Conclusion

Chapter-10
Chapter X

CONCLUSION

This study is aimed at finding out the functions and dysfunctions of religion in contemporary society and to suggest measures to reduce the dysfunctions of this pious and age-old social institution.

MAJOR OBJECTIVES:

The major objectives of the study are:

1. to analyse the attitude of contemporary society towards religion.

2. to assess the influence of the attitude towards religion on the perception of the community on the functions and dysfunctions of religion.

3. to assess the social functions and dysfunctions of religion in contemporary society.

4. to explain the reasons for the increasing popularity of cultic religions in terms of their functions and dysfunctions.

5. to suggest measures for arresting the problems created by religions in contemporary society.

Under the above major objective the following hypotheses were formulated for testing. Subsidiary hypotheses tested are given at the appropriate contexts.
HYPOTHESES:

Based on the objectives, this study formulated the following hypotheses for testing:

1. Religion as a social institution has both functions and dysfunctions in contemporary Kerala society and its functions outweigh the dysfunctions.

2. The positive functions of religion create favourable attitude of the people towards religion.

3. Pious motives of religion promote mental hygiene of its followers and thus a healthy social psyche is created.

4. Material Motives drive the contemporary society towards religion and they create inter-religious hostilities.

5. Progressive strengthening of any one religious group in the public sphere necessitates other groups also to strengthen themselves which ultimately creates religious hostilities.

6. Religion prevents the widening of the gap between the poor and the rich.

7. Religious leadership can create insular or cosmopolitan outlook within their religious group and hence the hostility and harmony can be created between them by the leadership.

8. The overloading of metaphysics in conventional religion gives popularity to cultic religion, which is more people friendly.

9. Cultic religions’ rational approaches to modern life make them more attractive to the society.

10. The social background of the people influences their perceptions on the functions and dysfunctions of religion.

Brief Methodology:
The major source of primary data was interview of 450 heads of household or the eldest adult member who can supply the data, using a semi-structured interview schedule. The schedule enquired into the relevant matters to facilitate the testing of the hypotheses formulated in the study. For the selection of the sample, the state was considered as three zones, the North, the Middle and the South. The Zones are represented respectively by the Districts of Kozhikode, Ernakulam and Thiruvananthapuram. One rural and one urban area were selected from each of these districts. Equal representation was given for rural and urban population in the sample by adopting suitable stratification technique. Secondary data were collected from published materials and knowledgeable persons.

A compendium of the results and inference derived out of them are given below. Association between independent and dependent variables has been highlighted wherever it exists.

10.1: Attitude Towards Religion:

The study reveals that 48.22% and 17.33% have respectively favourable and highly favourable attitude towards religion. It means a majority of the respondents (65.55%) has a penchant towards religion. It is not an astonishing fact since being religious is an innate quality of human being. The analysis shows that religion is more favourably looked upon by the lowest and highest age groups. We see that overwhelming majority of both the Muslims and Christians have favourable attitude towards religion (82.67% and 70.66% respectively Table No.5.1.2). The results indicate that the Semitic religions with its steel frame have the capacity to attract the members to them and keep them adhering to them. Another significant result is that among the different educational groups, comparatively school educated respondents has more (25%) favourable
fascination for religion. It is also found that the higher income brackets have lesser fascination towards religion. Similarly, the lukewarm attitude towards religion increases with increase in income. The revelation evinces that the material prosperity and affinity towards religion do not go together.

Also it is found in the study that larger family is having greater favour to religion i.e. 61.29% of them show favourable attitude and 16.13% high favour towards religion. A larger portion of the small families have lukewarm attitude (34.45%). It may be due to the fact that religion being a strong agent of social control, the larger families seeks the support to a greater extent from it.

10.2: Religious Beliefs:

Belief is the conviction of things not seen and assurance of things hoped for. It is found in the study that 56.22% uphold the opinion that God is the unseen force which controls the world and people look upon God as a super natural all powerful force. Also amongst the Semitic religions Islam is more firm in their religious conviction and Christians stand next to Muslims. Hindus stand at the bottom of the ladder. It is conspicuous from the derived figures of Table No.5.2.2 that equal portions of the Hindus and Christians (37.33%) each admit that God can not be explained. 32.67% of Muslims also subscribe to the view. It can be seen that College educated to a lesser extent (54.44%) are subscribing to the view that “God is an unseen force” compared to school educated (59%). It shows that the College educated are more savvy and discerning, compared to the school educated.

The analysis (Table 5.3.1) reveals that 58.22% of the respondents believe that ‘God’ is ‘a living one’, (human like entity without physical existence). The analysis
highlights that a majority of people view God as a power which has human characteristics without physical existence. Analysis on the relationship between age and perception on the nature of God reveals that the older people have more faith in the ‘Living Nature of God’. The abstract nature of God is more emphasised by the Hindus (43.33%). It can be attributed to the fact that according to the concept of Hindus God is very abstract in nature.

From the study it is revealed that the portion of those who consider God as a living God decreases with increase in income. The study indicates that the perception differs according to family size. The larger the family, the deeper the faith in God, that “God is a living entity”. A reverse trend is seen in the faith of God as an abstract entity; larger families are lesser in the group (12.90%).

The analysis reveals that the lion’s share of the respondents subscribes to the view that all religions are essentially the same (88.67%). The analysis in undisputed terms substantiates that Kerala community shows respect to the concept of secularism by showing equal respect to all religions, native and immigrant. The study reveals that the Muslims are more secular in their perception, followed by Hindus and lastly in tandem comes Christians.

On the whole, the analysis reveals that religious faith is increasing. When things go beyond the control of human beings, they instinctively look unto the unseen power and surrender themselves unto the God’s Providence to balance their life. It is very evident that regardless of religious difference, people feel that religious faith is increasing in society.
It is the flooding of worshipers and pilgrims that create the impression that religious faith is increasing. The Semitic religions insist on the getting-together of the believers for worshipping God. But for the Hindus such coming-together is not necessary for expressing their faith. So they consider the increase in the offerings as a measure of increase in the faith instead of increase in worshippers.

10.3: Religious Practices:

Practice is a customary way of doings things. It is revealed in the study that 93.56% of the respondents are in the habit of visiting religious places on one pretext or the other. Some persons go there simply because of inquisitiveness and to see what is going on there and yet some others to make a livelihood by some kind of activities even nefarious, heinous and sleazy. In this matter the Muslims are not that much particular to visit religious places as the other two groups are.

The analysis revealed that 73.33% of the respondents are in the habit of giving offerings and the rest are not (26.76%). So, it is to be concluded that majority of the people are complying with the spiritual and moral outlook that the wealth one possesses is the gift of God and a portion of the possessed should be returned to the supplier (God) for the benefit of the fellow and lower category beings (Table No. 5.8.1). While overwhelming majority of the Hindus (88%) and Christians (92.67%) uphold the tradition of making offerings of different kinds in religious places only a minority of Muslims (39.33%) follow the practice. The Muslims may be giving service in the places of worship in various forms instead of giving offerings. Or they may be giving money for the welfare of the deserving among their brethren.
It was seen that offering prayers to God is palatable for an overwhelming majority of the population. That is, the people in general subscribe to the belief that humans are powerless before the nature and all the creations are at the mercy of a power, God. The analysis reveals that the females are more interested to pray to God for his/her blessings. In our culture, if we look back to history, the female members are more at the helm of spiritual activities. The socialisation process of female members explains the result of the analysis. Religion wise analysis of the data gives support to the presumption that Muslims are more committed to daily praying. Among the educational categories, the school educated shows more interest in conducting daily prayer than the Higher Secondary and College educated do. Also it is revealed that the lesser the income the more the inclination for conducting daily prayer. This indicates the difficulty to prosper both in materialism and spirituality.

10.4: Functions of Religion:

The result of the study evinces that religion is a strong cementing factor of society. Emile Durkheim while analysing the functions of religion in society has pointed out that it is a strong factor for bringing the shattered society together. So, the result of this analysis is corroboration to the philosophy of the eminent French philosopher. It is seen that the men are more emphasising this power of religion than the females do. There is a general trend of seeing religion as a unifying force to a greater extent among the older people. Also the Muslims feel religion as more a unifying agent and the feeling is least among the Hindus. It is also found that the lower the educational attainment, the stronger the feeling that religion is a unifying force in society. The agreement to the perception that religion is unifying agency of people is very high in the lowest income group (Rs. Below 3000/- per month). The faith in the unifying power of religion is more among the larger families. Attitude towards religion and the opinion on the unifying
power of religion are associated. It is seen that 83.33% of those who have strong positive attitude towards religion are strong supporters of the unifying power of religion.

The analysis revealed that 56.89% of the respondents have very high appreciation for the charity shown by religion in contemporary society. Another 39.89% moderately appreciate this profile of religion. Thus, we can come to the inference that religion is showing its humane quality in contemporary social situations. Though all the three groups have all praise for charity according to their ideologies in real life situation charity is very much practiced by Muslim community. 93.59% of those who have strong positive attitude towards religion are strong supporters of the unifying power of religion.

The religious life itself is a purificatory process of physical, mental and spiritual activities of human beings. When the elicited data was analysed it was seen that 74.22% of the respondents support the view that religion helps to create cleanliness in human life. From this analysis it is revealed that religion has the capacity to promote cleanliness in human life. The study reveals that relatively, the young and old age groups have stronger opinion that religion has the capacity to bring about cleanliness in human life. 75% of the young age group (below 30 years) and 78.57% of the old age group (60 - 75 years) support the view that religion is capable of creating cleanliness in the physical, social and psychic lives of human beings. The Muslims are strong supporters of the view that religion is a cleanliness maintaining agent. 60% of them strongly believe that this is a fact and 27.33% have moderate agreement with the perspective.

Analysis of data reveals that overwhelming majority of the people have faith in the humane outlook of religion. Analysis on the basis of gender indicates that almost equal proportion of the females (84.84%) and the males (84.77%) subscribe to the
view that religion promotes human love. However, the depth of the feeling is very high among the males. 61.75% of the males and 45.45% of the females do strongly believe that religion has this capacity. Females are more oriented to practice religion for their spiritual realisation than to look at the sociological implication of religious life. Majority of the two religious groups, Muslims and Christians (68.67% and 52.67% respectively) showed deep faith in this function of religions. Among the lowest income group (below Rs.3000/-) the opinion is the strongest. 63.21% very strongly agree to the view that religion is capable of bringing about brotherhood. 30.19% even though do not express such deep faith are of the opinion that religion has such a profile. In all religious groups the lower stratum is getting financial and other material benefits either from their respective groups or from other groups even. So such helps prompt them to see the humane quality of religion.

It is seen that 77.56%, (of which 43.56% of the respondents of this study have strong agreement with this view and another 34% have somewhat concurrence) considered religion as an agency which brings forth contentment with life. So from this study we shall conclude that religion helps to lead a contented life. One important feature that is to be noted is that majority (58.67%) of the Muslims very strongly agree to the vision that religion can gives contentment with life. Regarding the relationship between attitude towards religion and contentment with life, it is revealed that 93.59% of the respondents who have highly favourable attitude are strong believers that religion inculcates contentment with life in people. That is, the stronger the attitude the stronger the faith in the function.

Analysis supports the assumption that religion is an effective agency for social control. Muslims consider religion as a strong agency of social control. From
Table No. 6.6.2 it can be seen that as the family size increases, the opinion that religion is an agent of social control also increase. It can be seen that 84.62% of those who have strong positive attitude towards religion are strong supporters of the social control function of religion.

In to 94.44% of the respondents are of the view that religion plays a role in creating and maintaining social stability. The older generation’s affectivity to religion is revealed. They believe that not only the spiritual need of the individual but also the social stability of the group is taken care of by religions. An overwhelming 85.33% of the Muslims are of the opinion that Religion is an agent of creating social stability and 69.33% of the Christians also subscribe to the opinion. Coming to the relationship between education and the perception, it is seen that the lesser educated people are stronger in their support to religion as an agency for fostering social stability. Occupation wise analysis of the data indicates that the manual labourers are very strong in their support to religion on this account. The larger families are stronger in their opinion that religion is an efficient agency for inculcating stability in society. In the case of larger families, they have to fall back on agencies like religion for socialising their members. Ultimately, they see religion as a reliable agency for social stability. It is further revealed that 88.46% of the respondents who have highly favourable attitude are strong supporters of this function of religion.

The analysis reveals that 56.67% of the respondents have great appreciation for the role played by religion in spreading education. As everybody acknowledges, in the spread of modern education the Christian community has been taking pioneering efforts. Of late, the Muslims also came to the scene. Investment and enthusiasm shown by Hindu community is comparatively less. An enquiry into the
The association of the outlook with the educational status reveals that the respondents with lower educational status are more attracted by the efforts taken by religion in the spread of education. In analysis (Table No. 6.8.4), it is revealed that 72.09% of the manual labourers (very high majority) and 54.92% of the white collar employees (majority) have great appreciation for the work done by religion in the spread of education. It is seen that the lesser the income, the greater the strength of appreciation for the efforts taken. 74.53% of the lowest income category (Rs. <3000/-) have very great appreciation for the work done by religion. It may be because the lower income groups are enjoying the free service extended by agencies including religious organisations. It can be seen that 74.36% of those who have strong positive attitude towards religion are strong supporters of the role of religion in the spread of education.

The people of the study area do not have the impression that religion is causal for the deterioration of the status of women in society. It is seen in the study that while 91.33% each of the Christians and Muslims state that religion does not affect the status of women adversely only 80.66% of the Hindus subscribe to the view.

Majority of all the attitude categories do not believe that religion has any adverse impact on the status of women. It can be seen that 94.87% of those who have strong positive attitude towards religion are strong supporters of the view that religion does not affect adversely the status of women.

10.5: Dysfunction of Religion:

Like any other field in religion too temporality surged into relegating its very existence in holiness and purity. In contemporary society religion has become the
centre stage for many worldly activities and hence the pious profile of it is considerably lost. These negative functions have been analysed in this study.

Analysis reveals that an overwhelming majority believe that the ethics of religion are lost due to this interaction (82.44%) between religion and politics. The younger the people they are more anxious over the erosion of religious ethics due to the influence of politics. As revealed in Table No.7.1.3, a higher proportion of unmarried respondents (91.36%) subscribe to the view that political affiliation of religion will be a threat to ethical principles. It is seen in Analysis No. 7.1.4 (on attitude towards religion and perception on the relationship between religion and politics) that in general those who have more affinity to religion are more against the religion – politics nexus and vice versa.

Another index of adverse impact of religion is the after effect of accumulation of material wealth by religious groups. It is revealed in the study that 78% of the respondents highlighted the adverse impact of the trend and they pointed out that disproportionate accumulation of material wealth by this kind of groups or organisations nullify their spiritual and humanistic orientations and create rivalry and unhealthy competitions among the groups. On a consolidation of the views, it is to be concluded that the true function of religion is vitiated by religion when it goes out of its expected domain (Table 7.2.1). It is revealed that 80.70% of the male members and 73.33% of the female members are of the view that it is adverse to the spirit of religion to accumulate wealth beyond what is absolutely necessary. The analysis indicates that group rivalry as an off-shoot is more emphasised by the Hindus (89.33%). Too much greed for material wealth of religions is for the aggravation of social pathology. The analysis (Table No. 7.2.3) indicates that the school and College educated have similar view that
unnecessary accumulation of material wealth by religious groups will enhance animosity between religions. The analysis indicates that all the occupational categories smell the danger of escalating religious rivalry by the accumulation of material wealth by religious groups. The apprehension is more strong among the manual labourers. It is seen that the larger families are more perceiving the grave situation of social disruption that is created by the acquisition of wealth disproportionately by the religious groups.

The results reveal that the people perceive the economic activities of religion as pastures of corruption and social injustice. 43.03% of the females and 36.14% of the males opine that the poor will not be benefited by the money transactions of any religious group. The Hindus very strongly (66.67%) indicate that money transaction by religion under the pretext charity can enhance social injustice. It is interesting to note that the highest section of the Christians (47.33%) uphold the view that money transaction will not benefit the poor, even when Christian ethics have no hesitation to think about capital accumulation. Coming to the responses of the occupational groups 50% of the professionals, the highest faction of them indicates that the money transaction in no way is helpful to improve the conditions of the poor people. The study indicates that smaller families are feeling more about the injustice brought about by the money dealings of religions.

Majority of the females (52.12%) feel that religions only give secondary importance to females. Interestingly, those who subscribe to the view among males also have a slight edge over those who believe in the other way round. Majority of the Hindu and Christian (57.33% and 52% respectively) believe that religion is pampering the males and pin-pricking the females in this regard. But in the case of the Muslims majority feel that the females are considered on par with the males. According to marital status, almost
equal proportion of the two groups (50.41% and 49.38% respectively of married and unmarried persons) stated that females are given only secondary importance by religions.

Religious fundamentalism is, in fact, a dialectics of religious life. It is found that 95.11% of the respondents are of the view that religion has become a tension creating agency in the social fabric. Both gender groups overwhelmingly adhere to the view that religious fundamentalism, competition and conflicts arising out of it are present in our society. It is found that 89.70% of the females and 98.25% of the males subscribe to the view. The School (SSLC) educated group feel the group rivalry and resultant conflict among religious groups to the greatest extent. It is found that 96.21% of the married respondents stated that religion based competition and conflict are increasing.

10.6: Cultic Religion:

Cult is a particular system of religious worship, especially with reference to its rites and ceremonies. It can be further interpreted as a group bound together by veneration of the same thing, person, ideal etc.

The study reveals that the human love and spiritual experience derived out of the collective activities are the two major reasons for people polarising around these movements. Conventional religions are oriented towards spirituality and the inclinations make them disenchancing to the modern people. The manual workers and the professionals come closer in their outlook. They stress the humanism achieved through cultic religion (55% of the former group and 57.58% of the latter) and that is the cause for mushrooming of the cultic religion.
The study reveals that the common view of the people that cultic religion will live long has a slight edge over the opposite view. Religion based analysis shows that majority of the Hindus and Muslim respondents (52% and 55.33% respectively) opine that cultic religion has long life. It is seen that the greater the income the lesser the opinion that the cultic religion has longer life. In the case of those who believe that the cultic religion is a temporary phenomenon, the strength increases as we come through the lower income to higher income statuses. It is revealed in the study that urbanites favour the cultic religion more. An explanation for this result is very easy. New movements are more affecting the urbanites. We know that the nuclei of cultic religions are urban centres.

The analysis reveals that an overwhelming majority (72.44%) of the respondents see nothing disadvantages to the social values from cultic religion Hindu Religion is more tolerant to the cultic religion than the Semitic Religions are. And the manual labourers are more unaccommodative to cultic religion in comparison with White Collar employees and the Professionals. While only around 25% of the other attitudinal groups express that cultic religion is a menace to the existing social values majority (52.56%) of the group which upholds “highly favourable” attitude towards religion highlight that cultic religion is a menace to the value system. This result reveal that the commitment to the conventional religion of the group makes them blind and stand against any other form of religious ideologies and practices. All other groups have almost uniform opinion that the new version of religion need not be considered as harmful to the society.

Analysis of data pertaining to the theme shows that majority of the respondents (59.33%) believe that foreign assistance by way of money and intellectual
power are giving impetus for the rapid growth of cultic religion. This is a very disturbing matter that there is the overt and covert support of foreign forces for the cultic movements. The Hindus come at the lower rung among those who believe that foreign support helps increase cultic religion. At the apex we see the Muslims and in between come the Christians. Analysis in Table No. 8.4.3 indicates the “indifferent” group is very strong in their belief that foreign funds are strong supporter of spread of the religious movement. Those who have “highly favourable” attitude come next to the indifferent group in this matter.

Analysis of Table No. 8.5.1 shows that the people have no much appreciation for cultic religion in this regard. The lion’s share of the respondents (81.56%) feels that the movements have adverse impact on the stability of society. On the basis of this analysis cultic religion is to be looked upon as destabilising agent. These results have sustenance in the sense that many of these movements are attracting allegations that they are centres of clandestine economic activities. Age wise analysis indicates that all the age categories are highlighting the adverse impact of Cultic Religion on the stability of the wider society. Analysis on the relationship between Religious Affiliation and the perception reveals that the Muslims feel the adverse impact of Cultic Religion on the social stability to the greatest extent and Christians the least. Table No. 8.5.3 contains analysis of the empirical data based on Marital Status. As revealed in the analysis the unmarried respondents are more sceptic about the usefulness of cultic religion to the total society in terms of stability inculcation.

As revealed in the analysis (Table No. 8.6.1) 83.11% of the respondents do not consider leaders of cultic religions as envoys of brotherhood; rather they are ordinary humans having capacity to convert others into their side through overt talks and
deeds. Those who believe that Leaders of Cultic Religions are not precursors of brotherhood are comparatively high among the Muslim community (93.33%).

As per the study there is no philanthropy in the followers of cultic religion. In terms of the responses 68.67% believe that the followers have no philanthropic orientation. All the three religious groups (Hindus, Muslims and Christians) solidly stand behind the outlook that the followers are not philanthropists. Among the different groups the Muslims are stronger in their view, and then come the Hindus and finally the Christians.

Majority of respondents (77.56%) expressed that cultic religion is a social polarisation around human god. So it is to be taken for granted that Cultic Religion is a creation of humans and nothing else. It is revealed in the study that the older age group is more critical about the divine nature of cultic religion. They are closer to conventional religion than the younger groups are. No religious group gives its heavy weight to the divine nature of cultic religion. Majority of all groups say that it is social polarisation around human gods. The perceptions of Muslims are more conventional that they very strongly reveal that cultic religion is merely banding of persons around human gods. Overcrowding majority of all the attitudinal groups consider that cultic religion is a social polarisation around humans who create the impression that they are the incarnation of God (human gods).

Very high majority (70.44%) of the respondents’ state that the religious forms are not oriented towards spreading true religious consciousness. It is seen that the thumping majority of all religious groups feel that cultic religions are not capable of or caring to inculcating true religious sentiment in the people. While 76.67% of the
Hindus and 74% of the Muslims find fault with the movement, only 60.67% of the Christians rub shoulders with other religious groups on this aspect. All attitudinal categories strongly believe that cultic religion is incapable of inculcating religious consciousness in the younger generation who are, by and large, the followers of such movements.

It is revealed in the analysis that 52% of the Muslim, 44.67% of the Hindus and 35.33% of the Christians disfavour the spread of cultic religion. These statistics indicate that the displeasure towards the flourishing of cultic religion is the highest for Muslims and least for Christians. The Hindus come in between the other two groups. The Occupation based analysis reveals that the Professionals are least disfavouring the flourishing and the spread of cultic religion. The highest opposition comes from the White Collar employees. The Manual Labourers take a via-media position in the matter. The Family Size based study reveals that where the family comprises more than 6 members, they invariably support the flourishing of the cultic religion. It evinces an inherent fact that where the responsibility and liabilities are more, there the frantic search for some solace in temporal life enhances and that can be counted as the cause for the unstinted support extended from this group. Among the attitudinal groups, majority of the “indifferent” and “highly favourable” groups do not favour the flourishing of cultic religion.

10.7: Reforming Religion:

The data analysed indicates that imparting religious education is the most appropriate measure which may be adopted for preventing communal problems (40.44%). While 33.94% of the females state that proper religious education can arrest communal tension, the corresponding figure in the case of the males is 44.21%. Analysis
based on age reveals that the largest portion of all the age groups except “below 30 years” subscribe to the view that religious education is a solution to prevent competition among religious groups. 44.67% (largest segment) of the Hindus believe that religious education is capable of arresting religious competition. Almost equal portion of the Muslims and Christians (38% and 38.67% respectively) come under this category. It is found that the views of different religious groups are different on the issue. It is seen that those who are with “highly favourable” attitude towards religion consider imparting religious knowledge as the most effective method for attaining the aim (47.44%).

Analysis of the responses shows that (Table No. 9.2.1) the highest segment (35.56%) opined that the leaders should consider all sections of humans are the children of the same God, whatever be the God named as. On a consolidation of the opinion it can be concluded that a religious leader should be a person who is capable of integrating the different sections of the society. Enquiries based on religious affiliation revealed that major sections of all religious groups subscribe to the view that religious leaders should consider all categories of people as children of the same God.

The analysis reveals that 93.11% of the respondents feel that if religion is practiced within the personal domain it’s dysfunctional aspects can be avoided. When the outlook is analysed against age status it is seen that the 45 – 65 years age group is distinguishing itself from other age groups. 87.60% of the group feel that religion is to be confined to the personal domain. The figures in respect of the other age groups vary between 94.90% and 97.37%. It is revealed that Hindus and Muslims are more of the outlook that religion is to be restricted to the personal domain, so that rivalry may be avoided. 99.33% of the Muslims and 92.67% of the Hindus subscribe to the view. In the case of the Christians it is comparatively low – only 87.33%. It is found that the
higher the income, the lesser the aspiration for practicing religion, in the private domain. Among both the married and unmarried groups negligibly small portions of the respondents aspire for practicing religion in the public domain. It is revealed that the urbanites are more aspiring for keeping religion away from the public domain. Regarding the attitudinal groups it is revealed that the more the favourable attitude towards religion, the greater the feeling that religious life is to be confined to the personal domain.

It is revealed that 95.56% of the respondents pointed out that the principle of secularism (no interference of politics in religion/ equal treatment to all religions by the government) should be strictly adhered to by the polity to maintain religious harmony and social peace. Gender wise analysis of the data reveals that the males are more supportive to the philosophy that government should be impartial in its dealings with various religions. The analysis of the data indicates 100% of the Muslims, 94% of the Hindus and 92.67% of the Christians believe that the Government should keep equal distance from all religions to avoid religious rivalries. The study reveals that the married group is more in favour of keeping the polity away from religious matters.

**Discussion of the Results**

When we articulate and consolidate the findings of the analyses we could conclude that the postulates of the thesis are valid. The core chapters six and seven deal with the analyses on functions and dysfunctions of the institution. Here elaborate analyses have been done by taking indices of the two profiles of religion. In terms of the
number of indices and the nature of perceptions of the respondents the appreciation for the good deeds of religion is far greater than the opposite dimension. This validates the first postulate of the study.

In chapter five analyses on the attitude of people towards religion have been carried out. It is revealed that (majority) 65.55% of the respondents have favourable or highly favourable attitude towards religion. When the depth of appreciation of the people for the functions revealed in chapter six is read with the attitude towards religion the sustenance of the hypothesis that the functions of religion create favourable attitude towards religion is supported.

In our analyses in chapter six, (6.1.1, 6.41 and 6.5.1) it is revealed that religion is capable of creating contentment with life, human love and esprit-de-corps in society. These findings are valid support to the preposition that pious motives of religion promote mental hygiene of its followers and thus a healthy social psyche is created.

The study indicates that power (religion – politics nexus) and wealth accumulation occupy the central stage of every religion (analyses 7.1.1 and 7.2.1). When the same objective becomes the target of many religions, rivalry between them is inevitable. These perceptions validate the fourth postulate of the study that material motives drive the contemporary society towards religion and they create inter-religious hostilities.

Capturing political power and accumulation of wealth are the ladders for climbing up in the social space and facilitating ones voice reverberating in the public sphere. It is seen from the above analyses that all religious groups try to capture political
power and accumulate material resources. The findings shedding light to the existence of the relationship formulated in the fifth hypotheses that progressive strengthening of any one religious group in the public sphere necessitates other groups also to strengthen themselves which ultimately creates religious hostilities.

Social institutions in general are considered as having a built-in capacity to widen the gap between the rich and the poor. But the study results indicate that religion is to be brought under an exemption clause. In analysis 6.2.1, 56.89% have high appreciation for the charity shown by religion. The charity may not be flowing directly to the individual beneficiary but to organisations taking care of the welfare of the poor. So the sixth hypothesis of the study that religion prevents the widening of the gap between the poor and the rich should be considered as substantiated by facts.

Equanimity of religious leaders to members of different religious groups has been inter alia, stressed by this study (Analysis 9.2). If the leaders deviate from this path it will instigate followers to indulge in communalising religious groups. So the religious leaders’ behaviour very much decides the harmony – disharmony relationship between religious groups. Hence the study postulates the seventh hypothesis that religious leadership can create insular or cosmopolitan outlook within their religious group and hence the hostility or harmony can be created between them by the leadership.

Conventional religions are propagating spirituality, metaphysics, philosophy of life after death, etc. But cultic religions according to this study help realise spirituality coupled with human love and physical comfort. The modern man/woman is becoming an atomised entity who has a craving for what is supplied by the cultic religion. Hence it is to be concluded that the disenchanting nature of conventional religion repels
the modern person from it and at the same time this worldly outlook of cultic religion (rational approach) attracts him/her to it. The essence of both eighth and ninth postulates of the study is substantiated.

Secondary hypotheses postulating the influence of the sociological variables (gender, age, religious affiliation, education, occupation, income, marital status, family size, place of residence and attitude towards religion) on the different dependent variables are tested and their validity established. Variables, namely, religious affiliation, education, occupation, income and attitude towards religion are showing greater influence on the dependent variables.

This study has made an attempt to make in roads into a complex, sensitive and elusive subject. Hence shortcomings in substantive and procedural matters are expected. However, the researcher has taken sincere efforts to minimise them.