
The Role of Religious Leaders in Promoting World Peace

¹**S. V. Sekhar Kumar**

²**Dr. T.Sharon Raju**

¹Research Scholar, Department of Education, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam – 530003
Andhra Pradesh, India

²Associate Professor & Head; Chairman, BOS in Education (UG) Department of
Education, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam – 530003, AP, India

Article Received: 19/01/2025

Article Accepted: 18/02/2025

Published Online: 19/02/2025

DOI:10.47311/IJOES.2025.7.02.252

Introduction

Religion is an institution accepted by a group of members with the same ideology. India is a country of many ethnic groups comprising different religions. Basically, India is a secular state. Religion plays a major role in maintaining peace and harmony among world nations. Every Religion has its own principles, and it gives its followers a way of living and achieving salvation. Religious leaders always observe whether the principles are being followed by their followers properly or not, and they also observe the attitude of governments towards their Religion. If any conflict occurs, they make their people cautious and go for revolutions. It was seen in the previous history that most of the religious people were engaged in conflicts which left the entire world in a state of insecurity. Every Religion in our country has its own role in building the nation. It is proved that when any international dispute arises, religious leaders stand by the side of our nation. It is a boon to our country that all religious people are living with peace and harmony without any discrimination with regard to the majority or minority. Even in the curriculum also, no importance is given to a specific religion, and all religions are treated equally. In recent times, there have been some disturbances occurring due to the religious feelings among the world nations, which are leaving the country in a state of insecurity. Unfortunately, religious leaders play a major role in these conflicts. Instead of making their followers understand what humanity is, they are encouraging them towards conflicts in the name of Religion. No religion teaches its people to engage in wars. Every Religion propagates universal brotherhood, love, faith in God, and achieving personal salvation. No God is against humanity, and hence the same is to be propagated by the religious leaders instead of engaging them in conflicts.

The word, 'religion' comes from the Latin words Religion- and "religio", which hold similar definitions to the current use of Religion. India is the only secularist country in the world with many religions, castes, sub-castes, races, and many languages. It is noted that there are 79.8% of Hindus, 14.2% of Muslims, 2.38% of Christians, 1.7% of Sikhs,

0.7% of people are Buddhism, 0.4% of Jainism, 0.25% are non-religious; and others occupy 0.15% of our country. Though India is a country with its highest Hindu population, all the other religions are living peacefully with harmony and with a feeling of unity. All the religious festivals are celebrated by all people, and Governments give equal importance to all religions. No curriculum in our textbooks is giving importance to a particular religion. It is stated that Hinduism is an umbrella that provides shelter for different religions and traditions. Islamism is the fastest-growing Religion in India, with a growth rate that has been consistently higher than Hinduism since India's Independence. For example, during the decade 1991-2001, the Muslim growth rate was 29.5% compared to 19.9% for Hindus.

Concept of 'Religion'

- ❖ The French Sociologist Emile Durkheim (2001) defined Religion as a "Unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set and forbidden beliefs and practices which unite into one moral community".
- ❖ James G Frazer defined Religion as "a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of Nature and of human life."
- ❖ George Bernard Shaw stated that "There is only one religion, though there are hundreds of versions of it".
- ❖ According to John Dewey, "The Religion is any activity pursued on behalf of an ideal end against obstacles and in spite of threats of personal loss because of its general and enduring value."
- ❖ Milton Yinger stated that "Religion is a system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggles with the ultimate problem of human life."
- ❖ In the words of Hick, "Religion constitutes our varied human response to transcendent reality."

Role Of Religion in Maintaining Peace and Harmony Among Nations

- Religion can help people to understand and respect the beliefs of others. It only occurs through dialogue, co-operation and communication.
- It establishes a moral framework among its followers and shapes the character of an individual.
- Religion can play a role in uniting divided societies.
- Religion can be understood as a catalyst for peace that builds social interactions and conflicts.

Who is called a religious leader?

A religious leader is a person who has authority in a religious community and is recognized as a leader within that Religion. Religious leaders are the main people designing character and beliefs among their followers. They provide spiritual and moral guidance. They lead religious ceremonies. They also manage and control religious charities. The religious leader is an authorized representative of an a religious organization or association who always guides the people towards good and humanity.

A religious leader should motivate and educate followers to adopt other healthy behavior that is compatible with religious teachings. The religious leaders magnify the voices of the poor where laws and policies are made.

Role Of Religious Leaders in Promoting World Peace

Religious leaders play a significant role in promoting world peace. As they are the representatives of a particular religion, they can propagate the universal brotherhood among the followers so that they can live peacefully in harmony. The religious leaders can promote peace through the following activities:

- Resolving disputes: Through negotiation, mediation, or arbitration, they can resolve international disputes.
- Preventing Violence: Religious leaders can use their influence to propagate the concepts of peace, tolerance, and acceptance to prevent violence and incitement to violence.
- Building Community: International religious leaders can use the services of local leaders to spread the concept of peace and tolerance in order to establish peace in the world. They can use the network of their religious leaders throughout the world and can solve the misunderstandings that prevail among the people.
- Promoting reconciliation: During the course of conflict, whatever the dehumanized situations occur, those can be rehumanized by the help of the religious leaders.
- Providing moral guidance: Religious leaders can provide moral guidance to oppose the injustice on the part of the governments. They can also emphasize religious teaching to build morality and communal harmony.

Approximately 85% of the world's people identify with a religion, making it a significant factor in our lives. Religious leaders, therefore, have a significant influence on global affairs. Moreover, the sacred value of human life, mutual support, and the rejection of destructive rivalry and hostility are a set of principles shared by all religions. Religious leaders can contribute to healing the wounds of hatred following an enduring conflict. Human nature is contradictory. There will always be provocations and hatred.

Recent actions to burn the holy Quran in a number of northern European countries are negative trends that undermine the culture of tolerance, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence. In this regard, the targeted communication of religious leaders to prevent such situations and trends is crucial. New technologies are radically changing all spheres of human life. These changes are mostly for the better, including improved healthcare, unlimited information online, and ease of communication and travel. At the same time, we observe how societies are being fragmented and polarized under the influence of digital technology.

In the new digital reality, it is also necessary to cultivate spiritual values and moral guidelines. Religion has a key role to play here, too, as all faiths are based on humanistic ideals, recognition of the supreme value of human life, and the aspiration for peace and creation. These fundamental principles should be embodied not only in the spiritual sphere but also in the socioeconomic development of countries and international politics. Without reliance on humanistic ideals and ethics, the rapid scientific-technological revolution can lead humanity astray. We are already witnessing such debates with the advent of general artificial intelligence. Ultimately, moral authority and the word of spiritual leaders are crucial today.

In some of the following cases, religious leaders played a crucial role in maintaining peace and harmony.

- In 1992, the community of Sant' Egidio, a Rome-based organization, successfully mediated the end of the civil war in Mozambique.
- In 1972, the world council of churches and the all-Africa Conference of churches mediated a short-lived peace agreement in Sudan.
- Churches were a leader in the fight against apartheid and the peaceful transition in South Africa.

Conclusion:

Religious leaders can have a significant impact on the lives of their followers and the behavior of those who share their beliefs. They can use their influence to spread messages of peace, tolerance, and mutual respect. The United Nations Organization on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect created a plan of action for Religious Leaders and actors to prevent incitement to violence. The plan was developed through consultations with religious leaders, faith-based organizations, and other stakeholders. The plan includes suggestions for how religious leaders can contribute to peace and stability.

References:

- Article on how Religion Influences peacemaking by Rebecca. A. Glazier in Article-3, Volume 25 in November 2018
- Article by Lederach JP (2003) on "Building Peace and Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies", Washington DC, US, Institute of Peace, Journal of Peaceful Coexistence by UFUK Dialogue Foundation, Vol-1, No 1, 2016
- Article by Smock D (2008), Religion in World affairs, Its rule in conflict and Peace and Conflict Resolution, Abuja, Nigeria.
- Article by Dubois H (2008) on Religion and Peacebuilding, Vol.1, Issue.2
- Article by Adamu. B (2015), Metro, Co-UK Sunday, 20th September, 2015

Citation:

Mahek Nanda" The Role of Religious Leaders in Promoting World Peace" *International Journal Of English and Studies (IJOES)*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2025, pp. 248-252. DOI: 10.47311/IJOES.2025.7.02.252.