The fundamentalism and caste conflict phenomenons religion essay

Fundamentalism and Casteism are considered as two different phenomenons. Whereby both these terminologies have been approached probably as different issues lying in the present Indian scenario. Conflict, as well, seems to be considered as the outcome of these issues. However, there is an attempt made in this paper to find out firstly, what fundamentalism means, secondly how fundamentalism becomes the base for Casteism; thirdly how Casteism paved the way for different conflicts; and finally, this paper deals with the Pastoral Response from the Pastoral Care and Counselling perspective to the caste conflict situation, which emerged from fundamentalism. Though Fundamentalism itself has the wide range of definition and yet not confined to a particular definition, in order to limit the scope of this paper, the definition of the term Fundamentalism is narrowed down to the foundational understanding of the Caste System. Nevertheless, this paper tries to interact with these 'isms' from their basic understanding and what upshot they have brought to the society.

1. Fundamentalism - What does it mean?

Fundamentalism is " the practice of following very strictly the basic rules and teachings of any religion" defines Oxford Advance learners Dictionary's seventh edition. Steven Jones, a research scholar from Virginia University describes that the term 'fundamentalism' was initiated in the series of booklets authored and published by leading Evangelical churchmen in US between 1910 and 1915. However, the term was given full strength in 1920 after " Curtis Lee Laws appropriated the term `fundamentalist' as a designation for those who were ready 'to do battle royal for the Fundamentals.'" M. M. Thomas comments, " These booklets opposed the

application of modern critical historical approach to the bible and the traditional dogmas of Christianity, because in their opinion, it would destroy their supranatural and supernatural elements which belong to their very essence."

Though the definition of this term has wide range of meaning, yet a fundamentalist is reckoned as the strict follower of a particular religion's teachings and its beliefs. James Barr states " Fundamentalism is based on a particular kind of religious tradition, and uses the form, rather than reality, of biblical authority to provide a shield for this tradition." Even, Bruce Lawrence in his book Defenders of God defines 'fundamentalism' as: " The affirmation of religious authority as holistic and absolute, admitting of neither criticism nor reduction; it is expressed through the collective demand that specific creedal and ethical dictates derived from the scriptures be publicly recognized and legally enforced." David Frawley views that, " Fundamentalists generally hold to their religion's older social customs and refuse to integrate into the broader stream of modern society which recognizes freedom of religious belief." In agreement to this statement, Dr. Ramendra identifies, " fundamentalism means belief in the literal truth of religious scriptures and fundamental religious beliefs of any religion." For Altmeyer and Hunsinger fundamentalism is " the belief that there is one set of religious teachings that clearly contains the fundamental, basic, intrinsic, essential, inerrant truth about humanity and deity; that this essential truth is fundamentally opposed by forces of evil which must be vigorously fought; that this truth must be followed today according to the fundamental, unchangeable practices of the past; and that those who believe and follow

these fundamental teachings have a special relationship with the deity." As a whole, though the term 'fundamentalism' is widely used with different connotations, still it cannot be denied that the term basically used with religious notion and it stands for it till today whether stand for inerrancy of truth or " militancy in its outlook". M. M. Thomas, Citing V. M. Tarkhundes's statement, says " Fundamentalism consists of uncritical adherence to ancient beliefs and practices."

On the other hand, Fundamentalism is probably viewed as the counter institution to Liberalism, Modernism and Secularism. " The fundamentalist movement tries to preserve what it considers the basic ideas of Christianity against criticism by liberal theologians." Fundamentalism designates " what is more generally called a conservative type of Christian thought, as opposed to the liberal or modernist tendencies." M. M. Thomas states " It may also arise from the insecurity of faith when its religious expressions are faced with the necessity to change." and " Fundamentalism emerged out of reaction to closed secularism" Erskine Clarke utters that " Fundamentalists resist secularisation and the cultural elements of modernity..." Accordibng to Marsden, " an American fundamentalist is an evangelical who is militant in opposition to liberal theology in the churches or to changes in cultural values or mores, such as those associated with " secular humanism."" In his note, he says, " in recent years been applied by analogy to any militantly traditional religion, such as Islamic fundamentalism." M. M. Thomas opines, " It is justifiable to characterise as fundamentalist similar movements in any religion which buttress traditional beliefs and social order from reform or change..."

Over all, Fundamentalism can be defined as strictly following of religious beliefs and traditions as well as it is a counter attitude against modernity which hails secularism and liberalism. With this definition, let us move on to analyse the caste system in India.

2. Caste: Does it emerge from Fundamentalism?

On its outlook, everyone would say that Caste system is probably not an outcome of Fundamentalism because both of them are different issues. Whereby, in this paper an argument is proposed that Casteism in India is one of the fruits of Fundamentalism. Though Caste System itself has the attitude of fundamentalism, the primary focus of this paper is how Casteism can be the victim of fundamentalism. There were many who fought like B. R. Ambedkar, Periyar, Jothiba Phule and Panditha Ramambai for the eradication of this canker system, hence it still rules the Indian society because of its deep roots in the Indian Soil. In order to substantiate the argument, it is good to view the definition and origin of the Caste system in India.

The word caste, which is of " Spanish and Portuguese origin," is " derived from Latin Castus which means pure." However, the Portuguese word casta means " breed, race or kind." It seems that the word " was used by the Portuguese to denote Indian social classification" says Bal Krishna Sharma. Seligman describes caste as " an endogamous and hereditary subdivision of an ethnic unit occupying a position of superior or inferior rank or social esteem in comparison with other such subdivision." Nesfield and Sir H. Risley also support this view. Ketkar defines caste as "(1) membership is confined to those who are born of members and includes all persons so born; (2) the members are forbidden by an inexorable social law to marry outside the

group." Thus, " caste is a stratified system in which each segment has its identity with a common name, origin and strictly specified inter-group relations. Each group is endogamous, traditionally following an occupation and enjoying a particular postion in the social hierarchy, built around the opposition of purity and pollution. The groups are localised, but keep social distance between them."

However, Casteism arises out of Hindu philosophy and becomes the beacon of the unique identity of the Hindu Society. Oxford Dictionary defines as " any of the four main division of the Hindu society, originally than made according to function in the society." T. K. Oomen states, " What is unique to India is the all pervasive Caste hierarchy, legitimised through the Hindu doctrine of Karma and reincarnation." P. K. Kar elucidates that the beginning of Caste system is in " the Hindu philosophy of four varnas." Ambrose Pinto cites Ambedkar's view that " the sanction behind the caste system is the religious sanction, for, the caste as the new form of varna system derives its sanction from the Vedas which form the sacred books of the Hindu religion and which are infallible. I say unfortunately because anything, which has a religious sanction, becomes by virtue of it sacred and eternal. To the Hindu, caste is sacred and caste is eternal." Max Weber Cited by Toppo states, " Caste, that is, the ritual and rights and duties it gives and imposes, and the position of the Brahmans, is the fundamental institution of Hinduism. Before everything else, without caste there is no Hindu." Thus, the caste system in India belongs to Hindu Philosophy which emerges from Vedas and Upanishads. Whereas this system is cemented by the code of Manu, called " Manava Dharma Shastra or Manusmirti. Dr. Ramendra says, " According to

Manusmriti, anybody who argues critically and logically

about dharmashastras ought to be ostracized."

With the above information, let us now look at the similarities between Fundamentalism and Casteism. Basically, both these isms consider the religious beliefs, teachings, and tradition as their base. Another aspect is their strong opposition to modernism. While modernism supports liberalism and secularism, the caste system in India can witness its strong roots in the Indian Soil. For which, the recent issues like 'Honour Killing', the atrocities against Dalits and the demand for caste base census all show the very fact that though India achieves many things with modernity, yet is under the strong bondage of Casteism. Dr. K. S. Jacob states, " While the secular, socialistic and democratic principles enshrined in the constitution demand equality of outcomes, the inherent caste-related inequality continues to dominate reality in Indian society." M. M. Thomas claims ," Purity and impurity ideas were the religious foundation of caste and it is the return to it by the middle class for spiritual and economic stability that makes their shift from secularism to hindutva."

It is painful to note the caste embracement is not only of Hinduism, but also it has its strong footage in Isalam and Christianity too in the recent past. One may probably question, why such evil system in these religions? The answer drawn by Koilaparampil when talking about Caste among Christians, he states " the rank of the Christian in the local community continues to depend on the Caste from which he was converted and this persists to the third and forth generation." As M. M. Thomas states " Fundamentalism consists of uncritical adherence to ancient beliefs and practices" may probably support

this notion when we compare Caste among Christian and Fundamentalism. As " Caste is considered important for identification," may also support the above view.

Finally both these issues may Probably lead towards conflict or violence. The recent murder in Khairlanji, a village in Maharashtra depicts the picture of the caste system's rule yet in Indian soil. Thus, Casteism can probably consider as the fruit of fundamentalism and this leads to the present day Caste conflicts.

3. Conflict

" Etymologically the term 'conflict' is derived from 'con-fligere' (Latin) denoting to strike together. It implies fight, clash, sharp or mild disagreement or even antagonism." Rachel Bagh cites William W. Wilmot and Joyce L. Hocker's definition " conflict is an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce, resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals." Alan C. FIlley defines conflict as a process which takes place between two or more parties. By parties he refers to individuals, groups, or organizations. Whereby, he explains, " Within our various social relationships are some which involve real or perceived differences between two or more parties. Where the interests of the parties are mutually exclusive - that is, where the gain of one party's goal is at the cost of the other's, or where the parties have different values- then the resulting social interaction between the parties contains fertile ground for conflict." According to Lewis A. Coser, conflict is " a struggle over values or claims of status, power and scarce resources, in which the aims of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the

desired values but also to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals. Such conflicts may take place between individuals and between collectivities. Intra group as well as inter group conflicts are perennial feature of social life." B. J. Prashantham states " Incompatible goals and means of achieving them can lead conflicts in inter-personal relations as would, differences in perception, communication styles, personality differences, personal interests and ideology." Thus, Maria Arul Raja comments, " Whenever human agency is alive and active, they appear rather clearly, in a positive or negative manner." Conflict, thus. Can be defined as the struggle between two persons or parties aiming at some goal to achieve.

Conflict is categorised under four divisions; they are intra-personal, inter-personal, intra-group and inter-group.

Intra-Personal

It is conflict within a person. Murry states that according to psychologists " there is a crowd in each of us." For which he elucidates, " there is a conflict between the spending self and saving self of a person when he received money." For him, " Sigmund Freud's theory of a person as a composite of three forces (the Id, the Ego, the Super-Ego) each with different wishes and standards" and " Eric Berne's theory of a person as a composite of three different ego-states (Parent ego, Adult ego, and Child ego) with three different attitudes to life and the environment," are the best witnesses for explaining intra personal conflict.

Inter-Personal

This is a conflict between two individuals. " Each person has different needs, values system, a world view and wants. When people with these differing dispositions meet, they clash. The difference may further widen by difference in sex, race, class and creed and social conflict becomes inevitable."

Intra-Group and Inter-Group

Inter-group and even intra-group conflict can arise due to differences in goals, values, loyalties and heritage. " Race, region, creed, nationalities, and ideologies are among the factors causing inter-group conflicts. Members of different groups develop inter-group loyalties and perceive the other groups with disinterest, prejudice, and antagonism."

Therefore, conflict arises in any one form of the above. It is important to note that a person's behaviour may affect his personality as well as others. Alfred Adler states that " a man is motivated primarily by social urges." Behaviourist therapy considers " outward behaviours are the result of faulty, maladaptive learning from the environment." So, conflict in the inter personal or inter group level may spring out because of the intra personal conflict. Besides, for the interpersonal conflicts, P. K. Kar narrates, lower castes in India who " are disabled from the social, economic, educational and religious viewpoint, most often become aware of their position and resent oppression and discrimination by higher castes. This change in the outlook of the lower castes culminates in inter caste conflicts." The Khairlanji Murder is the best example of this cause. Another present reality issue in the Indian scenario is Honour killings. This issue is " the reaction to inter-caste

marriages is much stronger and violent when the girl marries a dalit or into a lower caste than her own," Says Times of India.

Knowing the fact that the Caste is one of the sources of conflict, now we move on to the next section where we can draw some useful responses to resolve the conflict from the Pastoral Care and Counselling perspective.

4. A Pastoral Response to Caste Conflict

Pastoral Care and Counselling in the words of William A. Clebsch and Charles R. Jackle is defined as " a helping act, done by representative Christian persons, directed towards the healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling of troubled persons whose troubles arise in the context of ultimate meanings and concerns." Thus, a Pastor or a Christain counsellor is the one who helps people in times of their trouble. For which, C. W. Bristar expresses, " the Church's ministry is personal and social, ranging from individual salvation and guidance to mutual support and social welfare." Rachel Bagh refers that " we are called to the ministry of reconciliation/peacemaking (2Cor. 5: 17-20)." So, the role of the Counsellor in the conflict resolution is crucial and necessary in order to help persons to liberate from the bondage of Conflict. Probably, there may be diverse opinions and suggestion for the conflict resolution, hence hereby some pastoral responses are placed knowingly the limitation of this paper.

Preparation of the Counsellor

In order to have a fruitful reconciliation ministry, the preparation of the Counsellor is crucial. For which Augsburger suggests that " the mediators seek progressively sharpen their basic skills of empathy, active listening,

sensitivity to needs of parties, sense of timing, verbal and non-verbal communication skills, capacity to maintain neutrality while remaining in contact, and ability to understand the stages of negotiation and conflict resolution." Along with this, Rachel Bagh suggests that the mediator should be " trustworthy and confidential." Besides, the counsellor need to sense the presence of Holy Spirit and can probably utilise religious recourses (like Prayer, Scripture and etc.) and Religious symbols (Theological symbols like Grace, forgiveness, Atonement and so on) in the counselling process. Thus, the preparation of the counsellor is necessary before the counselling process starts in caste conflict resolution.

Preparation of the Counselee

Preparing for Acceptance

Acceptence is the basic aspect in conflict resolution. Conflict arise when one person thinks that he is superior. Both Fundamentalism and caste sytem have the attitude of Superiority. Whereby others those who don't follow the norms of the fundamentalists are considered as the enemies of fundamentalism. This attitude creates conflict. The inferior attitude of oneself leads to inferiority complex, aggression, fear, anxiety and so on. This postulates the intrapersonal conflict. Whereby, superior attitude leads to interpersonal or inter-group conflict too. The counsellor needs to encourage the client to consider other human as human and should help him/her to respect each other. As Carl Roger's proposes, 'Unconditional Positive Regard' need to be important in resolving the problem. The best example of this acceptance would be Jesus. As Murry states, " Christians are the members of the new humanity in Christ whose thoughts and actions are directed by the

principles of Christ." Thus, the counsellor helps the client to prepare himself to accept each other.

Encouraging for 'love your Neighbour'

Another important aspect in conflict resolution is encouraging the client to love other even enemies. Rational emotive Therapy of Albert Ellis highlights irrational beliefs and perception leads to distortion of personality. Both caste system and Fundamentalism imposes hatred rather love with the irrational religious beliefs. For example, Ambrose Pinto in his article 'Caste conflict in Karnataka,' indirectly quotes the major crisis of the conflict in Idapanur is hatred between different castes. However, God expects us to Love others (John 15: 12). Murry states that " the plain truth about God and the Christians is that God wants the Christians in every situation to love the other humans (even enemies), to forgive the others more than once, to seek also the interests of the others, to do the others as he/she would like to do to him/her."

Making a Sense of Reconciliation

The conservative concept is that never reconcile with anybody. Fundamentalism is on that line the same way, though many improvements in the society arise, still we hear about caste discrimination and caste biased atrocities. This shows the strength of non-reconciliation. Whereas, conflict resolution hangs on acceptance, Love one another and forgivenss. The spirit of forgiveness leads towards reconciliation. Murry, states that " The Christ-event in history is symbolized by the shape of the cross Christ died on - the vertical line symbolizing God-human reconciliation accomplished, and the horizontal beam symbolizing the imperative of human-human reconciliation

if humans should avail the efficacy of Christ's redemption. The cross of Christ reminds us of God's love, humility, forgiveness, and vicarious death for those who broke His heart should e the reference point for the Christians in dealing with any kind of conflict; personal, communal or global. Ps. 85: 10, 2 Cor. 13: 11, Rom. 5: 1, Eph. 2: 14)." Eric Berne's Transactional Analysis explains the three ego states (Parent ego, adult ego, and child ego). According to Murry, " The over dependence on either one ego states will result in conflict. So, all these three to some proportions are required in a person." The counselee has to be reminded of forgiving each other and accept each other without comments.

Creating the sense of 'Wholeness'

Conflict damages the personality. As Fritz Perls views, " many personalities as lacking wholeness, as being fragmented and people are often aware of only parts of themselves rather than of the whole self." further he states that the Gestalt therapists assist to discover clients self and mobilize it for greater effectiveness. Fundamentalism and Caste System segregate the human socity and also looks other with negative cannotation. Whereas the prime concern of Christian understanding is to bring back the fragmentd humanity to experience wholeness growth. Liberation is one of the aspect in redeeming wholeness, says Clinebell. However, fundamentalism and Casteism opposes the liberation aspect. But in resolving the conflict, the counsellor need to bring the counslee into the sense of liberation to attain 'Wholeness.'

Building the community of Shalom

Finally, the pastoral response to Caste conflict as conflict resolution is building the community of peace and harmony. The major hindrance of Fundamentalism and Casteism is their approach with humanity and society. These both compartmentalise the society and break the human relationship. The stratified system of the society on the basis of Law code of Manu, had not only divided the Indian Society but also created enmity. Whwn God creted, he wanted that the creation to live harmoniously. Whereas the present situation goes upside down. However, the conflict resolution needs to build the community not to destroy.

Conclusion

Fundamentalism is of following strictly the teachings and tradition of a religion. Whereby, the existence of Caste system demonstrates that the root of the Casteism comes from the Indian religious traditions and Hindu philosophy. No one can deny, both these issues are interrelated by their idealogy too after it has been discussed broadly in this paper. Nevertheless, these evil practices not only helped the seeds of conflict to grow but also claimed many lives in order to satisfy its thirst. Hence, the role of a Christian minister or Counsellor is crucial at this juncture. If a Chritian misiter give totally for the sake of building the shalom community, hope the kingdom of God will be rooted on this earth. For concluding this paper, it will probably be worth quoting Dyanchnad Carr's statements. " in the cse of local and micro level conflicts the hurt memories do play an important role both in keeping alive the dormant of volcano of resentment and anger as well as in fanning

them into fires of conflagration. We need to do all we can diffuse the

situation and bring about a reconciled peace."