



Article : WEBERIAN MODEL OF CHARISMA IN INDIAN NEW RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract :

There are many New Religious organizations in India, at present. Some of these organizations also have followers in abroad. Hare Krishna Sampradaya (ISKCON), Chinmoy Mission, Ananda Marga, Siddha Yoga of Swami Muktananda, Yoga Vedanta Seva Samiti of Asaram Bapu. Sahaj Yoga of Nirmala Mata, Panduranga Shastris' Swadhyaya Movement, etc. are some of the examples of New Religious Organizations in India. The Principles, Philosophy, Chief Deity, Joining procedures of the followers, types & procedures of sacrament, etc are different & the impacts of all these on the followers & other members of the society are also different. One can make the study of these organizations by many angles with applying the various theories. One may apply a single theory to study the specific organizations or a combination of related theories. However the Weberian concept of 'Charisma' is commonly applicable to all of these New Religions organizations. Because the 'Charisma' of a leader of these organizations is the main pillar of attraction for the followers. The processes of joining & leaving of the followers to these cults & also that of practicing are tremendously affected by the 'Charisma' of particular founder or leader of these organizations.

Keywords : New Religious Organizations, Authority, Charisma, Gemeinschaft , Gesellschaft, Succession, Routinization, etc.

India is a land of multi religious groups. Religion is playing important role in each & every aspect of life from the ancient times. Today religion is becoming more & more global. Religion has always been something that concern society. The impact of religion has tremendous implications in shaping the Indian society.

A new religious organization is a religious community or ethical, spiritual or philosophical group of modern origin which has a secondary place within the dominant religious culture. New Religious Organizations may be new in origin or they may be part of wider religion as Hinduism, Buddhism or Christianity, in which case they will be distinct from pre existing denominations. Scholars from Sociology of Religion have adopted this term as alternative to the word 'cult'.

New Religious Organization describes a group which is recent in origin & different from existing religions, although it may be seen as part of an existing religion. Some scholars consider religious organizations new when taken from their traditional cultural context; they appear in new places, & even in modified forms. NROs vary in terms of leadership, authority, concepts of individual, family & gender, teachings, organizational structures, etc.

The Hindu religion followed by majority of Indian citizens does not appear to be a well united centrally co-ordinated church like formation. It appears to be a collection of many sub religious & religious cults or Sampradyas or other categories of cult formations, acquiring distinct forms of religious organizations. Some of these religious organization function on an all India level.

Religious organization is the complex of institutionalized roles & procedures which regulate the relation of men with the super natural order, however such an order may be conceived in time such organizations appeared whose main function is religious. These specifically religious organizations are found generally in societies in which an internal differentiation of functions & stratification have developed. Tonnies has called the former types of social organization Gemeinschaft & the latter Gesellschaft. Specifically religious organization tends to appear as part of the development of Gesellschaft.

Specifically religious organization evolve out of the specific experiences of particular founders & their disciples. From such experiences a form of religious association emerges, which eventuates in a permanent institutionalized religious organization secret & mystery societies, church, sect, Sampradayas, etc. may be cited as examples of specifically religious organizations.

Traditionally, persons who are believed to be endowed with religious power have been discussed under the term charisma. Max Weber applies the term charisma to *a certain quality of an individual personality, by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men & treated as possessing supernatural, superhuman or at least specifically exceptional power or qualities. These are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary & on the basis of them the individual is treated as a leader.*

Weber gives the examples of such authority; the prophets, individuals with healing or legal wisdom, leaders in hunt & war heroes. Weber is most concerned with charisma in connection with persons. He does not dwell extensively on objects or animals endowed with charisma. In *Religionssoziologie* he discusses various kinds of religious specialists endowed with charisma. Weber had developed a categorization of religious specialists endowed with charisma.

1. Magician 2.Priest 3.Prophets.

Magician has cultivated a distinctive subjective condition that is essential for the mediation of charisma.

In case of priest, he does not depend upon personal charisma Weber discusses how the role of the priest emerges out of purely magical practice. For priesthood to emerge, there has to be a regularly organized & permanent enterprise concerned with god. The priest also have a body of special knowledge, religious doctrine & vocational training as their tool of trade, where as magicians operate by virtue of personal charisma. Between the extremes of magicians & priests there lies a group of religious specialists charisma, namely the prophets. The prophet like the magician is an individual bearer of charisma. But in contrast to magicians, prophets claim revelatory knowledge concerning specific doctrines & commandments. Distinct from priest, the prophets claim to authority is based on his or her personal gifts or charisma. The priests lay claim to authority by virtue of their service to the tradition. In practice, the establishment of the prophets authority is usually based on special ecstatic abilities or performances of magic. Prophets may practice divination, healing arts or personal counseling. They are generally not required to professionalize their religious functions. The prophet typically propagates ideas for their own sake & not for any economic compensation.

Weber distinguishes the category of prophets from three other categories of charismatic religious specialists, scared legislator teachers of ethics & mystagogues. A legislator is a person who has been assigned the responsibility codification & reconstitution of law . The teachers of ethics may gather disciples & counsel individuals on personal matters. The traditional concept of Hindu *Guru* is a typical expression of this category. In some Indian sects, the guru may distribute salvation by virtue of being initiated in a special lineage of secret magical practices.

Weber approaches the phenomenon of charisma from the different point of view i.e power, domination & authority. In addition to these, every system includes a tendency to faster believed in it's legitimacy. On the basis of this idea of legitimacy Weber had developed his famous typology of legitimate authority.

According to Weber, there are three pure types of legitimate authority-

1. Legal authority-

Based on rational grounds, that is on a belief in the legal patterns & normative rules under which those in authority issue commands.

2. Traditional authority –

Based on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions under which those in authority issue commands..

3. Charismatic authority-

Based on exemplary character, sanctity of heroism of an individual person who is issuing commands.

Charismatic authority is power legitimized on the basis of a leader's exceptional personal qualities or the demonstration of extraordinary insight and accomplishment, which inspire loyalty and obedience from followers.

As such it rests almost entirely on the leader, the absence of that leader for any reason can lead to the authority's power dissolving. However due to its temperamental nature and lack of formal organization charismatic authority depends much more strongly on the knowledge of legitimacy of the authority than Weber's other forms of authority. For instance a charismatic leader has been touched by God, in the sense of a guru or prophet. Should the strength of this

belief fade, the power of the charismatic leader can fade quickly, which is one of the ways in which this form of authority shows itself to be unstable. In contrast to the current popular use of the term charismatic leader, Weber saw charismatic authority not so much as character traits of the charismatic leader but as relationship between the leader and his followers.

Losing of Charisma, death of the charismatic leader may affect adversely to the organization. The number of followers may decrease in such condition as the Charismatic authority is centralized around a single leader. Charismatic succession & Routinization are the processes for prior arrangement of transformation of Charismatic authority from one leader to another.

- i) Routinizing Charisma - Routinization is the process by which Charismatic authority succeeded by rationally established authority or by combination of traditional & bureaucratic authority.
- ii) Charismatic succession :- After the death of one Charismatic leader his place taken by another one who after that works as his successor & leader of that particular organization. This succession may be by selection procedure, i.e. Revelation, Designation by original leader, Designated by qualified staff & Heredity.

In New Religions organizations we can observe all above types of successions & the process of routinization. Some of the examples are as follows-

- i) **Designation by religious leader** - Guru gives his power and authority to one of the disciple or *Shishya* before taking '*Samadhi*' or death. These types of examples are found in many Hindu religious organizations. Ex. After the *Samadhi* of Swami Muktananda his *Shishya* Gurumayi became the chief leader of SYDA Foundation as Muktananda had given her the power & authority.
- ii) **Heredity**- After death or retirement of a leader the authority & power goes with the biological successor of that leader . Ex. Pandurang Shastri's *Swadhyaya Movement*.

Conclusion :

Weberian model of Charisma is appropriate for the New Religious Organizations in India. As the leadership of these organizations possess all the characteristics of the Weberian concept of Charismatic authority. The processes of formation, possession, succession, & routinization of authority among the new religious organizations show all the features of Weberian model of Charisma.

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