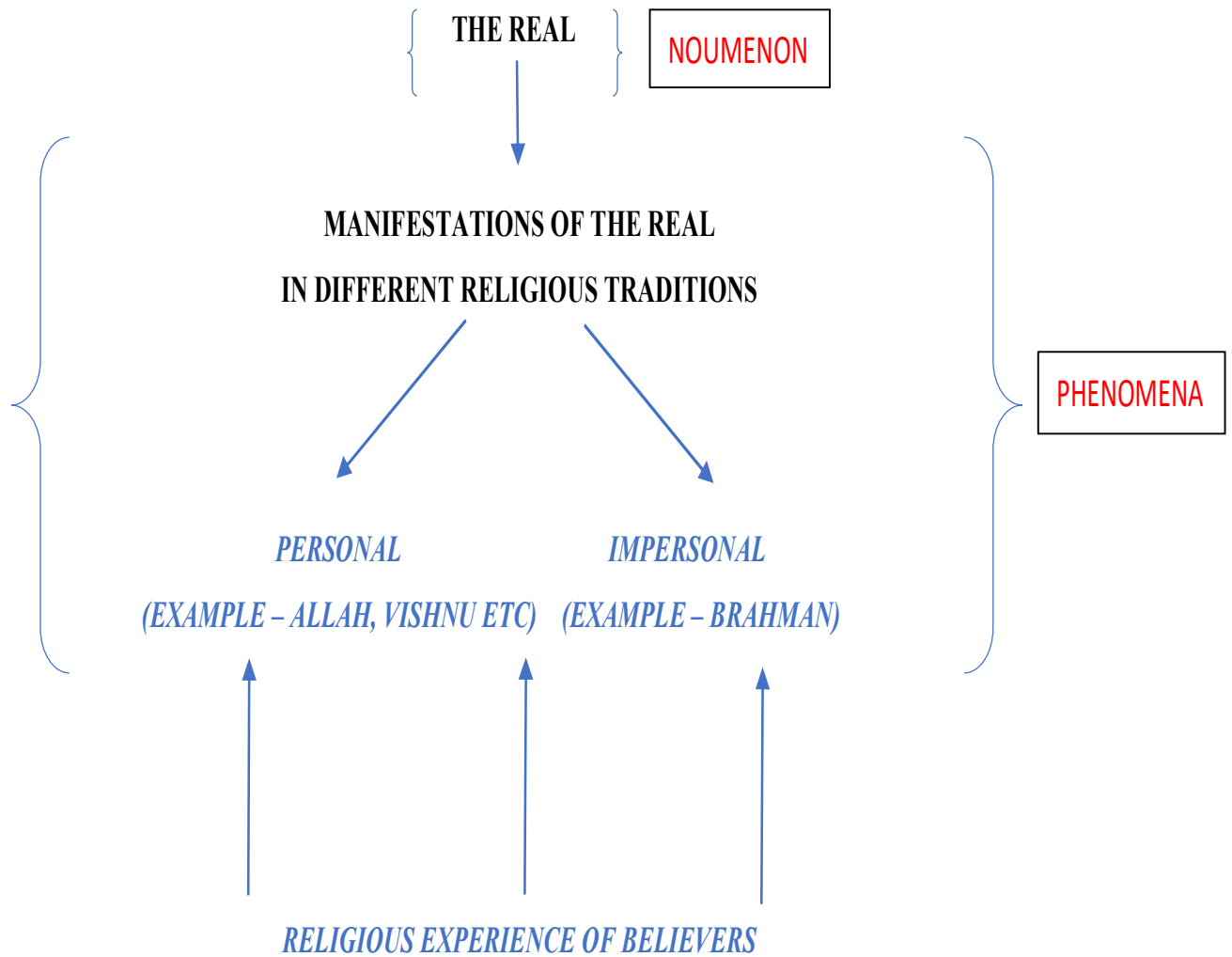
arise due to the difference in cultural and geographical background (Hick n.d, 282-283). As a result, the dichotomy between noumenon and phenomenon is central to Hick's hypothesis, and it is through this distinction that he strives to make the beyond description noumenal Real phenomenologically accessible to human conceptuality. To get to the bottom of clashing concepts of the Real, Hick turned to the contrast between phenomenon and noumenon which ingeniously belong to Kant's epistemology. The realist believes that knowledge is knowledge of things, while the idealist asserts that knowledge is knowledge of my own thoughts, whereas Kant asserts that knowledge is transcendental knowledge. (Marías et al. 1967, 286). It can know the phenomenon but not the noumenon as the noumenon is not affected by subjectivity on the account of it is not-in-me and is beyond reach (Marías et al. 1967, 286). Nevertheless, Hick broadens the phenomenological acumen beyond sensory experience to religious experience therefore Hick can't qualify as strictly Kantian and it should be jotted down that he only borrowed a page from Kant's epistemology (Hick 2004, 244).

Hick claims Kant's religious epistemology has nothing to do with his sensory perceptual knowledge. Though, as this event does not limit others who are motivated by his elementary ideas of viewing religious and sensory experience as intrinsically continuous. Kant's distinction between phenomenon and noumenon became a key weapon in his unwavering support for the pluralistic hypothesis. Hick begin by deploying Kant's most crucial epistemological discoveries that mind diligently evaluates sensory knowledge in terms of concepts (Hick 2004, 240). Hick applies Kant's fundamental doctrine that all I comprehend is formed of two elements one is what I assume (Marías et al. 1967, 289) and the other is what I am given (Russell 1972, 708). The most essential postulate that Hick borrows from Kant is "things known are in the knower" according to the mode of knower (Hick 2004, 252). This implies that the method through which we learn something is influenced by our perception of it, implying that human subjectivity plays an important role in epistemology. Hick uses the same assumption to show how, in regard to the divine, the mode of knower varies across religious and cultural systems. As a result, the Real is conceived and experienced in a variety of ways (Hick 2004, 241). If the creation is somewhat our own private construction, then Hick claims we must distinguish between the thing-in-itself, unseen by anyone and the creation as it appears to, that is perceived or seen by us (Hick 2004, 241).

Hick's explicit distinction between noumenon and phenomenon was crucial to his philosophy and pluralism hypothesis. Hick did what Kant never did: he applied Kant's epistemology's essential acumen to our religious experiences (Hick 2004, 244). In order to

arrive at his own Kantian revolution (Hick 2004, 43). This implementation of Kantian revolution aided Hick in resolving the central challenge of Hick's pluralistic hypothesis: the problem of opposing views about the Real. This exercise helped Hick to strike two targets with the same arrow. He was able to assert the wholly divergent interpretations of the Real through various world religions and he was able to pull it off while maintaining the presence of single noumenal Real.

2.3 DIAGRAM REPRESENTATION OF HICK'S MODEL



CHAPTER 3 – HICK’S CRITICISMS AND REPLIES

John Hick’s pluralist hypothesis was critiqued widely by philosophers and theologians. Hick wrote a book titled as *A Christian Theology of Religion* where he replied to its critiques using two imaginary characters named Phil and Grace. He wrote this in the form of conversation where John is talking to them and used Phil to reply to his critics of pluralism and Grace to reply to his criticism from theology. In this chapter we will look at some of his main critiques and discuss their position and criticism in detail. After this in the next section I will cite Hicks reply to critics and assess whether the criticism levelled at Hick was apt or not and in the same paragraph after Hick’s defence I will reply to his critics as well. Mostly Hick was accused by exclusivists and received his biggest criticism from Alvin Plantinga, who is a Christian exclusivist. In the first paragraph I will list Plantinga’s arguments against pluralism and then I will return to them later in the section 3.3 and after Plantinga, I will list arguments of Keith E Johnson who is a theologian and, I will list his criticism of John Hick’s strict pluralistic model and then later in section 3.3 I will discuss his arguments in detail.

3.1 PLANTINGA’S CRITICISM OF HICK

Plantinga penned down an article titled as ‘A defence of religious exclusivism’ outlining his voice that why being an exclusivist is a proper way of being religious. He gives two arguments in favour of exclusivism:

1. The world was created by God, an almighty, all-knowing, and perfectly good personal being (one that holds beliefs; has aims, plans, and intentions; and can act to accomplish these aims)
2. Human beings require salvation, and God has provided a unique way to salvation through the incarnation, life, sacrificial death, and resurrection of his divine son. (Plantinga 1995, 173).

He further argues that there are people who don’t agree with him neither on (1) and nor on (2) and they still believe in some higher power that’s out there and doctrine of salvation. Apart from these there are another set of people who believe in (1) but not in (2) and these are non-Christian religions and their followers (Plantinga 1995, 173). Being an exclusivist Plantinga believes that his own faith is correct and rest everything is false and after submitting his logical reasoning Plantinga asks what’s wrong about this approach. For his strict exclusivist approach

Plantinga was labelled as unjust, egotistical, irrational and intellectually arrogant (Plantinga 1995, 174). But Plantinga argues that if believing in (1) and (2) is egotistical then outright denial of (1) and (2) is also the same and that's what a Pluralist is doing. After this Plantinga concludes that an exclusivist and pluralist are in the same boat as they both believe that their own view is epistemically justified while others are not and keeps believing what they believed earlier. So, he accuses pluralism of dressing up as exclusivism. Further Plantinga argued that Hick's Kantian distinctions and related concepts of ineffability could not be supported philosophically. In other criticism of religious pluralism Plantinga claims that only one property must apply to the Real out of all sets of contradictory properties. In another critique of Hick's religious pluralism Plantinga argues that in order to maintain the uniformity of soteriological paths between religions, Hick seems to be forced to downplay or neglect the disagreements while translating critical concepts from various religions and he did in a manner that might not be acceptable to people of that religion (Plantinga 2000, 56).

3.2 JOHNSON'S CRITICISM OF HICK

Johnson starts off in a different fashion than Plantinga, he claims that he likes Hick's hypothesis for three main reasons, and he finds it worth investigating further and dwell down into it. Johnson finds Hick's hypothesis as intuitive that all the world religions guide you to the same place, and he also finds Hick's way of writing very compelling. On the top of all this for Johnson, Hick's explanation of religious pluralism is quite interesting and one of the best versions he had come across (Johnson 1997, 1-2).

But for Johnson the biggest problem that pluralistic theories have is the problem of clashing truth claims. He questions how it can be possible that all the world religions stem out of same ultimate reality and still they aren't compatible with each other. For Johnson it's important that Hick's pluralistic hypothesis explain this fallacy in detail and at the same time it avoids itself from getting into any internal inconsistency. (Johnson 1997, 1-2). According to Johnson, Hick's hypothesis tries to explain four main things.

1. People are religious
2. Different content of religious beliefs
3. Real religious belief
4. Religion can transform people's life for good (Johnson 1997, 2).

Further Johnson asks questions like does religions make any truth claims, and if they do then what's the nature of these claims also if these claims are conflicting in nature, then do they weaken or diminish Hick's hypothesis. He accuses Hick of not answering the problem of truth claims by evading from the problem. Johnson sighs this Hick's inability to answer makes his hypothesis implausible as two opposites can't be true at the same time (Johnson 1997, 6). For Johnson these truth claims were the biggest source of criticism (Johnson 1997, 9). According to Johnson the next problem that he can demark with Hick's pluralistic hypothesis is that his theory might not be acceptable to the followers of many religions as it was molding some of the accepted doctrines. I will return to the Johnson's arguments in the subsequent paragraph and reply to them

3.3 REPLY TO CRITICS

In this section I will return to the list of arguments listed by Plantinga and Johnson, first I will restate their arguments and then pen down the Hick's reply to those arguments and later on I will reply to those arguments. The most widely discussed challenge is, there are conflicting truth claims of the various religion'. And if they have conflicting truth claims then how they can all be true if there are such important, significant, and contrasting views of what the divine nature is. Hick responds to this and claims that the ultimate divine reality (noumenal i.e., the thing in itself) is infinite and it's generally accepted that is the case. The cause of that is, it transcends the grasp of the human mind as we are just finite minds, we can't grasp it fully. Given our limited minds, God cannot be grasped or defined fully. Hick argues that the various contrasting meetings with the divine (i.e., phenomenal – as expressed in various religions) may all be meetings with the same infinite reality. Thus, he uses the blind man and the elephant analogy, there are six blind men and each of them comes in contact with different parts of the elephant. One of them touches its legs and say the elephant is like a tree, one of them touches its stomach and says the elephant is like a wall, the other touches its tusk and says the elephant is like a plow, one touches its tail and say the elephant is like a rope and one touches its trunk and says it's like a large snake, but in the end, it's an elephant, therefore, Hick argues that this is similar to what happens to divine reality, it unveils itself in diverse ways to various peoples and cultures throughout human civilizations. So, the moral of this story is not any notion of God or transcendence is valid, for Hick the notion of God that has been born out of a historical manifestation and has a long-standing tradition of practice and it's been tried and tested for years that represents a genuine encounter with reality. Therefore, he submits by saying that the

encounters of the major religions are encounters of the same divine reality but from a different historical and cultural standpoint and it is because of this diversity they vary greatly and not because of the divine nature. Potential answers to the epistemological questions posed by religious diversity include a pluralistic as well as an exclusivist and inclusivist perspective. The argument of exclusivism asserts that regarding the characteristics of divine reality only one consistent statement can be true out of all the non-consistent statements that are out there. Thus, an exclusivist may consider all conflicting statements made by different religions false, since all claims outlined by their custom are valid. An Inclusivist approach asserts that only one set of assertions are completely obvious (or one set of assertions are clearer than the other), but claims made by various religions may be true primarily, specifically, or to a lesser extent. The distinction between this point of view and that of exclusivism regularly needs to do just with how many multiple religious claims can be yielded in any event halfway as obvious – consequently, the proposal that inclusivism might be all the more appropriately named "soft exclusivism"(Basinger 2002, 5). However, it is still debatable whether the presence of a number of contrasting beliefs claims necessarily diminishes this basis. Stances on this issue range from blatantly denying the possibility of a well-founded religious belief in the event of an epistemic conflict.

Now coming back to Hick, is he right about the implications of being unable to fully grasp the Divine? Hick claims that we cannot grasp the Divine fully with our minds thus we have these conflicting truth claims.

What Hick entails let's understand from an analogy, for say can an individual be grasped or defined fully? I guess the answer that can come to a person after thinking it through is no, no one can be defined fully though there must be people who know you closely but not fully. So, does this imply that we cannot speak of any person intelligently? Yes, indeed we can't speak though we all have a subjective account of that person and hence there are contradictory claims about every individual out of which some are true and some are false. Now shift the focus to another position of Hick and maybe the most significant angle to Hick's hypothesis is the presence of the "Real" that individual of all customs endeavor towards. For Hick, the world's incredible religious tradition (counting Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, etc.) is centered around the advancement of humankind from "self-centeredness to a re-centering in what we talk about as God, or as Ultimate Reality, or the otherworldly, or the Real"(Hick 2004). Kant's religious outlook was an important foundation in the improvement of strict pluralism, and it had a powerful impact on John Hick, whose pluralist stance is one of

the most notable modern responses to strict dignified diversity. Here Hick borrowed a page from Kant's philosophy, Kant recognized a 'thing in itself and a 'thing as we encounter it. He termed the previous 'noumena' and the other 'phenomena'. We comprehend the world through our faculties of sense. We encounter phenomena - how things appear to us. We don't encounter noumena - something in its unadulterated structure. This differentiation is utilized by Hick, by acknowledging the noumena of God (the essence of essence, how it truly and truly frees itself from our senses) and the phenomena, which is the phenomena of God. Hick asserted that identifying the difference among noumena and phenomena makes it possible to understand the possibility of discussing the same reality, even though all religions do so in different ways. Alvin Plantinga and others have argued that Hick's Kantian distinctions and related concepts of ineffability could not be supported philosophically. To reply to this criticism, one needs to understand why this position is philosophically untenable, as with most parts of the religion the problems persist with us and I will try and show what I meant by this in the upcoming part. In my eyes, untenable - religious experience is personal and ineffable. A variety of poetic expressions and metaphors can be used, to sum up, but that won't be sufficient to understand. Science is objective thus whatever is done by science it's objectively available for us to enquire or go further about it. Whereas religion is also a science but of the inner world, a world that is subjective thus one needs to go in themselves and no matter how many people know that truth but until and unless one doesn't see himself or herself, they cannot understand the crux of the matter. When Buddha, Mohammad, Christ, or Shiva realized the truth and started speaking about it, their positions, were also untenable but people put their faith in them and walked the path as all these great people they were talking about and experienced the truth. Religious truth will stay untenable for one who has no experience of it first hand, but if you have the experience then that won't be the case. So, the criticism doesn't sound a valid and strong one as it brings out one's shortcomings.

In other criticism of religious pluralism, Plantinga claims that only one property must apply to the Real out of all sets of contradictory properties. Hick argues that anyone can say whatever they want to say about truth and Plantinga's criticism only justifies as a defense of exclusivism. Whereas I feel this criticism can be tackled from two ways i.e., firstly from grounds of 'either-or logic' and secondly by showing why the contradictory claims exist. It is said that laws of logic demand that religious pluralism is false, but how do we come to this certain conclusion that the Real or God falls under the same laws of logic that are applicable in our natural universe? Is it logical itself to think that God who is non-physical can come under

the laws of logic that are made in the physical world itself? Even after these unanswered questions, people go on using either-or logic. Some people attack the position of religious pluralism by saying that religious claims are contradictory so either claim of religion A are false or claims of B, but both can't be right at the same time as they are contradictory and this is the overwriting point, that how all of these religions can be true if their claims are mutually incompatible. Here comes in the scene, the religious exclusivist, who is the proponent of the position that there is only one true religion and in the majority of cases it turns out they choose their religion as the religion that's right and it's the correct path to truth. This kind of approach is very partial and ignorant as well because when a religious exclusivist says that one particular religion is true, he or she is just talking about one unproven metaphysical assumption, for example, we only have one lifetime to circle this earth and then we go to heaven or hell. And then there is another unproven metaphysical assumption of rebirth. Therefore, this takes nowhere rather it makes the problem more confusing.

Coming to the second part that why contradictory claims exist. Here I want to start with what Osho said, he writes, "man is bridged between two eternities"(Osho 2012). If the man is the bridge, then what's the two ends of the bridge? In my eye's nature is one end of that bridge and God is the other end and the man is the connection between the two. The claims of religion that look mutually contradictory are needed to be bridged. There are different types of human beings, someone likes one method and the other person doesn't like that very same method they need a new way. For example, the book was written by Shiva named 'Vigyan Bhairav Tantra' has one hundred and twelve different ways to meditate. A seeker is free to choose the method that suits him the best. One religion teaches struggle to reach the divine whereas the other teaches a complete surrender, a total let go. Religion in the east focuses on Yoga, meditation, and rigors fasting to reach the divine. Whereas Abrahamic religions (western religion) are surrender based, having faith in Christ or Allah. This looks paradoxical but the circle is complete and the man is in the center it's being done for him. It's right that all religions point to some higher power but one thing is needed to be understood, what's the way and how the way is to which they are pointing. All religions help the man to turn inwards and become conscious of his surroundings and stop behaving like he is a mere robot. When one turns inwards then one can reach God. And there can be various ways to turn inwards depending upon what kind of person you are, so religion is like a tool as science is a tool to reach out in the external world, in that same manner religion is a tool to reach to the inner world. Therefore, the criticism is superficial as one digs deeper one can find the similarities in those

contradictions, also the contradictions that look alike, are there because, the eastern religions when they originated in the east and said human life aims to get out from this repetitive circle of life and death, one should transcend this circle and be free. When religious leaders put forward this hypothesis the people interpreted it in the manner that there is too much time to get out of this circle if not in this lifetime, then in other and its consequences shaped the society. East is a little lazy compared to the west, people are procrastinators they think if not today then tomorrow. The whole teaching got polluted because of the interpretation of people. Therefore, when religions were taking shape in the west, their leaders made sure to rectify that mistake that was made in east and said there is only one life and after that, you won't get any chance so people in the west interpreted as this is their only chance to enjoy life and explore it to its fullest after that they won't be able to return. The consequences of this understanding made the west faster than the east. Scientific discoveries started happening in the west, to make life better and easier, and as a result, time became an important and valuable entity as there is very little of it compared to the east. Now can you look at it as a contradiction or it's our misunderstanding of the religious people and religions that have resulted in this exercise of contradiction? .In chapter 4 I will talk about this more explicitly and directly and will try to show what is the philosophical significance of these observations.

In this paragraph, we will talk about another critique of Plantinga and Johnson, who have argued that in order to maintain the uniformity of soteriological paths between religions, Hick seems to be forced to downplay or neglect the disagreements while translating critical concepts from various religions and he did in a manner that might not be acceptable to people of that religion (Plantinga 2000, 5). Hick argues the main work of religion is to transfer a person from self-centered to reality centered and every religion have this as an underlying goal and highlighted its own path to achieve it. I think this criticism can be tackled by starting how well people understand their own religion, if one will meet people from the same religion and talk to them then they all have different accounts of their religion. Two Muslims can easily differ on what's written in the Quran and what's the interpretation is. The same goes for Christians, Hindus, and Buddhists. This clearly shows that we don't have an understanding of our religion. So, these members who don't accept it maybe they didn't understand that part of religion in its full length and breadth and that's why it appeals to them that Hick made a mistake or minimized it while translating. Though this fact can't be ignored that maybe some person knows the religion well when compared to an outsider but with what surety we can claim that who is this person who is raising this finger. Thus, the criticism has no concrete basis. Another

criticism comes in the form, that all religions make claims of exclusivity. This is also not true because in Hinduism it is said 'Sarva Dharma Sama Bhāva' (Barua 2015). Which can be translated as equal respect to all religions and sincerely-held religious viewpoints and beliefs besides one's own is not merely tolerated but fully admired and respected. This also would seem to be the preferred basis for a secular society, as it removes the reason for the state to prefer one religion over another.

Some other sets of philosophical and theological challenges faced by Hick are stated in this paragraph, though I am not responding to them and just listing them so that reader can get the idea about other criticism as well. S. Mark Heim states that Hick is not a true pluralist rather he's a disguised inclusivist because Hick thinks that the world's major religions are true responses toward the Real, but Satanism certainly not. (Thompson 2009). This is because the world religions steer away from selfishness and resentment towards worship and selflessness. This means that Hick believes that one particular kind of moral action guides salvation whereas genuine pluralism does not present such decisions. Another philosopher Johnson Ward claimed that Hick's 'hard pluralism' is inconsistent. He said that if we cannot understand what Real looks like, then at this moment we cannot realize that the religions of the world understand it well. (Ward, Holtzen, and Sirvent 2012). Theologian Alistair McGrath has stated that Hick's view of Real implies that we cannot say anything meaningful about it by any means and if we can't know it in itself, at that point we can't know which of our observations about it are meaningful. It is now worthwhile to summarize Hick's critiques that have been leveled at him. Not all religions can be right because they show different things. Hick is not saying that most of them are self-evident and that every statement is valid. He said that they all contain some reality. They also carry human projection and errors. Some may be clearer than others, but we can't tell which is generally correct, so we must treat all legitimate religions equally. Not all religions are valid, for Hick, not every religion is a true reflection of the divine. Hick views religions as a true representation of the divine if they drive to a virtuous way of life and keep people away from selfishness. So do the great religions of the world, so do many minor religions, but not all belief systems do so.

CHAPTER 4 – SMALL ‘r’ religions TO CAPITAL ‘R’ Religion

Krishnamurti says, if there was only birth and no death, then materialism would have been all. There would have been no need of thinking in terms of something that exists beyond all of this therefore no need for religion but death comes which ignites this longing, the feeling that there must be something beyond all this, beyond all the human suffering, sorrow, pain and all the materialistic world. So, what do you consider is religion, the word? Is it the search for human beings something outside of their own daily life, something other than their petty self-centred activity, beyond their cruelty, bestiality, and their vulgarity? Is it that human beings have always sought from the most ancient of times something beyond themselves? (J. Krishnamurti - Official Channel 2014).

4.1 INTRODUCTION TO MODEL

In this chapter I must begin by describing what I mean when I say small r religions and what I mean by capital R Religion, as this distinction will be a pioneering difference among the two and the whole backbone of this model that I am about to sketch. When I say small r religions then I am talking about all the world major religions for example, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism etc. Whereas when I am talking about capital R Religion then I am referring to the religion not a religion that belongs to a Christian, Hindu or Muslim etc. It's the religion that doesn't have metaphysical claims and leave no space for a person to have an identity with it, throughout this chapter I will keep clarifying the difference between small r religion and Capital R religion, and broaden on the concept that what is capital R religion. Our identification with one religion breeds issues in the society and later on I will discuss with examples from India where identity with a particular religion has resulted in destruction. We will further discuss this with examples in the coming paragraphs of this chapter. The whole purpose of this model is to address the issue that prevails in the society and the fragmentation that we have created with our identifications with one particular religion. The movement from small r religions to capital R Religion is a movement that tries to prove all the religion have different name and this identification with names breeds the problem that we are facing today i.e., pluralism versus exclusivism. In earlier chapters of the thesis, I showed that religious pluralism is a more favourable position than exclusivism with the help of John Hick's religious pluralism whereas in this chapter I will show that they possess internal problems therefore

arguing in the favour that neither pluralism nor exclusivism, as both positions have their own inconsistency and show that pluralism can also take form of soft exclusivism. I defended pluralism against exclusivism as exclusivism is something that's more dangerous and breeds its own kind of self-centred-egoistic problems and when compared with pluralism, pluralism is far better position than exclusivism, but pluralism has its own problem to deal with so I will try to lay the foundation and argue that neither exclusivism and nor pluralism.

4.2 DIVING DEEP INTO THE STRUCTURE OF r to R RELIGION

The word religion needs to be understood. Religion doesn't only mean something pertaining to God, devil, heaven or hell because when we bind religion with such metaphysical terminologies then we are trying to say that religion is something that only concerns itself with the metaphysical realm of the universe and has no or little say in the natural world. This outright commentary regarding the metaphysical is somethings that's claimed by all major religions and that's their fundamental mistake when they say they know everything that's out there in the metaphysical realm and make claims about it. Though these claims can't be verified by someone living and if only after death they can be verified but dead people never come back to tell us whether or not it was true or it was blatantly false. This whole situation makes these claims just a mere belief system or maybe just a product of thought as we have no concrete proof that whether they are true or false. This brings us to a question that why we use thought that's a material process to make claims about metaphysical. We as humans are here in the vast existence where nothing is under our control, the day and night happens regardless of what we want, seasons change without our permission and so on and so forth. The whole physical world doesn't bother about our presence and this gives birth to the helplessness it makes humans feel lonely, lost, in despair and they need something to cling to, to provide hope and hold our hands amidst this time. Then we use thought to introduce these extra-ordinary claims that might or might not be true (Osho 2020, 88-100).

In this paragraph I will link religion to identity that I was talking about in earlier paragraph. A person born to Hindu parents in India is bound to be Hindu and someone born in Pakistan to Muslim parents is bound to be a Muslim, so on and so forth. A person has no say in which religion they are born in so when they are born their parents start teaching them the religion the whole family has followed, the religion which their parents taught them, telling the kids all the dogmas, beliefs, rituals and doctrines they follow and then the kid grows up with

idea that he or she belongs to so and so religion and now that it's their religion it's the extension of their own-self and they go to any extent to save their own religion and like this everyone tries and prove that their own religion is right. All this exercise happens on the basis of arguments against each other's beliefs whereas on the other hand all these beliefs are one set of metaphysically unproven statements yet followers argue with each other because this is their religion and how can their religion be wrong, this egoistic identification puts one religion against the other. This is what is referred as small r religions. Now the question comes if this is small r religions then what is capital R Religion. Capital R Religion is something that's not based on belief but rather on experience only. A religion where no claims about the metaphysical are made on the basis of belief instead here Religion is the sceptical investigation into truth. The person who investigates must be free of belief, dogma, rituals or saviours to investigate into truth. If I am anchored in Buddhism or in a personal saviour as in Christianity and so on, I cannot sceptically investigate ("J. Krishnamurti - Interview by Ross Saunders in Sydney, Australia 1970). Whereas we watch things with our own prejudice and opinions, with our memory and that's how we look at everything. We download all the information we have gathered about an object we are looking at, by downloading I mean whatever information we have about the object in our memory we project it and make assumptions about the object but is it possible for us to look at something without all this structure of memory (Krishnamurti 1948-49, 207-222). And see for ourselves that what is out there, the capital R Religion is not something practised by a crowd rather it's a personal affair, it's something for an individual to see for themselves because each individual comes together to make the world, the society, we all live in. Therefore, religion becomes the capacity of experiencing directly that which is immeasurable, that which cannot be put in words (Krishnamurti 2015, 78-85). And this immeasurable is what Hick calls as the Real.

4.3 WHY PLURALISM FAILS

If there are so many religions and if all of this is created by God who is all knowing, all powerful and loving then why there are so many wars, so much cruelty and why such division exists on the basis of nations, race, caste, religion and so on. The answer to this question lies somewhere deep rooted inside human psychology. As I said earlier, we all find ourselves helpless out in such vast existence therefore we give birth to this idea of God, someone we call as all powerful, all kind, all knowing and all loving. We paint God in the picture that we all

aspire to be but we can't because of our petty self-centred attitude. We then turn everything into a set of belief as all of this idea was invented by the thought in first place. All major world religion also can't shield themselves from this division, they are internally divided into sects and each sect is against the other, so not only the world religions are put against each other rather they have internal problems of conflict as well. So, if they are internally conflicting how can they take someone to unity, or help to bind the society rather than creating a division. And this is the point where pluralism also fails, I will demonstrate it further that what causes this failure. Hick has argued for a presence of the Real and movement from self-centred to reality centred, but to be identified with the fact that this is my religion and that is not my religion, can't be considered a reality centred act as there is one frame of reference, an identification that this is mine and that is not. With the approach of pluralism, the self remains intact whereas to be reality centred one needs the dissolution of self. Now with respect to the Real, how Hick knows something about the Real when it's the thing in itself and how he is able to make claims about the Real when it's a metaphysical entity, to bypass this argument Hicks appeals to the noumenal Real and the phenomenal Real, but reality is a unity then how Hick came to this division and again ended up making a claim about the Real which is metaphysical and something not in the natural world, this claim of Hick is similar to the claims of religion regarding afterlife, heaven and hell but they are metaphysically unproven, which gives birth to belief and like other religions Hick also ended up believing and created the noumenal and phenomenal Real.

Hick says how the Real is perceived is different. He further suggests that these differences arise due to the difference in cultural and geographical background (Hick 1988, 283-284). This outlook of Hick creates a fallacy. What Hick is doing, he is breaking the Real into two categories to adjust it to his pluralistic hypothesis. If according to Hick, the Real is ineffable then how can he himself describe that what the Real is. The Real is part of metaphysical whereas Hick's claims about the Real in the natural world, how Hick is himself so sure that his claims about the Real are right or wrong in the first place, whereas the many interpretations of the Real from different cultural standpoint shows that we as humans interpret things differently based on our conditioning but it doesn't show that there are two different Reals, one is noumenal and the other is phenomenal. Here I would like appeal to my argument that it's our interpretation that plays a major role in the religion. Osho says "I am responsible for what I say not for what you understand" (Osho 2018, 354). This is the case with religion, they are open for interpretations different people have different interpretations, even two followers of Islam can't agree on the what's written in Qur'an and this hold true for other

religions as well. Hick has described how religions started taking shape throughout the world, but I would like to appeal to another distinction to show that it's us who have interpreted religions like that and the onus is on us and our understanding. Remember we briefly touched upon this topic in chapter 3 that all major world religions can be divided into two main categories (a) Eastern religions (b) Western religions. When religions were first taking shape in Eastern civilizations, they came up with this idea that life is cyclic which means you are born, you live here on the planet, you die and you are again born. This cycle repeats itself and it's a vicious loop we all are caught in and we should get free from this cyclic movement of repeated birth and death which involves so much sorrow, pain and helplessness therefore one must do what religion says and be free of this cycle. Whereas people in the East interpreted it as there are many births so what's the hurry if not in this birth, then in the next birth, we will eventually be free of the cycle.

After east religions started taking shape in west and they realized the mistake made by Eastern religions so they came up with a completely opposite approach instead of cyclic they said it's a linear life which means you take birth and you die and, in the middle, there is time to get free from these sorrow and pain so you must live in accordance with God and he will reward you on the judgement day. Just like people in east, people in west also interpreted it as there is only one life so there is not much time to enjoy so let's enjoy for the time being we are here and then anyway we will have to appear for the judgement day. Therefore, in case of both religious movements the followers interpreted the messages in their own ways, according to their own comfort. This is the point where the actual problem lies with the small r religions that they are open to interpretations, so followers interpret them, and these interpretations further create the issue of putting one religion against another.

Here comes the capital R Religion which leaves no place for interpretation as it's a method comprising of different mediations that one can choose and see for themselves as whether or not there is an immeasurable or the Real is out there. Bertrand Russell writes, we may define 'faith' as a firm belief in something for which there is no evidence. Where there is evidence, no one speaks of 'faith. Faith in something is required when there is no evidence for it. For example, Newtons third law of motion doesn't require any faith it can be proved easily with the help of experiments, but there is a God out there who is looking at us all the time and writing down our good and bad deeds, there is no experiential proof of this, all a seeker can do is have faith and that's the problem with religion, it makes extraordinary claims about everything whereas on the other hand we have science that makes claims about what it knows and says that there is always something unknowable, unlike religion science knows it's limits.

In science if a scientist finds out flaws in a theory and discover new truth the whole science comes together and accept the new facts that were derived on the basis of experiments and the new facts are also open to future changes if presented by better proofs. Whereas religions just impose centuries old truth and claim that they will hold true always and these claims have no backing by any proof just claims and they are imposed on people by brute force of fear the religion put inside the human heart.

To tackle these kinds of problems we need a religion that doesn't make extra ordinary claims regarding metaphysical rather it concerns itself with what's here and now. It's a religion based on practices rather than blind faith. So, what are these practices that's the next question one might come up with. All the major world religion can be divided into two set of fundamental practices that they offer and these practices are mainly based on two methods (1) Struggle and (2) Surrender; struggle is a method of meditation where you need to sit in a position for hours and need to do the steps prescribed in the method. There can be different methods for example in Hinduism there are one hundred and twelve ways of meditating, a person can read all and try whichever they find suitable. In the same manner Taoism, Buddhism, Jainism etc they all list similar methods of meditating. The next question arises why I am calling them 'struggle', it's because one needs to do something in order to achieve something and this requires effort therefore, I am coining them under struggle. Next, we come to surrender based methods, surrender means you accept whatever the existence brings to you, you are one with the existence and you don't have your own self-centred desires now rather you live in complete state of let go and you go wherever life takes you. Christianity, Islam and other religions are an example of this surrender-based religions. What happens when we adopt these two methods and what change they bring in the seeker? These meditations help seeker to take them from mind to no-mind, where they don't use their structure of memory, their preconceived notions regarding the object they are looking at, and for the first time one can look without judgement, fear, conditioning etc and see for themselves that what it is that they are looking at, and that what a reality centred act is, to see what is there not to mix it with what we think it is, Krishnamurti calls this state as the observer is observed (Krishnamurti 2003, 45-50).

4.4 SMALL r religion's IMPACT ON SOCIETY (FOCUSING EVENTS IN INDIA)

Now let's turn to small r religions impact on society and see what kind of wars it has caused but it will be done by looking at the events that happened in India. The incident took place on 15th October 2021 when a man entered a Sikh temple and ran away with the holy book that was kept in the temple. There was a Sikh guard who was patrolling the temple he saw him running so he chased him down and caught him. In between all of this a group of Sikhs who are called as Nihang's gathered around the man and his hands were tied and his body parts were chopped one by one until he died. Because of sacrilege a man was lynched and all of this happened in the name of religion moreover the people who killed him they had no remorse of taking a life and they said they did it because their holy book was disrespected and they will do it again if this happens. Just like this there are various incidents like this that takes place in India all the time where followers of one religion kill each other in the name of religion. In another incident that happened in New Delhi, i.e., capital of India on 23 February 2020 where a Hindu mob attacked Muslims. Lot of Muslims died in the lynching and this whole blood bath went on for weeks, when it ended there were bodies found in the drains and lot of people were killed and wounded. Muslim temples were set on fire and people were heard shouting Hindu slogans amidst all the chaos. Though this all was started when Citizenship amendment bill came into force but soon it took religious colours and it became a Hindu-Muslim riot.

This identity with small r religions creates a problem in the society and gives birth to violence in the name of religion, the religion that was supposed to make us reality centred. Therefore, to tackle this problem in the society I came up with the model of capital R Religion, in capital R Religion there are no metaphysical claims as they are not verifiable in the natural world and they are mere belief based, this religion then becomes a sceptical enquiry into what is out there and a seeker can see it for themselves and therefore making them reality centred. Someone can ask why I am calling it capital R Religion because I am clearly making the religion shorter whereas capital R of the Religion gives this impression that I will add something more to the existing religion whereas I ended up subtracting the metaphysical claims. To answer this, I must say that I named this model capital R Religion because this religion deals with existing problems of the society and puts forward a solution in the real world and can help in solving various religious conflicts that rock the fabric of the society.

In the end I must briefly touch upon the fact that why I say that neither exclusivism nor pluralism. Exclusivism is a dangerous position as it's very egoistic to say that only one religion is correct religion and the only path to reach God, as one might ask on what grounds this surety is achieved that religion A is better than religion B, as they are just some metaphysical claims which rests on the firm belief of the follower, even the follower is not sure and that's why they are also believing it to be true, they can't prove that their claims are right and others are wrong, as metaphysical claims can't be verified in the natural world. Therefore, exclusivism fails, now pluralism says all religions say the same thing, my religion is true and yours is true as well, but this identity with my religion and not my religion is a softer version of exclusivism and later it can take shape of brute exclusivism and it fails to deliver what it says that the main work of religion is to take an individual from self-centred to reality centred, but without losing this sense of my religion one can't be reality-centred. Seeing these issues, I gave the model of capital R Religion which helps an individual to inquire and gives methods to travel the path, rather than putting fear inside the heart of an individual and make them follow a faith, believe or any dogma.

CHAPTER 5 – OBJECTIONS AGAINST CAPITAL R RELIGION MODEL

In this chapter I will look at some of the possible objections against the ‘small r religions to capital R Religion’ model that I put forward in the previous chapter. After listing the objections, I will go on to reply to the objection posed to the model and defend the model the model against the objections.

5.1 OBJECTIONS AND REPLIES TO OBJECTIONS

Let’s begin with the most obvious objection one can raise that how can it be a model of religion if it has no metaphysical claims in it. To answer this, I will revert to the part of the model where I appeal that those metaphysical claims are not verifiable. We as agents of natural world can’t go and verify the claims made pertaining to metaphysical realm, they might or might not be true, we can’t say much about them with full certainty. Let’s imagine a person named X, X has never been to London and he believes that buses in London are of red color and it’s a country of black people, for twenty-two years X believed this and then finally he got a chance to go to London for a summer school. The moment he stepped out of the airport he saw red buses so his belief checked out but his other belief was wrong as he saw too many white people. All his belief was about natural world so they could be verified but let’s suppose that London is a metaphysical place will X still be able to verify his claims and see which one is wrong or right? The answer is more than obvious that same route is not possible. Now X can’t verify claims about metaphysical London, but he keeps on believing the same two beliefs he had. Then X went to a bar and met Y, Y has completely opposite views about metaphysical London, she thinks that buses in London are on orange color and mostly white people live in London. They both had few drinks and started talking about their beliefs regarding the metaphysical London, soon the argument got heated as they both were not ready to come to a decision that who is right. The bartender heard them and told them about Capital R Religion model and asked them that in such situations they must suspend their belief as it can’t be verified anyway. X and Y seem pleased with the description and to solve the conflict they gave up their belief. Now the whole point of this thought experiment is that religion should solve conflict between the followers rather than putting them one against each other and killing them based on the claims. A religion should be existential and should be focused on enriching the life here and now while giving the tools to enquire into the unknown or the immeasurable.

Another possible objection could be it's not a religious model at all rather a model for atheists, as the model refrain from making any definitive claims regarding what's out there, is there a God or not, and what will happen in afterlife, is there heaven and hell. To reply to this, I must begin by describing what problems the answer to these questions will bring about. The moment one has the already known answers to these questions they start believing in the fact that all these things are true and they exist, and now one is biased and can't afford to look at things without their structure of memory and this corrupts their intelligence that one could have used to enquire regarding the nature of these questions and come to a conclusion for themselves. So, the model is for people who are interested in knowing what's out there, and are ready for a skeptical investigation, where as an atheist is in outright denial of these things and he is on the other end of the spectrum from the theist, as he believes God doesn't exist whereas a theist believes that God exist. In my eyes both are childish as mind formulates these questions and then mind itself answers them. All these questions are manufactured by man so he must take it upon himself to find the answers to these questions and remain sceptic until anything can be said firmly about these questions.

The other obvious question is if there are no metaphysical claims then what motivates one to practice Religion? Humans have always thought in the way that what I will get from the situation, we want to maximize our pleasure, profit etc. We are so self-centered, that for us to do something we need assurance that I will get something at the end of this activity. This worldly thought process that a person uses throughout their life they use the similar thought process when it comes to religion therefore the metaphysical claims play an important role because in the end a person is thinking that whether they will gain something or not, if not in this world then maybe in some other dimension in form heaven or hell but they must gain something from their religious actions and this again beats the purpose of being reality centered as the basis of whole activity is for self-gain. Also, these religions of metaphysics have brought so much destructions over the years, so many crusades, wars and jihad. Instead of bringing man closer they have drawn a wedge between them and have put one religion against another. The question is how they have managed this, it's based on the claims they made and luring humans who are already greedy and this greed drives them. Whereas the model of small r religion to capital R Religion, is a religion of meditation that helps a person to increase their intelligence rather than making outright claims that might or might not be true. Subtracting metaphysical claims from a religion doesn't stop anyone from practicing religion rather it helps people to be more religious as there is no greed involved and the religion makes them reality centered from

the go and it helps to kill the self as there are no promises made to lure people towards religion. And why I am against metaphysical claims is because they are based on belief and belief makes you blind. For example, in India farmers use to believe that when God becomes happy then the rain comes, and for a farmer rain is everything as their harvest depends on the amount of rainfall, so now that farmer becomes a religious person, he goes to the temple three times a day, because it's written in a holy book what exactly helps you impress the Almighty. So, the farmers follow the instruction, again out of his own greed, but years later with advancement of science we know the whole process of raining and those beliefs are shot down. Whatever we don't know we believe in it, but to be certain about a belief one requires effort, a journey to uncover the truth and that journey requires dedication and constant work but humans are lazy and we just accept beliefs and try to prove that our own belief is better than someone else's and this whole exercise draws a wedge between society and gives birth to wars and what not. Therefore, for religious practice it's not important to have a purpose, because purpose is selfish and the whole work is to make a person selfless.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have argued that religious pluralism is a better position when compared to religious exclusivism and discussed in detail what problems exclusivism poses, this was necessary to attain a level field, after attaining that level field I went on to discuss and show what problems even pluralism can't shield itself of, here I proposed a new model of religion and this was all done looking at the strife torn society and problems that we deal in our life due to the ill effects of our identity with one particular religion. The framework of religion should be uniting the people together rather than dividing the whole globe into different sets of religion, this basic function of the religion is to make a man turn inwards and be reality centred rather than just being self-centred and think only in terms of their own fulfilment. Exclusivism is a highly controversial position as it's full of self-centredness and quite an egoistic take that only one religion is true and that's too one's own religion, whereas pluralism fails when it starts making claims about the Real, which is the ultimate reality and Hick says that nothing can't be said about the Real as it is a thing in itself but ends up making a claim, and nothing can be said about something is also a claim. This problematic part of Hick's model took me to sketch the small r to capital R model of religion. There I argued that how dangerous it is for oneself to identify themselves with one religion and proposed a method to go beyond this problem and be reality centred instead.

Things have a nature, like fire burns, that's the nature of fire, water takes the shape of container it is put in, that's the nature of water etc. Throughout the thesis I tried to make religion a personal affair rather than something that can only be practiced by masses. One can argue that if I am trying to solve the real-world problems then why instead of sketching the model, I abandoned the religion itself? For making a claim of that nature, I must be certain that there is nothing beyond the physical world. In order to make such an outrageous claim I hold no power as this can only be known after enquiry so I proposed a method of enquiry in the form of model. Therefore, the nature of religion should be to unite people together rather than dividing them, as religion is an enquiry into what is out there, therefore one must experience it for themselves and see. Hereby I suggest we accept the model of religion and solve the problems that are there in the society and help people come closer to each other, the lines dividing the countries shouldn't exist in our minds to create this division because religion is a matter of unity

ABSTRACT

In this thesis I have argued how we can go beyond religious pluralism and exclusivism to tackle the existing issues in the society. To uncover the veil, I have begun by describing what is religion and various religious positions like exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism. After clearing concepts next, I discuss Hick's model of religious pluralism and explained the central pieces in model, like, his doctrine of the Real and how Hick utilized the brilliance of Kant's epistemology of religion. After describing them I have defended Hick's model against the arguments of exclusivist's like Plantinga and Johnson. Further, I have argued that religious exclusivism is a dangerous position when compared with religious pluralism, as the latter is more tolerant. Then I have sketched a model of small r to capital R Religion, and argued that religious pluralism has its own problems and why it fails. Then finally I defend the 'small r to capital R Religion' model against possible objection.

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