

# Religion, Philosophy and Lingayat

## Religion

According to the philologist Max Müller, the root of the English word "Religion", the Latin *religio*, was originally used to mean only "reverence for God or the gods, careful pondering of divine things, piety" (which Cicero further derived to mean "diligence"). Max Müller characterized many other cultures around the world, including Egypt, Persia, and India, as having a similar power structure at this point in history. What is called ancient religion today; they would have only called "law" [1].

Many languages have words that can be translated as "Religion", but they may use them in a very different way, and some have no word for religion at all. For example, the Sanskrit word *dharma*, sometimes translated as "Religion", also means law.

**Definition:** The typical dictionary definition of religion refers to a "belief in, or the worship of, a god or gods"<sup>[2]</sup> or the "service and worship of God or the supernatural" [<sup>3</sup>]. "Institution to express belief in a divine power". However, many writers and scholars have noted that this basic 'belief in god' definition fails to capture the diversity of religious thought and experiences (Anubhava, ಅನುಭವ).

"**Religion:** A general term used... to designate all concepts concerning the belief in god(s) and goddess (es) as well as other spiritual beings or transcendental ultimate concerns."  
—*Penguin Dictionary of Religions* (1997).

"**Religion:** Relation of human beings to God or the gods or to whatever they consider sacred or, in some cases, merely supernatural."  
—*Britannica Concise Encyclopedia* (online, 2006)

"**Religion:** Human beings' relation to that which they regard as holy, sacred, spiritual, or divine."  
—*Encyclopædia Britannica* (online, 2006)

"**Religion:** (2) a personal set or institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices; (4) a cause, principle, or system of beliefs held to with ardor and faith."  
—*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (online, 2006)

"The religious response is a **response to experience** and is coloured by the wish to provide a **wider context** for a fragile, short and turbulent life."  
—Philip Rousseau, *The Early Christian Centuries* (2002), p. 4.

"Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the **opiate** of the people."  
—Karl Marx

"Religion is the human attitude towards a **sacred order** that includes within it all being—human or otherwise—i.e., belief in a cosmos, the meaning of which both includes and transcends man."  
—Peter Berger

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<sup>1</sup> Max Müller. Introduction to the science of religion. p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> The Chambers Dictionary. Chambers.

<sup>3</sup> Religion. Merriam-Webster Dictionary.

Edward Burnett Tylor defined religion as simply "the belief in spiritual beings" [4]. He argued, back in 1871 that narrowing the definition to mean the belief in a supreme deity or judgment after death or idolatry and so on, would exclude many peoples from the category of religious, and thus "has the fault of identifying religion rather with particular developments than with the deeper motive which underlies them". He also argued that the belief in spiritual beings exists in all known societies.

The anthropologist Clifford Geertz defined religion as a "system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic"[5].

The sociologist Durkheim, in his seminal book 'The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life', defined religion as a "unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things"[6]. By sacred things he meant things "set apart and forbidden — beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, Temple, Anubhava Mantapa, Masjid, all those who adhere to them". Sacred things are not, however, limited to gods or spirits. On the contrary, a sacred thing can be "a rock, a tree, a spring, a pebble, a piece of wood, a house, in a word, anything can be sacred" [7]. Religious beliefs, myths, dogmas and legends are the representations that express the nature of these sacred things, and the virtues and powers which are attributed to them [8].

In his book *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, the psychologist William James defined religion as "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine"[9]. By the term "divine" James meant "any object that is godlike, whether it be a concrete deity or not" to which the individual feels impelled to respond with solemnity and gravity.

When religion is seen in terms of "sacred", "divine", intensive "valuing", or "ultimate concern", then it is possible to understand why scientific findings and philosophical criticisms do not necessarily disturb its adherents.

## Philosophy

Philosophy is the study of general and fundamental problems, such as those connected with reality, existence, knowledge, values, reason, mind, and language.[10][11] Philosophy is distinguished from other ways of addressing such problems by its critical, generally

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<sup>4</sup> Tylor, E.B. (1871) *Primitive Culture: Researches Into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*. Vol. 1. London: John Murray; (p.383).

<sup>5</sup> Geertz, C. (1993) Religion as a cultural system. In: *The interpretation of cultures: selected essays*, Geertz, Clifford, pp.87-125. Fontana Press.

<sup>6</sup> Durkheim, E. (1915) *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. London: George Allen & Unwin.

<sup>7</sup> (*ibid*, p. 37)

<sup>8</sup> (*ibid*, pp. 40–41)

<sup>9</sup> *Man Nature*. Longmans, Green, and Co. (p. 31)

<sup>10</sup> Jenny Teichmann and Katherine C. Evans, *Philosophy: A Beginner's Guide* (Blackwell Publishing, 1999), p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> A.C. Grayling, *Philosophy 1: A Guide through the Subject* (Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 1.

systematic approach and its reliance on rational argument<sup>[12]</sup>. The word "philosophy" comes from the Greek φιλοσοφία (philosophia), which literally means "love of wisdom". <sup>[13]</sup> <sup>[14]</sup> <sup>[15]</sup> In more casual speech the "philosophy" of a particular person can refer to the beliefs held by that person.

The main areas of study in philosophy today include **metaphysics**, **epistemology**, **logic**, **ethics**, and **aesthetics**.

**Metaphysics:** Metaphysics is the study of the most general features of reality, such as existence, time, the relationship between mind and body, objects and their properties, wholes and their parts, events, processes, and causation. Traditional branches of metaphysics include cosmology, the study of the world in its entirety, and ontology, the study of being.

Within metaphysics itself there are a wide range of differing philosophical theories. Idealism, for example, is the belief that reality is mentally constructed or otherwise immaterial while realism holds that reality, or at least some part of it, exists independently of the mind. Subjective idealism describes objects as no more than collections or "bundles" of sense data in the perceiver.

**Moral philosophy:** "moral philosophy" or Ethics is concerned primarily with the question of the best way to live. The main branches of ethics are meta-ethics, normative ethics, and applied ethics. Meta-ethics concerns the nature of ethical thought, such as the origins of the words good and bad, and origins of other comparative words of various ethical systems, whether there are absolute ethical truths, and how such truths could be known. Normative ethics are more concerned with the questions of how one ought to act, and what the right course of action is. This is where most ethical theories are generated. Lastly, applied ethics go beyond theory and step into real world ethical practice, such as questions of whether or not abortion is correct. Ethics is also associated with the idea of morality, and the two are often interchangeable.

We can see many philosophers who worked and provided many moral practices to follow to live happily, few are Aristotle's ethics demands that people follow the Aristotelian mean, or balance between two vices; and Confucian ethics argues that virtue consists largely in striving for harmony with other people. Karl Marx's Marxism is based on a materialist understanding of societal development, taking at its starting point the necessary economic activities required by human society to provide for its material needs. The form of economic organization, or mode of production, is understood to be the basis from which the majority of other social phenomena — including social relations, political and legal systems, morality and ideology — arise (or at the least by which they are greatly influenced). These social relations form the superstructure, for which the economic system forms the base.

### **Specialized branches of philosophies:**

**Philosophy of language:** Explores the nature, the origins, and the use of language.

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<sup>12</sup> Anthony Quinton, in T. Honderich (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 666

<sup>13</sup> "Philosophia, Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, "A Greek-English Lexicon", at Perseus". Perseus.tufts.edu. Retrieved 2010-08-22.

<sup>14</sup> "Online Etymology Dictionary". Etymonline.com. Retrieved 2010-08-22.

<sup>15</sup> Webster's New World Dictionary (Second College Ed.).

**Philosophy of law:** (often called jurisprudence) explores the varying theories explaining the nature and the interpretations of the law in society.

**Philosophy of mind:** explores the nature of the mind, and its relationship to the body, and is typified by disputes between dualism and materialism. In recent years there has been increasing similarity between this branch of philosophy and cognitive science.

**Philosophy of religion:** is a branch of philosophy concerned with questions regarding religion, including the nature and existence of God, the examination of religious experience, analysis of religious vocabulary and texts, and the relationship of religion and science.

**Philosophy of science:** is concerned with the assumptions, foundations, methods, and implications of science. It is also concerned with the use and merit of science and sometimes overlaps metaphysics and epistemology by exploring whether scientific results are actually a study of truth.

Many academic disciplines have also generated philosophical inquiry. These include history, logic, and mathematics.

## Similarities and differences of Philosophy and Religion

From the above Religion and Philosophy meanings/definitions, Clearly there are enough similarities that religions can be philosophical (but need not be) and philosophies can be religious (but again need not be). Does this mean that we simply have two different words for the same fundamental concept? No; there are some real differences between religion and philosophy which warrant considering them to be two different types of systems even though they overlap in places. Both religion and philosophy have their own similarities and differences.

Similarities between religion and philosophy are that they both deal with human life, human mind, its existence in the universe, the meaning of life, the ultimate truth, and so on. Both tend to make existence in this universe a lot less complicated by addressing issues such as knowledge, truth, life, and existentialism. Thus, one can always argue that both religion and philosophy are one and the same and we just call them by different names. But it is not entirely true.

The spirit of philosophy is one of free inquiry. It **suspects** all authority. Its function is to trace the uncritical assumptions of human thought to their hiding places, and in this pursuit it may finally end in denial or a frank admission of the incapacity of pure reason to reach the Ultimate Reality.

But the aspiration of religion soars higher than that of philosophy. Philosophy is an intellectual view of things; and, as such, does not care to go beyond a concept which can reduce all the rich variety of experience to a system. It sees Reality from a distance as it were. Religion seeks a closer contact with Reality. The one is theory; the other is living **experience**, association and intimacy.

Religion is a set of principles, morals, ethics, and rules set up to lead one's life. Philosophy is a discipline which deals with life, metaphysics, knowledge, and the ultimate truth.

We can see in almost all the religions in the world have a set of **rituals** which are to be followed by the followers of the respective religions. And there are ceremonies in religion for important life events (birth, giving a name to new born, grown-up to adulthood, marriage, death).

Also we have "Festivals" for important times of the year; start of the year, birth/demise celebration of religious persons (Dharma guru, ಧರ್ಮ ಗುರು/ಧರ್ಮ ಸ್ಥಾಪಕ), special days/season (Good Friday, Shraavana Maasa ಶ್ರಾವಣ ಮಾಸ, *Sankranti* ಸಂಕ್ರಾಂತಿ, Ramzaan etc...)

In philosophy we do not see any ritualistic actions. Students do not have to ritually undergo any **consecration** before studying philosophy; they do not celebrate any "Festivals" in a year.

Religions may have organized behaviors, clergy (priesthood, Guru, Swamy), a definition of what constitutes adherence or membership, holy places, and scriptures. In philosophy we can see the believer/followers of a particular philosophy (theory) but we cannot see clergy or holy places/scriptures.

Another major difference between religion and philosophy is the concept of belief. While almost all the philosophies do not accept the concept of belief, religion tends to bring in the belief angle quite a few times. In philosophy, something is considered true only if it is completely proven true on a long term basis by means of various forms of reasoning. If it is not, then it will not be considered the ultimate truth. However, in case of religion, a lot of things are supernatural, superstitious, and incredulous in nature that only the concept of belief can make people stand by those things. This is the reason why a lot of philosophers were against organized religions. However, there were a few exceptions where philosophers were religious in nature and stated that religious practices actually have hidden meanings and can help people understand the ultimate truth in life.

In Religions we have a collection of belief systems, cultural systems, and world views that relate humanity to spirituality and, sometimes, to moral values. Many religions have narratives, **symbols, traditions** and sacred histories that are intended to give meaning to life or to explain the origin of life or the Universe. They tend to derive morality, ethics, religious laws or a preferred lifestyle from their ideas about the cosmos and human nature.

**In Brief:** *Religion is a belief in a supreme power and worship of it as the creator and controller of the universe without reasoning whereas philosophy is a pursuit of wisdom by intellectual search and logical reasoning. Philosophy of religion questions the very existence of the supreme power. Religions discipline the people through a set of code of conduct, principles and ethics whereas philosophy relies on the moral self-discipline.*

## Lingayat ಲಿಂಗಾಯತ

**Lingayat community center:** Anubhava Mantapa ಅನುಭವ ಮಂಟಪ (Basava Mantapa).

**Lingayat Rites and rituals:** Worship of Guru-Basavanna, Ishtalinga-globular Emblem, Jangama- holy person.

**Holy month:** Shraavana Maasa (July/August)

**Flag symbol:** Hexagonal star with Ishtalinga on Saffron colour cloth.

**Heritage:** Sharana heritage started from Lord Basavanna with so many Sharanas and Jangama Yogis of Lingayat.

In Lingayat we have the following main rituals for the different events of human life cycle.

1. Garbhalinga Dharane ಗರ್ಭಲಿಂಗಧಾರಣೆ- (ಸೀಮಂತ): This is performed when a woman is 7 months pregnant.
2. Lingadharane ಲಿಂಗಧಾರಣೆ: Tying the Ishtalinga to the new born baby (This is the first ritual). After this naming ceremony function will be Organised when baby become 21 days old or 3months old sometimes 5 months old.
3. Ishtalinga Deeksha (**consecration**) ಇಷ್ಟಲಿಂಗ ದೀಕ್ಷೆ: This is the main and important ritual in the Lingayat. Any human being irrespective of rich or poor, male or female,

officer or clerk, director or office boy, black or white any human can become a Lingayat by Ishtalinga Deeksha. In some places Ishtalinga Deeksha will be performed in the marriage.

4. Sanyasa Deeksha ಸನ್ಯಾಸ ದೀಕ್ಷೆ: If a person will to dedicate his life for the society he will undergo the Sanyasa Deeksha. (He will remain unmarried till death, sacrifices everything to the society and provides religious service to the society)
5. Burial ಲಿಂಗೈಕ್ಯ ಸಂಸ್ಕಾರ:

We have festivals in Lingayat. Main “Festivals” of Lingayat are (there are many, listed only main & important one).

1. Siddharameshwar Jayanti (Jan 14 every year)
2. Allama prabhu jayanti (Ugadi)
3. **Basava Jayanti** (Viashakha Maasa, Akshaya Trutiya)
4. Akkamahadevi Jayanti
5. **Basava Panchami** (Shraavana Maasa, Sudha Panchami, also known as Nag Panchami)
6. Neelamma Shashti (Next day of Basava Panchami)
7. Channabasavanna Jayanti (Deepavali)

From the above definitions and differences of Religion and Philosophy one can think of Lingayat as a Religion rather than a Philosophy. Lingayat has all the characteristics of a religion. But again what decides the Religion or philosophy is depend on how you define the word “Religion” or “Philosophy”. The Lingayat is called in Kannada as “**Lingavanta/ Lingayat Dharma**”, ಲಿಂಗವಂತ [16] [17] [18]/ಲಿಂಗಾಯತ ಧರ್ಮ. As above discussed the meaning of “Dharama” when translated to English gives the meaning as law or set of rules one has to follow.

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<sup>16</sup> ಲಿಂಗವಂತನು ಲಿಂಗವಂತರಿಗ ಬುದ್ಧಿಯ ಹೇಳುವಲ್ಲಿ -- ಸ. ದ. ಸಂ.-೧, ವಚನ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: ೬೫೩

<sup>17</sup> ಲಿಂಗವಂತರು ತಾವು ಅಂಜಲದೇಕೆ? -- ಸ. ದ. ಸಂ.-೧ ವಚನ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: 685

<sup>18</sup> ಲಿಂಗವಂತಗಲ್ಲದೆ ಸಾಧ್ಯವಾಗದು ನೋಡಾ -- ಸ. ದ. ಸಂ.-೧ ವಚನ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: 966