

A CRITICAL STUDY OF GANDHI'S CONCEPT OF RELIGION

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By
PRANITA SARMA, M.A.
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
DISPUR COLLEGE,
GUWAHATI, ASSAM
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Dr. (Mrs.) Manisha Barua,
Reader, Deptt. of Philosophy,
Gauhati University.

Zoo Narengi Road.
Guwahati - 781021
Phone - 556031

This is to certify that Mrs. Pranita Sarma, M.A. has prepared her thesis "A Critical Study Of Gandhi's Concept Of Religion" under my supervision and that she has fulfilled all the requirements under the Ph.D. regulations of the Gauhati University in submitting the thesis.

The thesis is the result of her own investigation and she has not submitted this thesis or a part thereof for any other degree of any other university.

I wish her success.

Manisha Barua
Manisha Barua

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PREFACE

This thesis brings out how Mahatma Gandhi interpreted his concept of religion in the light of new perspective and how his concept of religion is reflected in the present society. There is so much misunderstanding today about Gandhi's views and ways of thinking. So in this thesis I am trying to focus Gandhi's fundamental principles of his faith and conduct which will help to make Gandhi's position clearer to the modern mind. Moreover I am trying to prove that Mahatma Gandhi not only as a religious man and a spiritual seeker but also as a constructive promoter of harmony and mutual respect among religions. This thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter-I is Introduction. Chapter II is Historical background of religion. Chapter III is Gandhi's concept of religion. Chapter IV is Gandhi's concept of God. Chapter V is Gandhi's view on religion and politics. Chapter VI is Gandhi's religion and other contemporary Indian philosophers. A comparative study and Chapter VII is Conclusion.

Gandhi was a man of religion and also he laid great emphasis on morality. It was the firm view of Gandhi that if life is separated from religion, it descends, whereas if it is pursued in identification with or inclose correlation to religion, it ascends. Gandhi strongly believed that we cannot deny by any means claim to be religious if we are cruel, dishonest or untruthful. Religion should always fight against impurities, dogmas, superstitions and so on. For Gandhi religion was

an all pervasive influence and not an affair of temples or of sacred days or rites. He tried to show that the chief contents of all his important concepts have been derived from the religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity and Islam, Gandhiji called for mutual respect among religious people of different persuasion without any sense of superiority or inferiority.

His unique greatness lies in the fact that he tested and verified the truths he acquired and preached in his own day today life. He discovered for himself that all religions have elements of truth and none is in exclusive possession of the whole truth. Therefore he accepted all great religions as necessary and essentially true. In this way he discovered that 'Religion is one'. To him, the whole of human life, individual and collective was a field for experimentation to attain the Truth.

Though Gandhi was born by Hindu, his Hinduism included all that was valuable in Islam, Christianity or in any religion what so ever. For him religious values were the highest.

It is true that Gandhiji today is regarded by many the world over as one of the great teachers whose thought is for the whole of humanity and for all time to come, so far as one can see. Though he believed that truth and non-violence were as old as the hills, but when he kept old values before humanity, gave them a new significance and a new depth of meaning. Gandhiji restated truth and non-violence

to cover new ground for which there are only slight hints in the old dispensations of the world.

One of his greatest contribution is that he synthesised religion with politics. People are generally remarking that religion and politics are not to be mixed together, but for Gandhi, religion to be a necessary part of politics.

We cannot deny the fact that the main source of Gandhiji's strength was his deep devotion to God which helped him to totally free from any kind of cowardice and fear. I also realize that Gandhi's faith in God helped him to win the most unique battle that he fought and the inspiring ideal that he placed before humanity. Gandhi's conception of God although basically formed under Hindu beliefs was also influenced by the strict monotheism of Islam, the Christian conception of God as love and the ideas present in Buddhism. Gandhiji declared that Dharma was the basis of all things and satya was the basis of Dharma. He used the term Truth as synonymous with God and said that truth was the most appropriate characterization of God or that Truth itself was God.

We are facing a crisis born of dichotomy between man's material life and spiritual life. Hence Gandhi, the thinker has shown us certain basic principles and strategy to remove this dichotomy so that there should be no politics without principles, economics without morality, science without spirituality and worship without sacrifice.

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Pranita Sarma
Pranita Sarma

Department of Philosophy
Dispur College, Dispur

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	i-iv
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION	1-22
CHAPTER II HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF RELIGION	
II.1 Introduction	23-24
II.2 Definition of religion	24-29
II.3 Approaches to religion	30-44
II.4 Importance of religion	44-48
II.5 Conclusion	49-52
References	52-54
CHAPTER III GANDHI'S CONCEPT OF RELIGION	
III.1 Influences	55-63
III.2. Religion and morality	63-66
III.3. Gandhi and Kant on morality	66-72
III.4 Gandhi and Marx on morality	72-76
III.5. Truth and non-violence	76-78
III.6 Eleven Vows	78-99
III.7. Fasting and Prayer	99-101
III.8 Sarvodaya	101-105
III.9 Temples and Idolatry	105-106
III.10 Reason	106-107
III.11 The soul and its liberation	107-111
III.12 Conclusion	111-112
References	112-114

		PAGE
CHAPTER IV	GANDHI'S CONCEPT OF GOD	
IV.1	Introduction	115-118
IV.2.	Proofs for the existence of God	118-122
IV.3	Faith	122-123
IV.4	Nature of God	123-126
IV.5	The way to God	126-128
IV.6	God as Truth	129-131
IV.7	Rāmanāma	131-132
IV.8	Problem of good and evil and Freedom of will	133-136
IV.9	Was Gandhi an advaitin?	136-139
IV.10	Conclusion	139-141
	References	142-143
CHAPTER V	GANDHI'S VIEW ON RELIGION AND POLITICS	
V.1	Introduction	144-145
V.2	The gospel of satyagraha (Non-violence, Civildisobedience, Fasting, Picketing and Strike)	145-150
V.3	Swaraj	150-153
V.4	Gandhi's concepts of state, the individual and the government	153-156
V.5	The Gandhian approach to world peace.	156-159
V.6	Conclusion	160-161
	References	162

	PAGE
CHAPTER VI GANDHI'S RELIGION AND OTHER CONTEMPORARY INDIAN PHILOSOPHERS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY	
VI.1 Introduction	163-167
VI.2 Gandhi and Bal Gangadhar Tilak	167-172
VI.3 Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore	173-182
VI.4 Gandhi and Swami Vivekananda	182-194
VI.5 Gandhi and Sarvapali Radhkrishnan	195-205
VI.6 Conclusion	205-206
References	206-207
CHAPTER VII CONCLUSION	208-231
References	231-232
BIBLIOGRAPHY	233-247

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

Religion is the most important and outstanding feature of human life. It has played a very important role in the evolution of mankind. Religion is not mere belief but behaviour, not mere conviction but conduct, not mere faith but functioning. In religion the whole of a human being's personality is involved. It has shown the ways of conduct with the higher power and to appease them. It has laid down the foundations of searching the truth, realisation of the soul and God and achieving the freedom of immortality.

Man is not a mere life - body complex with the lower mind like as a dog, a monkey or a horse is. Man has a higher mental faculty. So they can develop the religious consciousness. Religion is one of the greatest formative forces in the building up of character. It may be added that religion helps an individual in his efforts to remake himself. If society is to be lifted out of the morass the individual man and woman have to recreate themselves, they must find out the meaning and purpose of life. It is the business of religion to restore the belief in the purpose of life give meaning to it. It is to be noted that the lives of those persons who are most close to divine are full of joy and hope for the world and they make it easy for those who come to contact with them to become good. Sometimes one objection is raised in this connection. The objection is that Charles Bradlaugh and Bertrand Russell were men of high moral character though they were no believer

in religion and God. They have a strong basis for morality. But individuals of this type are not many.

Human history shows that people and countries were prosperous and progressive so long as the true religious spirit prevailed among them. They began to decline and decay when the religious spirit waned. Religion is not something imposed upon man from outside by some cunning and selfish priests, but is a demand of our true self or nature.

Though today life is much more comfortable and luxurious through the development of science and technology, but it is not so sweet, so human, so kindly and so noble as in the past. But we cannot blame science and technology which have enabled us to prepare the deadly nuclear weapons for the unprecedented damage to human life and civilisation. The nuclear energy which has been placed at our disposal can be used for peaceful purposes as well as for destructive ends. If it is used for peaceful purposes and depends entirely on the moral and religious outlook then humanity and civilisation can be saved but not otherwise. It can be submitted that the only disciplines which can inform us about the nature and significance of moral values and distinctions are ethics and religion. Ethics teaches us about the nature of moral goodness and its distinction from badness. Religion helps us to promote the former and avoid the later. So we can come to the conclusion that union of science and religion alone can save the world from the doom which otherwise we cannot escape. The divorce between the two would bring about the ruin of the human race and civilisation.

A civilisation which ignores religion or relegates it to a subordinate position in its scheme of life, can neither endure for long nor be adequate and satisfactory.

India is a secular country where people of different religions, castes and creeds inhabit here from the very ancient period. India's mission is different from that of others. India is fitted for the religious supremacy of the world. Even Maxmuller said that the study of religion is incomplete unless it is studied with reference to India.

Mahatma Gandhi was born in India. He was born at Porbandar (Gujrat) on October 2, 1869. Gandhi was one of the most prominent personalities of our century. The Indians gave him the name "Mahatma" the great soul. This was not because of his fame nor because of his remarkable position, but because he was recognised to be of his spiritual nature. Gandhi didn't himself admit that the title 'Mahatma' gave him any pleasure and he felt rather awkward about it. He explained that he was a humble seeker of truth and he also said that he made experiment in order to find out life's eternal truths like a scientist. But Gandhi did not claim to be a true scientist because he could not provide any concrete evidence with scientific exactitude for his methods and neither had he any concrete results for his experiments which modern science demands.

Gandhiji has himself observed that whatever power, whatever influence he had possessed or exercised had been derived from religion.

That is why about this aspect of Gandhi's personality Manchester Guardian wrote, "He is above all, the man who revived and refreshed our sense of the meaning and value of religion. Though he had not the all comprehending intellect or the emotional riches which can construct a new philosophy or a new religion, yet the strength and purity of his moral urge were clearly derived from deep religious feelings"¹.

Gandhiji was a strong supporter of religion. For him, religion was not only a matter of belief rather it was the foundation stone of all the activities of his life. Nothing could influence him which was irreligious and immoral. Participation in political life was for him a means to the religious life. Politics is the application of religion. If we wish to understand Gandhi as a politician, it is important first to understand him as a religious personality. He always tried to base his political and economic doctrines on religion. He believed that political philosophy and political techniques are only corollaries of his religious and moral principles. For him, politics without religion is death trap.

Gandhi considered himself a Hindu on the basis of his birth and upbringing. He saw the special beauty of Hinduism in the fact that it included all the essentials of other religions and what it excluded he considered 'inessential'. He did not, however approve of everything that was taught in the name of Hinduism. He considered it his duty to point out the mistakes that Hinduism was guilty of in order to purify it. There are innumerable written texts in Hinduism. Gandhi's faith in

the Hindu texts did not mean that he accepted every word and phrase as being infallible. Gandhi therefore although a professed Hindu was also a reformer of Hinduism.

Gandhi's conception of Hinduism had no place for untouchability. Hinduism stresses the unity of existence. Hinduism teaches that each person is important to all other persons and living beings. All the great religions teach love of man but Hinduism teaches love of animals as well. They feel killing an animal is wrong and the animal has as much right to live as man. According to Gandhi, 'cow protection' is the gift of Hinduism to the world. It is a distinctive contribution to the world's religious ideas. 'Cow' to him meant the entire subhuman world. It meant " the protection of the weak and helpless". To Gandhi, ' Cow protection' had a very wide significance. Gandhi did not mean by merely protecting the animal cow, one can attain moksa. He said that for moksa one must completely get rid of one's lower feelings like attachment, hatred, anger, jealousy etc. It follows therefore that the meaning of cow protection in terms of moksa must be much wider and far more comprehensive than is commonly supposed. The cow protection which can bring on moksa must from its very nature include the protection of everything that feels. But at the same time Gandhiji thought that the Hindus have no ground for quarrel with Muslims to save for the cow. Gandhiji said that the Hindu's religion consists of saving the cow, but it can never be his religion to save the cow by a resort to force towards a non - Hindu. It is true that there is a

wide difference of attitudes in Hinduism and Islam. For the Hindus, cow protection and the playing of music even near the mosque is the substance of Hinduism. On the other hand for the Muslim cow-killing and prohibition of music is the substance of Islam. Hence Gandhiji advised both communities (Hindu + Muslim) that the Hindus abandon the idea of compelling Muslims to stop cow-killing and similarly the Muslims the idea of compelling the Hindus to stop music. For Gandhi, people should tolerate all religions and should give equal respect to all religions.

Gandhi realised the terrible abuses that had crept into the varnasram dharma and to offer relentless battle against them. The caste system was, he thought opposed to the basic concept of love.

Gandhi and Karl Marx were the greatest lover of humanity. Both dreamt of a new socio-political order in which the common man and women will enjoy full human rights and there will be no exploitation. Though their main ends were same but there was difference between means to achieve their ends. Gandhiji was an apostle of love and peace, whereas Marx as an exponent of class hatred and class war. Gandhiji stood for sarvodaya, the greatest good of all. His ideal state is Ramrajya in which exploitation of man by man will be unknown. Karl Marx on the otherhand dreamt of a classless society, a society in which every man and woman would have his or her due. All artificial barriers between man and man will cease to exist. The privileged classes will not voluntarily surrender their power and privileges. Hence the necessity

of the class war - a fight to finish between plutocrats and proletariat, between the 'haves' and the 'have - nots'. Marx takes his stand on the economic or materialistic interpretation of history, because he believed that the history of man is only economic history. Gandhi on the other hand rejected the materialistic or economic interpretation of history. Gandhi did not minimise the value of economics in the life of the individual or the groups. But unlike Marx he did not think that all human values and institutions were the result of the working of economic forces. Gandhiji believed in the power of the spirit of man to shape its environment to some extent and thus effect the course of history. For Gandhi, the spirit is superior to matter. Marxism on the other hand believed the matter to be the ultimate reality and spirit only a by product of matter. Gandhi believed not only in the spirit, but in the unity of the spirit as well. The world according to him is one in its deepest roots and highest aspiration. He believed in the spiritual unity of the whole animate world.

Gandhi was very confident of the power of man's soul force. He believed that the soul within man, which was really a force of love, could give history a different colour altogether. The marxists could not look into the depth of human nature in which there was a soul. They missed the soul force within which was the seat of love and which could create peace, harmony and happiness in society. Marxists could see only the external brute force of man which was based on egoism and all sorts of struggle and conflict were due to that

Gandhi compared means to the seed and the end to a tree in Hind swaraj. He pointed out there that a healthy tree cannot grow from diseased or otherwise defective seed. Good effects also can not be produced by bad causes. He therefore said, " If one takes care of the means the end will take care of itself"². Gandhiji was a firm believer in ahimsa or nonviolence. Gandhi's non-violent and peaceful methods of resistance were tried in gaining for India its freedom from the foreign yoke. His movements succeeded, though no doubt it was helped by favourable world events. Means and ends are convertible terms in Gandhian philosophy. For Gandhi, they are inseparable and should be equally pure. Gandhiji wanted morality which guides men's individual and social conduct, however often it may be violated to regulate their behaviour in the political field. This social morality must have currency not only in the field of internal politics but it must also regulate international politics, where it has never been recognised so far. He felt that to realise the humanitarian aims, the means employed must be in consonance with the ends in view. Gandhiji made no distinction between ends and means. He held that if the means neglect or violate the requirements of the moral law, the ends will not be what were intended and worked for. Marxism on the otherhand believed that the end justifies the means, violence is indispensable in the social evolution of Marxist conception. Violence, falsehood, terror and deception may succeed for a time. They certainly produce quick results and may triumph for a time over truth and love, justice and

open dealing. But it is to be noted here that victory achieved by these means is partial and transient where as lasting good and peace of the individual, of the community and of humanity can be ensured by honest means alone.

Karl Marx was highly critical of religion. For Marx, religion was the 'sob of the oppressed culture', 'the head of a heart less world' and the 'opium of the poor'. Marx pointed out that people believed in an unseen and unknown agency i.e. God because they had themselves powerless and helpless against the social forces over which they have no control. To Gandhi on the other hand God and religion were the very important thing for his life. For Gandhi religion and morality were the same. They were interchangeable terms. Gandhiji did not believe that religious activity was separate from other activities of life. For him, the basic principle of this morality were truth and non-violence. About religion and God Gandhi said in his own words, " I often described my religion as the religion of truth of late instead of saying God is truth. I have been saying truth is God in order more fully to define my religion Nothing so completely describe my God as truth. Denial of God we have known. Denial of truth we have not known. The most ignorant among mankind have some truth in them. We are all sparks of truth. The sum total of these sparks is the indescribable, as yet unknown truth which is God I am being daily led to it by constant prayer"³.

Gandhi cannot be regarded as originating any new philosophy.

He did not approve of 'Gandhism'. He said that he tried to adopt in his own way 'eternal truths' to our everyday life and its problems. Gandhi was a revolutionary thinker. He worked for a major change in human nature. He sought to prepare us for life in a disarmed world. He said that we must remove the world of strife and hatred and get ready to work on the basis of co-operation and harmony. 'Satyagraha' is his substitute for war and is based on an absolute adherence to truth, practice of love and self-suffering by one who resists in cases of conflict. Gandhiji tried to make his religion a vital part of his life and applied it to the different problems he faced. It is a known fact that religion was the main spring of Gandhiji's activities. This means that all that he said and did through out his public career not only in the realm of religion proper but also in the sphere of politics, economics and social life were inspired by religion. For him a religion which did not concern itself with every side of life was no religion at all.

Gandhi's ideas are new and revolutionary. He did not acquire his ideas and knowledge merely from books. Much of his knowledge was the result of direct contact with life and the practical experience it offered. He therefore placed his ideas before the public not in the language of the learned but in that of their own simple language which they understood. He was a man of the masses. He addressed them not about what he had read and studied in books, but what he had seen, sensed, experienced and thought about. He described his own observations

and his reactions to them. This was his method. His method is more suited to the intellectual capacity of the common man than that of the learned. His practical schemes of work and his explanations thereof created his philosophy.

In Gandhi's philosophy the emphasis is not only on idealism but on the practical idealism. It is rooted in the highest idealism, but is thoroughly practical.

Although Gandhi considered himself to be a Hindu, his concept of religion points to a general religion which is common to different religions. Gandhi said, "Religions are different roads to the same goal. For this reason one must not reject other religions, but anybody belonging to any religion can receive from others what is good in them"⁴. Gandhiji derived morality from many religions. Each and every religion more or less teaches truth. This truth morally imbibes a person to do justice to himself, to society, to country and even to his religions. Gandhi's religion is full of moral acts with love to mankind. It is not only a faith, but practice for the services of mankind with no limitations. A moral life accelerates the idea of dynamic morally oriented soul of mankind and the eradication of wrong and injustices. The ethics is the pivot of the religion. Gandhiji experienced that religion comprised dedicated service to mankind. Hence for Gandhi, religion consists in removal of untouchability, spinning wheel for the poor and so on.

Gandhiji believed in self discipline. He felt that his own personal

progress and all that he had been able to achieve was because he lived a life of discipline. Like Manu, Prasastpada, Patanjali etc. Gandhi gave utmost emphasis upon practice of moral virtues. He mentioned eleven such vows, like truth, non-violence, celibacy, nonstealing, nonpossession, physical labour, control of the palate, fearlessness, equality of all religions, swadeshi, discarding untouchability etc. His vows were more scientific though he was not a scientist in the academic sense of the term.

The gospel of non-violence and truth which he had preached and practised was no new philosophy. He had indeed admitted, and even claimed that it was 'as old as the hills'. Only he had resurrected that philosophy and used it on a new plane. For Gandhi, non-violence was not merely a policy, but also his religion. It was a way of life. He followed it in thought, word and deed. His non-violence was often criticised, but no criticism could shake his faith. He considered human beings as one family, whatever their differences in sex, colour and race. He did not believe in the artificial differences between man and man, created by religion, caste, community and nation. He believed in the perfect equality of man. Any exploitation of man by man or of a group by group was contrary to his faith in truth and non-violence.

Gandhi had very broad view about religion. For him, religion is like a tree, it has only stem having different branches. Thus according to him, there is one true and perfect religion, but it becomes many

like branches and it passes through the human medium. Gandhiji did not try to unite all the religions of the world instead he tried to extricate the underlying principles of all religions. He found truth in all. A true man therefore can create the atmosphere of love for all the religion for achieving truth and establishing brotherhood. Gandhiji did not stress that religion is particular for a particular class. Religion is above all. He did not know religion apart from human activity nor does he consider religion as one of the many activities of mankind. He never liked to criticise the scriptures of other faith or to point out their defects. He stressed the need of practising truth for the people as a whole. Gandhiji pointed out that all religions basically effect man's mind for eternal awareness which leads a man for divine potentialities.

Gandhiji was guided by the Hindu, Buddha and Jain ideals of non-possession (aparigraha) and took moral and spiritual uplift of man to be the real sign of his progress. He did not mean by religion any kind of sectarian belief. He said that he believed in the religion which underlied all religions. No historical religion according to him could claim exclusive or absolute truth. Gandhi was Hindu by birth and he liked to remain a Hindu throughout his life. But he loved other world religions also and accepted many points from them in his practical life.

By religion he meant truth or the vision of the truth, the underlying basis of all thing, the permanent substratum behind the passing flux of phenomenon which is designated as capital 'R'. On the practical side, there are many religions giving vent to different ways

of life but fundamentally Religion is one.

Gandhiji also stressed the need of tolerance. According to him, toleration is the way through which a man moves towards perfection; this perfection towards the truth. He said that this toleration encourages a man for moral binding and cooperation.

Gandhiji rejected everything that was against reason and against humanity. We have said earlier that though Gandhi loved to call himself an orthodox Hindu, he did not subscribe to the pernicious and cruel system of untouchability. He tried by raising the status of Harijans and the poor and treating men and women as equals to develop an integrated society in India. This integration is still at work and not complete.

Gandhi had great faith in prayer. Morning and evening there were prayers in the Ashram. He did not believe in image worship for himself. But he had no objection to it for those who needed such symbols. His prayer meetings were also occasions for him to take the public into confidence about what was happening in the Councils of the great whether the national organisations or in the Government. He did this because he wanted from the people enlightened co-operation in the national struggle which was not only meant to remove the foreign yoke but was also meant for their political, social and above all their moral advancement. He thought that a reformed India would be a free India.

Gandhiji sometimes fasted for the moral lapses of those who

lived or worked with him, because he considered himself responsible for their conduct. Any misbehaviour on their part was a proof of some imperfection in him.

Though Gandhi himself was not so much of an idol worshipper his attitude was liberal and pragmatic. An idol did not excite any feelings of veneration in him but he thought that idol is a part of human nature. Though Gandhi only preferred the worship of the formless he never objected to other man's liking or using images in prayer. Gandhiji readily admitted that some word like God carry different meaning to persons having passed through different stage of evolution.

Gandhiji was a dynamic religious thinker. He believed in God which according to him, is nothing else but truth like an orthodox Hindu. He had a firm faith in religion and in the religious philosophy of the Vedas, Upanishads and Gita. Gandhiji derived truth and ahimsa from them. According to Gandhi, truth is God which he later clarified as God is truth. If truth is God, sincere pursuit of truth is religion. Religion is ordinarily defined as devotion to some higher power or principle. Gandhiji's devotion to truth was also upper most factor in his character. He therefore said that higher Principle being truth devotion to truth (God) is religion.

Gandhiji said " If I did not feel the presence of God within me, I see so much of misery and disappointment every day that I would be a raving maniac and my destination would be the Hooghly"

His love for God can be compared to that of Hanuman. So he said "Hanuman tore open his breasts and showed that there is nothing there but Rāmanāma. I have none of the power of Hanuman to tear open my heart, but if any of you feel inclined to do it I assure, you will find nothing but love for Rāma"⁶. There can be no better testimony of Gandhī's love for God or Gandhi being a truly religious soul. He uttered Rāmanāma though he made it clear that Rāma of his conception was not the husband of Sita or the son of Dasaratha, but he who abides in the hearts of men, the Antaryami. For himself he believed in a formless and attributeless God. He frankly admits that existence of God cannot be proved by reason though it is not against reason. Even if he could not prove his existence by rational arguments which may not convince, he felt it within himself.

For him, religion was the law of life and God was the living power. Gandhi was all through his life endeavouring to see God in service of humanity, because he knew that God is neither in heaven nor down below, but in everyone. So for him, the only way to find God is to see him in his creation. Gandhiji never claimed exclusive divinity or prophetship. He wanted to see God face to face, because he knew that God is found more often in the lowliest of his creatures than in the high and mighty. Hence he had as much passion for the suppressed and the oppressed classes as to God. For him God is poverty incarnate, daridra narayan. So we find here that Gandhī's great contribution lies in removing the common misgiving that there is a

dichotomy between the 'Spiritual' and the 'practical'. They are one. Like Aurobindo, he evolved a synthesis between faith in God and his concern for man.

The fundamental notion of Gandhism is the metaphysical conception of an omnipresent spiritual reality, an all embracing living light which can be called sachidananda or Brahman or Rama or simply truth. This supreme absolute is both the starting point and the final goal of Gandhian thought. For Gandhi, God has a double significance metaphysical as well as religious. God is not only the ultimate Reality with him, He is also practical reality for his living response. There is no doubt for all practical purposes Gandhi regards God to be a concrete person possessing all the gracious qualities and perfections. But from metaphysical point of view God is for him impersonal. Here there is no contradiction for after all the metaphysical idea of God as an all embracing spirit and the devotional idea of a personal God have a difference stand point only and not of essence. These two aspects cannot be taken as opposed to each other. In this connection it may be pointed out that Gandhi was not a metaphysician in the academic sense and he didnot use two different terms Brahman and Iswara as Sankara had done to devote the transcendental and the phenomenal realities separately. He used the word 'God' in both the senses.

Gandhi was anxious to fight against the prevalent evils in society not merely because they were anti-social but because they were

in conflict with the basic values of his religion and ethics. His concept of 'sarva dharma samabhava' is very near to swami Vivekananda's Universal Religion and Tagore's Religion of man. Rites, rituals, dogma and ceremonies are not the essence of religion. Gandhiji also described varnashrama as a healthy social decision of work based on birth but he regarded the present idea of caste a perversion of the original. For him, the present idea is purely a question of duty and not the question of birth which determines superiority or inferiority.

Gandhiji has been called a 'prophet of peace', because all his activities had been actuated by and directed towards the achievements of universal peace. Simplicity in life was the first principle which Gandhiji advocated. He did not consider complexity to be the sign of progress. He stressed the need of decentralisation and localisation of industries. Gandhiji made no distinction between economics and ethics. He discussed the capitalist to regard themselves not as owners but as trustee of their wealth and use it for the service of society. He said that the rich should not enrich themselves at the expense of poor and the poor should not envy the rich. They should constitute a great family living in unity and harmony and working in loving co-operation for mutual and material welfare. This is the ideal which Gandhiji tried to inculcate through out his life.

A study of Gandhi's writings and speeches makes it clear that one world and world peace were inherent in his life. Gandhiji wanted harmony and peace to be established not merely between Hindus and

Muslims but among the adherent of all the great religions of the world. His message was not for India but for all the world. No wonder, no writer in this century has achieved the world wide attention that Gandhi has.

Gandhi's approach to spirituality is different from that of the ancient Indian philosophers. They misconceive spirituality with the institutional religions. But for Gandhi, spirituality is embodied in the whole of our life and action. It does not need to give up the world and sit in the cave of Himalayas. Spirituality for Gandhi, is not the way of life prescribed for an old man but for a youth. For Gandhi, spirituality is not some sort of isolated activity. Gandhi did not believe in passive spirituality of meditation. Once he said that if he could meet Lord Buddha, he could have advised him to preach the path of action than meditation. For Gandhi, spirituality is selfless service of the needy which helps us in self-realization. Gandhi viewed spirituality through social actions, economic, political, educational and through other peace activities. For Gandhi, there is spiritual sense which gives us the knowledge of spirituality but that sense is awakened through the constant practice of moral conduct. We must have scientific progress. But the real progress according to Gandhi lies in the progress of the soul.

Gandhi stressed a unique method of self realization i. e. the realization through service, Gandhiji himself entered into active service of the nation for realising moksha, the summum bonum of life.

Gandhi looked towards science and spirituality with his open mind. Science deals with physics and spirituality deals with mind. One deals with the material and the other with the spirit. One deals with the visible and the other deals with invisible. Similarly one deals with the outer, and the other with the spirit. Gandhiji being a man of peace believed in the right co-ordination or combination of the two. Science is lame without spirituality. One is incomplete without the other. Gandhi recommended science to enter into the realm of consciousness and spirituality to incarnate in all possible facets of life, so that it may not artificially be separated and reserved only for a particular stage of life or particular form of human behaviour. His life style was a unique combination of a scientist and spiritualist. Hence it is clear that to meet world crisis, the co-ordination of science and spirituality is inevitable. Even to day it is possible to live plain life with minor wants, if we all follow Gandhi's preaching about science and spirituality.

From the foregoing discussions we admit that Gandhiji was a truly religious man and he lived in the life of religion. His religion underlined peace, humility, gentleness, philanthropy, tolerance - all these as attributes of truth. Gandhiji was not born great, but he made himself great through struggle and experiment with the help of two qualities, i. e. love of truth and love of all fellow beings. Mahatma Gandhi was the only and unique personality upto now in modern human history, who combined the (a) goal and means, (b) continuing test for truth and relativity and (c) spirit and matter. As we have said earlier

for Gandhi, it is not necessary for man to become a Sanyasi in order to lead an ideal life. His ideal was that of a karmayogi, one who devotes his life to actions determined by his conscience. To him conscience is the best guide to conduct and action of an individual. Gandhiji believed that man has a divine spark and by his karma, he can increase his fire of evolution towards higher goals and perfection in his own whole lifetime.

Like a scientist Gandhi was highly experiment oriented. So his aim was not to be consistent with his previous statements on a given question but to be consistent with truth as presented to him at a given moment. That is why people have often charged him of inconsistency in his statements made at different times. Gandhiji accepted it but said, "The fact of the matter is that conditions have changed. I am the same. My words and deeds are dictated by prevailing conditions. There has been gradual evolution in my environment and I react to it as a satyagrahi"⁷.

So even in matters of religion Gandhi did not try to remain consistent. Because his life was an experiment with truth. He observed and experimented upon the different religions of the world and from these he derived a conclusion which was completely his own and unique in its nature.

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CHAPTER - II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF RELIGION

of humanity. According to it, religion is not merely a symbol of the external conduct, practice rites and belief but that energy which sustains society and keeps it organised. Here we find that the ancient Hindus allowed 'dharma' to stand for various things not because of their failure to define it, but because of their effect to have that all empowering principle which would cover all aspects of human life.

In Indian philosophy, according to the Vedantic view every form of theistic religion ultimately has to be negated in favour of the one single religion of the supreme spirit. Swami Vivekananda aptly observes "All religion is contained in the Vedanta, that is, in the three stages of the Vedanta Philosophy, the Dvaita, Visistadvaita and Advaita, one coming after the other. These are the three stages of spiritual growth in man. Each one is necessary. This is the essence of religion"¹⁵ We cannot accept a definition of religion in terms of theism only, because it leads to the rejection of Jainism and Buddhism as a form of religion. Buddhism and Jainism are ethical systems which have adopted 'Kaivalaya' and 'Nirvana' as the end of moral life.

From the above discussions we find that the above definitions failed to touch all the aspects of religion. The definitions were incomplete because they overlook one or the other aspects of religion. So it is better to find out the central feature of the term 'Religion' in terms of which all religious phenomena are to be understood rather than to define it.

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ii.3 Approaches to religion

Religion is highly complex and it has varied aspects. For a proper, systematic and comprehensive understanding of religion it is therefore necessary to make a number of approaches to religion. Let us go into greater details.

Previously there were two theories about the origin of religion namely (a) Divine revelation and (b) Human reason. Divine revelation means God's revelation to mankind. Divine revelation theory is not acceptable. This theory is psychologically false. How could a being who had no consciousness of religion in him, receive all of a sudden the message from the Divine being? The other view was accepted by the English Deists of the 18th century. They rejected the Divine revelation theory and trace the origin of religion to human reason. But this theory has also certain defects. This theory over emphasizes reason and ignores emotion and intuitions which are fruitful sources of religious ideas and experiences. In recent times many attempts have been made to explain the origin of religion in a natural way

(a) The anthropological approach : It is concerned with the historical or the pre-historical origin of religion. How did religion first appear in time and space? In what did the religious nature of man first express itself? What was the most rudimentary form from which all other forms of religion developed? These are some of the questions which anthropologists seek to answer. We have a good number of

anthropological theories of the origin of religion.

Animism is derived from the Greek word 'Anima' meaning soul. To Tylor "animism is not a religion, but a basis of religion, a kind of philosophy of religion"¹⁶. Animism means worship of stones, trees and animals in the belief that these are abodes of spirits, good or evil. Yet as an account of the origin of religion, it cannot be regarded as satisfactory. In fact animism does not explain religion fully. It is not rudimentary religion, but a kind of rudimentary philosophy. Haffding calls it as the most elementary of all human philosophy. Animism involves the notion of soul, immortality, re-birth, law of karma etc. The tribals believe that the soul is not destroyed with the death of the body. Most of the Indian tribes believe that after the death of the man the soul of a man survives the body and enters in to the body of some animal, bird or other living being.

De Brocques propounded a theory about the origin of religion known as fetishism. The word 'Fetish' is derived from the Portuguese word 'Fetico' which means an amulet or talisman. Hence a fetish is a natural object supposed to possess some mysterious power. Galloway rightly points out that fetishism is deterioration, not a development. W. Robertson Smith in his 'Religion of the semitics' and F.B. Jevons in his 'Introduction to History of Religion' have advanced the view that totemism is the simplest and the most primitive form of religions. A totem is a species of animals or plants or even a class of inanimate objects. Totemism refers to a system in which a person or a social

groups is identified in a special relation with an animal or a plant or an inanimate object and the belief and customs associated with the objects. The totem is not exactly a God, but a cognate being and to be respected. It must not be used for common purpose. It must not be eaten except on some solemn and sacramental occasions. Different tribes believe in different types of totems. French sociologist Emile Durkheim regards it as the most simple and primitive religion. It cannot be denied that totemism is very ancient but its universality is very far from being proved. Totemism is not a universal religion of the tribes. There are many people of very low culture among whom it is unknown or at least unrecognizable. For instance among the veddas of Ceylon though there are divided into classes, or among the people of Andaman islands or among the low Brazilian tribes. Hence totemism cannot be called a religion though it is the border line of religion.

The malanesian term Mana is an all pervading supernatural power that operates in unexpected ways or appears in natural objects of striking character, an infinite reservoir of energy on which man can draw for good or ill. Mana suggests not only an objective power but also the emotional reactions of awe and wonder which are produced by it. Maxmuller observes that mana is an attempt to define certain natural phenomena in terms of an impersonal power. According to the tribes people the high mountain, the river, the thunder and all other natural phenomena act with the power of mana. This power act both for good and for bad. The Ho and Munda tribes of Chhota Nagpur call it Bana.

Banga is a form of mana. Banga is a mysterious and impersonal power at the back of rains, tempests, cold, floods, epidemics and the wild animals.

Magic is a unique anthropological concept in explaining the origin of religion. In recent times anthropologists have tried to show that religion and magic have common root. It may be held that religion was prior to magic and the later evolved in some way out of the former. Here Frazer pointed out that the contribution of magic to the genesis of religion was negative rather than positive. Like oil and water, magic and religion cannot be mixed. They are mutually irreconcilable attitudes. Sir James Frazer in his 'Golden Bough' advocated the view that magic was prior to religion. Primitive magic was the germ out of which religion developed. Magic relies on the misapplication of the laws of association of ideas. Man recognised that magic was false. His bitter experience of the failure of magic drove him to develop a different and better method of adjusting himself with the unseen. Thus the age of magic gradually gave place to the age of religion.

Frazer's theory cannot be accepted. It is far too intellectualistic to view the origin of religion. It represents the early man as almost full-blown arm chair philosopher in search of working theory of life and the world.

Again his theory is based on association which is now obsolete. Frazer's theory offers a negative explanation of the origin of religion.

i.e. the failure of magic. It is wrong to think that the primitive man had a clear idea of the sharp difference between magic and religion and knowledge of such a difference is the result of better development.

Yet another view of the relation between religion and magic is that they spring from a common root. This root is man's experience of the mysterious forces of nature. This view of the relation between religion and magic is acceptable, because it recognised the difference between magic and religion clearly. Firstly the religious attitude is one of submission and the attitude of magic is one of arrogance. Secondly religion differs from magic in method. Religion depends on prayer and persuasion to communicate with the mysterious but magic seeks to exploit it by way of compulsion. Thirdly religion is social while magic is individualistic and non-social.

From the above discussions we find that though religion and magic differ in principle and method, they have a common source. They are the results of primitive man's emotional reaction to his environment and his random experiments with the unseen forces of the universe in his struggle for existence.

An anthropological study of religion involves certain limitations. What true of primitive religion may not be true of the great historical religions of the modern world. Today, the advancement of science tends to reduce the importance of supernatural power. It does not mean that the religion of the civilized man is a mere vestige of savage crudity. The

has been development as well as continuity.

b) The Historical approach : From the historical point of view religion is classified mainly into three groups, namely i) Tribal religion ii) National Religion and iii) Universal religion.

Tribal religion is the most primitive form of religion found in human society. Some scholars pointed out that tribes are the original inhabitants of the earth. The Kols, Bhils, Gonds, Konds and Santhals are the different names of the tribes, which live particularly in India. The tribal people believe in the presence of supernatural powers at the back of high mountains, flooded rivers, big trees and other natural objects. The concept of God varies from tribe to tribe. Each tribe has its local deity. Among many tribes the supreme God is identified in most cases with the sun and moon.

Here we have seen that tribal religion consists in polydaemonism — the worship of many spirits, which cannot be dignified with the name of Gods, because they have no personal history or personal character or individual names. The change to polytheism consists in the process by which the nature - spirits came gradually to be anthropomorphized. Two important movements in the development of National religion must now be briefly sketched viz 1) The moralization of the God and 2) the movements in the direction of monotheism. National religion emphasise more on the moral order of our life and on Gods. Moral character could be attributed to the various God of

the religion. In this process of moralising the Gods certain virtues are frequently associated with certain God. For instance, Indra stands for the quality of valour, Varuna for justice and moral law etc. Though Hinduism is polytheistic in the sense that we worship Krishna, Shiva, Shakti and Ganesha etc. but in facts there is an element of unity in the world of Gods and spirits based on the supremacy of the monarch God. So in this case Hinduism is monotheistic. Like Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism and Jainism and Islam are monotheistic in nature. Prayer, sacrifice, faith, devotion and worship are common in different National religions. Different religions have different names. There is fundamental unity that lies at the root of each religion. In recent times in every country most of the thoughtful person have come to realise the importance of adopting a synthetic attitude towards religion. All the great religious thinkers from Jesus, Mohammad, Buddha, Mahavir, Nanak and Zoroaster to the modern figures namely Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Aurobindo, Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi have adopted a synthetic approach to religion. For Ramakrishna the purpose of life is to realize God. But he also very well knew that apart from various sects of Hinduism, there are other religions too like Islam and Christianity. That is why he pointed out that religions of the world namely, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam etc. are not contradictory or antagonistic, but they are the various phases of the eternal religion. He said that all religions and all paths call upon their followers to pray, to one and the same God and therefore one should not show disrespect to any religion or religious opinion.

According to Tagore, all the religions of the world are only different forms of a basic human religion. It is this which has caused similarity in the teaching of the saints and deities of a different religion. Each religion is a different way of attaining the highest reality. He tried to synthesise the ancient gospel of spiritual worship of God with humanist trend of modern rationalism.

For practising religious tolerance Vivekananda said, "I accept all religions that were in the past and worship with them all. I worship God with everyone of them. The Bible, the Vedas, Koran and all other sacred books are but so many pages and an infinite number of pages remain yet to be unfolded."¹⁷ Vivekananda accepted advaita vedanta and yet engaged himself in social activities like famine relief, maintenance of orphanages, opening of training centres, educational institutions, dispensaries and the like. He was also against the exploitation of the low caste in the guise of caste system. He advised people to go for inter marriages between different castes. Vivekananda was not simply intellectually convinced of the unity of all religions, but he experienced and lived it through.

Gandhiji respected every religion. For him, the soul of all religions were one. He rejected the superior or inferior status of religion. He made it a practice to read the religious texts of different religions and respected their deities, but he persisted in calling himself a Hindu as he objected to conversion of religion. In this way Gandhiji gave expression to his own synthetic approach towards religion.

Regarding historical development of religion we have so far discussed the oriented aspects of it, because it is as old as our human generation. Civilisation is the result of progressive development from the savage to a higher level of culture. Similarly religion is also one of the integral parts of civilisation and gradual development from the lower to the higher stage. The various phases of religion indicate that religion has been moulded and modified with the advancement of human society and thought.

c) Sociological approach : The sociologists recognise religion as an important and universal social phenomenon. Religion is not any external phenomenon super-imposed on a society from outside. Everywhere we find that religion is deeply embedded in the social structure. A sociological study is something which is necessary for individual both in his private life and in respect of his social commitment. The different religious expressions are in many cases full of social significance and therefore social character of religion cannot be denied. As Yinger remarks, " whenever one looks in a preliterate village, in a commercial town, in a modern metropolis - he finds religion woven into the fabric of social life. Beliefs, rituals, group, structures are enormously various, but no society lacks them"¹⁸. It is known by us that family is the smallest social unit. A primitive family was not simply a social unit, but a religious unit also such as the family organisations of the primitive tribes as well as of the Sumer, Babylon, Egypt, India, China, Mexico would all illustrate the religious character of this basic social

unit. Family rituals were not only social but also religious libations connected with meals, cultoinners, prayers, offerings sacrifice to the family deities, burning of incense at the family altar and finally ancestor-worship, all show how religious functions permeated the whole of family life specially, marriage, birth and death acquired a religious significance. There is also a close similarity between religions and some forms of social behaviour. For example 'Faith' involves a strong feeling and it issues forth in some kind of action without caring for any logical justification or proof in support of its action. The faith that a friend reposes in his friend, a child in his parents, a lover in his beloved is something which is comparable psychologically to the faith in the supernatural or the highest, though the later is far higher and stronger than the former.

There is also a similarity of form between the social and the religious phenomena, for both of them reveal a unity in multiplicity. Different social groups show a kind of unity which is conducive to religious development and again religious development itself exercises a cohesive force within a group. It should however be noted that inspite of these similarities the religious group is not to be identified with any natural social group and like were there are many social patterns of thought and action which should not be defined as religious.

Sociology is the science of structure, origin and development of human society. It investigates the habits, manners, customs and institutions of human society. On the otherhand religion postulates the

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 existences of God and the immortality of soul. Unlike religion, sociology emphasises the creative and constructive aspect of social events. Both sociology and religion are value oriented. A society can become more civilised and rational if it is based on religious and moral values. In order to build the noble and ideal character in the society we have to emphasise on the religious value of the society. The value of religion is nothing but the human values, namely truth, right conduct, love and nonviolence. It is a fact that man cannot live apart from society. Today the goal of religion is not only liberation, but it is more concerned with social welfare, social relations, social cohesion and national integration. Religion is for the betterment of human beings. Social welfare and service of humanity is the call of religions.

d) Psychological approach : Religion is not simply a matter of objective study, but it is also a matter of experience. It is subjective as well as objective. We have already discussed religions from anthropological, sociological and historical point of view. These are concerned with the outward or objective expression of religions. Hence religion should be discussed from psychological point of view also. We now start with the following questions :-

a) What are the factors in man's inner life which account for his being religious?

b) What is there in his spiritual constitution that induced him in the beginning to seek satisfaction in religion and causes him to

continue to be religious throughout the untold ages?

c) What are the psychological factors that account for the development of religion from its crude beginning to what we regard as its highest levels?

It is sometime said that psychological origin of religion lies in a religious instinct. But this is not satisfactory. To say that man is religious because he has a religious instinct is a cheap and facile way of solving the psychological problem of the origin of religion. For psychologists, the word instinct means something very definite and simple viz, the inborn untaught tendency to react in a specific way to certain kind of object or situation, independently of prior experience. But religion is not simple, specific reaction to a simple, specific kind of impression. It is rather a very complex and diversified product of the co-operation of several instincts, which bring forth very heterogeneous manifestations. Though we reject the instinct theory of religion we must acknowledge that there is an element of truth in this theory. The truth is that religion deeply rooted in human nature. Further this theory implies that religion is a normal and natural thing of a human being.

Like the instinctive theory, the faculty theory also seeks to explain the origin of religion with the help of religious faculty. Man is religious, because he has a religious faculty. Like the instinctive theory, this theory is also not satisfactory. Faculty psychology has been proved to be pseudo science. To imagine a separate religious faculty

is to ignore the fundamental unity of the human mind. Religious experience is composed of the same elements of which the conscious life of man as a whole is composed. There is no part of man's psychical nature which can be labelled religious in the sense that it alone functions in his religious life.

The single emotion theory attributes the origin of religion to a single element of emotion. This theory has been supported by the Latin poet Lucretius who identified religion with superstition. In modern times Hume and some psychologists e.g. Ribot have emphasised fear as the motive of religious acts. But the emotion of fear is not to explain the origin of religion in a satisfactory way. Awe in the presence of mysterious forces of nature is one of the most fundamental religious emotions. But awe cannot be identified with fear. Besides fear, awe includes wonder, admiration, interest, respect and even love. But even in the mind of the savage there are the germs of trust and hope and a sense of the positive values which he desires to acquire or conserve. According to W.R. Smith, religion had its origin in a sense of kinship with the God rather than in fear of them as hostile beings.

From the foregoing discussion of the psychological theory of the origin of religion it is seen that it often leads to negative results. There are no separate element of man's psychical nature that can be called specially religious. There is no instinct or faculty or emotion or any psychic element which can be described as religious in the sense that it is not found in the non - religious or secular type of experience.

When we were to hold that religion has its roots in fear, it would still be obvious that fear is not exclusively a religious emotion. Because all fear is not religious fear. Religious consciousness is also not a mere aggregate or mosaic of many psychic elements. It is an organised whole which is greater than the sum of its parts.

Before we close one may raise a question. The question is what are the needs that prompt man to religious activities ? We may point out from the psychological stand point that there are certain basic earthly needs that immediately turn man to seek some solution in the religious sphere. Why is there so much evil in the world? Why should man suffer ? And what again is the way out of these suffering ? These are some of the central questions that figure in every religion. Man's quest for an answer to these puzzling problems has led him to religion. When he resorts to religion he experiences a kind of relief of his tension. Religion by its approach to the problems of evil and suffering enables man to stand erect even in the midst of frustrations and failure. This does not mean that every where religion can offer an actual solution of the problem of evil and suffering. But it means that religion can often provide a man with the necessary mental strength to meet the solution. It shows him the path of salvation. Hence on comparison of different religions we find that the immediate ground for religious motivation is more or less the same at different cultural levels. We find that in every form it enables its followers in some way or other to face the hard situation of life. It gives an individual solace in the

individual. A diminution or subordination of this personal aspect by the socio-religious systems of churches, priesthood, rituals and ceremonies has often crushed the spiritual elements in religion.

Spirituality is the ideal of religion. This spirituality is not the negation of life. Religion has nothing to do with social development if its aim is life negating. Religion should satisfy the whole being of man. It should perfect his physical vital and mental being. Thus spirituality is the essence and criterion of religion. The success of religion as a method of social development depends on the spiritual element in it. Religions are serviceable only so far as they are spiritual. When the spirituality is absent, religion is a mere activity of man, powerful yet never a principle of guidance in his life. Spirituality is the very opposite of limitation, fixation, systematization. It is fulfilled by freedom which means the power to expand and grow towards perfection by the law of one's own nature. A religion founded on spirituality will give freedom and perfection to philosophy, science, art, social and political activities and illumine them for a many-sided finding of their greatest, highest and deepest potentialities. Sociologists regard religion as a social activity which takes society as a reality. Durkheim as such regards God figure as a social truth and necessary for holding the society together as a moral community. The basis of religion should not be negative feelings such as feelings of fear, want, guilt and hatred but the positive fullness of life, joy and freedom. The values of religion have deepened with the deepening of social values.

II.5 Conclusion

From the past tradition it is clear that man believed in religion a-priori. But the present age is an age of science and technology. Freud, Russell and Marx etc. denounced religion. Freud not only rejects a religion of totemism, naturalism, and animal worship but denounces all religion as such in unmistakable terms. But prof. Leuba does not denounce the value of religion in human life. In contrast to Freud's view he says, "Religion and science would work hand in hand for the production of better and happier, a diviner man"¹⁹. This is the view widely popular at present inspite of some agnostics and some materialist sceptics. Hence religion cannot be divorced from human life, as it is instinctive. It can only change its form.

Moreover religion and science are not antagonistic to each other. Science and religion had a common origin both in India and the west. We can neither go back on scientific civilisation nor can we drop religion. The greatest thinkers in the east and the west have felt the need for both science and spiritual life. Science will triumph over ignorance and superstition and religion over selfishness and fear and nations will come together to build a great future for humanity, the brotherhood of man which has the vision of prophets since the beginning of time will be established.

The denouncement of religion by Freud, Marx and other is not entirely useless. Thus these anti-religious trends also have a certain truth

behind them. Because religions and their exponents have everywhere been too often a force of retardation, oppression and ignorance. Churches, cults, and creeds have supported superstitions, aberrations, violence and crimes and exploited them for their own benefit.

It is held that religion is a time bound phenomenon of man and with the deepening of the scientific spirit in man, it is bound to disappear. But this need not be a true view of religion and even of modern men. Marxism Freudianism and Dewey's type of humanism have very systematically tried to destroy the very foundation of traditional religions. But they have themselves assumed the form of some sort of religion. For example communism in Russia and the Eastern Europe reflects the preaching of the Christian Gospel. Even Freudianism teaches a religion of human brotherhood free from psychic complexes and dedicated to the alleviation of human sufferings. John Dewey's teaching of humanism supporting the American type of democracy is itself a form of religion. He too regards his naturalism as the implicit faith of all mankind. It is also a form of militant religion. Thus religion cannot be banished from human beings. Kurt Goldstein, Andras Angyal, Abraham Maslow, Prescott Lecky, Carl Rogers and many others came to the conclusion that personality tends to become one unified whole. Under a strong drive in each man to become an ideal self i.e. an ideal self comes to be projected into a deity, by worshipping which each man get psychological satisfaction of his reaching and realising his perfect self. Thus religion is as natural as breathing, thinking and becoming.

From the foregoing discussions we find here that any specific form of religion is certainly culture bound, but religion in general is natural in man and is not likely to disappear in near future or at any time. ✓

Mahatma Gandhi discussed the concept of religion in a very practical manner not only in individual life but in social life also. Gandhi was a social reformer. He cannot be regarded as originating any new religion in the academic sense of the term. He was influenced by many great religious teachers of the world. From them he took the essential elements of religions and then he tried to assimilate these in his own way and tried to apply these not in his personal life but also in social, political and economic problem. Hence Gandhi can be called a practical philosopher. No one has seen before him a man so passionately concerned for the uplift and emancipation of the poor, the weak and the neglected. Gandhi was a symbol of whatever could be good in man. He has been variously characterised by various people as a saint, a politician, a political thinker, a philosopher, a social reformer, a social and economic leveler, sannyāsin, a religious reformer and so on. But above all he was a man, a religious man, to be more specific. Because he used to say "I am a man of religion".¹ Apart from his political life he said that it was only a garb and that basically he was a religious man. Here we can quote his own statement - "Most religious men I have met are politicians in disguise, I however, who was the guise of a politician am at heart a religious man"².

Fervently behind and beneath his apparently political activities can be clearly seen through his following statement also", at the back of every word that I have uttered since I have known that public life is, and every act that I have done, there has been a religious consciousness and down right religious motive"²². The primacy of Gandhi's religious motive behind all his social and political activities was nothing but self realization or the realization of God. He took social service and the service of the poor and the weak to be his chief concern because he had the firm belief that it was only through such service that he could realise God. He had his own conception of religion. An attempt has been made to discuss Gandhi's views on religion in detail in the next chapter.

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22. Tiwari, K.N., World Religions and Gandhi, p. 3

CHAPTER - III

GANDHI'S CONCEPT OF RELIGION

III.1 Influences

Mahatma Gandhi was essentially a man of dharma. Without religion life for him was not worth living. Gandhiji was not a religious saint who preached his religion amongst the society through his sishyas. But he infused religions in all affairs of life including the state, commerce and industries. He said "Man without religion is man without roots. Therefore religion is the basis on which life structure has to be erected if life is to be real". Gandhiji tried to make himself as an integral part of religion. Regarding his attitude towards religion he said "you must watch my life, how I live, eat, sit, talk, behave in general. The sum total of all these in me is my religion". This quotation indicates that for Gandhi, religion should pervade everyone of our action.

It is well known fact that everything in this world has some cause behind it. Human personality is a complex of environment and heredity. Human psychology tells us that much of an individual's personality is built when he is a child. Gandhiji inherited his religious forum from his parents. His family background shaped his religious thoughts to a certain extent. Hence the family environment of Gandhi was also responsible for his religious favour. Gandhiji's parents were religious minded persons. His father was Sjt. Karamchand Gandhi, who was also known as Kaba Gandhi. Kaba Gandhi was a believer in God and used to visit temples and saints. Kaba Gandhi's father (Mahatma Gandhi's grand father) Ota Bapa preferred to devote his old age to the spiritual

matters. Ota Bapa was a follower of vallabhacharya's pustimarga, which believes solely in the efficacy of devotion for realising the supreme. Ota Bapa was very much attracted to one Khaki's Baba, a follower of the order of Ramananda. Ramananda was a preacher of the cult of pure devotion that knows no distinction between man and man. He was a person who inspired the mystic poet Kabira. He also inspired Tulsidas the well-known author of the Ram-charita-manasa. Ota Bapa became fond of Tulsi's Ram-charita-manasa. His son Kaba Gandhi was also fond of it. Kaba Gandhi used to recite some portions of the Gita daily. He had a deep rooted aptitude for religion and devotion. Gandhi's mother Putalibai was more devoted to God. Putalibai's parents were the followers of pranami or sat or pranami sect. This sect aims at combining the best elements of Hinduism and Islam. Gandhiji pointed out that at one time they (The follower of this sect) were considered to be even crypto Muslims. At porbandar a pranami temple was situated in a close vicinity of Gandhi's house. He said about this temple in the following words, "There were no idols or images in it ; and on the walls there was writing that looked very much like texts from the Koran. The dress that the priests wore was unlike that Hindu priests in temples generally wear and their way of praying also resembled somewhat that of the Muslims"³. Prānnāth was the founder of this sect. He was a member of Kshatriya community of Kathia war. After him this sect is sometimes called sect of Prānnāthis.

Gandhi's father Kaba Gandhi believed in God and sought the

company of holy persons. He had visitors belonging to different religions like Islam, Zoroastrianism, Christianity etc. At times these persons discussed religious matters. Gandhiji being a child, used to take interest in their talks. Regarding the matter of Gandhis' religious teaching we may mention here the name viz. Rambhā who was a maidservant of Gandhiji. Rambhā was very much religious minded. Gandhiji was afraid of ghosts when he was a child. Rambha told him, "There are no ghosts. But if you are afraid repeat Rāmanāma, your fear shall vanish"⁴. Later Gandhi became fearless because of this faith in Rāmanāma.

Gandhiji stated in his autobiography that he was very much influenced by chance reading of 'Sharavana pitribhakti Nataka' which he found among his father's book. He was also very much influenced by the play of Harishchandra. He said, "I literally believed in the story of Harishchandra. The thought of it all often made me weep. My commonsense tells me today that Harishchandra couldnot have been a historical character. Still both Harishchandra and Shrivana are living realities for me and I am sure that I should be moved as before if I were to read those plays again today"⁵.

Gandhiji was influenced by Raychandbhai also. Raychandbhai had made deep study of the vedanta, the Bhagavadgita and the Bhagavad Purana. He had also studied the Jain scriptures along with the Koran, Zendavesta etc. He was Jain by his religion but had respect for all the religions.

Gandhiji appeared to have been deeply influenced by the Jain

teachings of the soul and its path to liberation.' These influences began operating in his youth through the Jain monks who advised his father and his mother. They affected him most strongly through his intimate friendship, conversation and correspondence with the Jain reformers and poet, Raychand Mehta. And it resulted in Gandhi's acceptance of the Jain ideal of moksha as the complete self sufficiency of the soul (svatantrata) through the detachment of all passion and ignorance. It is well known that Jainism along with Buddhism originated in India as a reaction against caste distinctions and excessive ritualism prevalent in Hinduism. Gandhiji was also very much against caste distinction and he himself did not like a religion of excessive ritualism. Though Gandhi was very much influenced by the Jaina doctrine of ahimsa, he did not like the way in which the doctrine was practiced in Jainism. He did not like to make fetish of ahimsa. Gandhi was influenced not only by these religions but also by some of the important philosophical principles of Jainism, namely, Anekāntavāda and Syādvāda. Besides non-violence, Jainism emphasis on the following ethical virtues like purity, chastity, non-attachment, non-possession, non-stealing, truth, compassion, love, fellow feeling etc. But of these utmost emphasis has been laid on the virtues of celibacy (brahmacharyas), non-attachement (aparigraha), non-stealing (asteya) and truth (Satya). These along with non-violence constitute the panchamahavratas of Jainism which has got a very special significance in it. Gandhi has mentioned exactly these five in his list of ethical virtues. These virtues are stressed in Hinduism and Buddhism also. But it can be said that Gandhi was indebted more to Jainism

than to any other religion.

Gandhi was very much influenced by Buddhism. The 'Light of Asia' influenced him. He learnt the lesson of religion, ahimsa, renunciation, detachment, sacrifice brotherhood for the entire mankind irrespective of caste, creeds and social status from Buddhism. Gandhi like the Buddha was also convinced that human suffering was the greatest reality of the world. Gandhi's suffering was not the personal suffering of the individual which resulted from decay, disease and death. He took up the cause of social suffering, injustice and tyranny which was inflicted by political, social and economic exploitation. So his main concern was to find a way to remove social suffering. Gandhiji accepted Buddhist eight fold path for the salvation of mankind.

Gandhiji had deep devotion to Christianity and he studied Christianity. The sermon on the mount especially created an indelible impression on his mind. He said that Jesus occupies in his heart the place of one of the great teachers who have had a considerable influence on his life. Though Mahatma Gandhi was an admirer of the Christian religion he rejected many conceptions of Christianity. He did not accept that sin is inherent in all mankind. For him man is composed of flesh and blood and suffers from the native defects of these elements and therefore he commits sin. He did not accept the belief that Jesus Christ was only the incarnation of God. For him, Krsna, Rama, Mohammed and Zoraster were equally incarnated divine persons. Jesus can not be the only son of God and God can not be his exclusive. Further Gandhi

says that it was impossible for him to regard Christianity as a perfect religion or the greatest of all religions. According to Gandhi those who today call themselves Christians do not know the true message of Jesus. Amongst religions other than Hinduism perhaps no other religion inspired, impressed and influenced Gandhi so much as did Christianity. Gandhi learnt the concept of Satyagraha, mostly from the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament of the Bible. Gandhi loved Christianity, because of its absolute emphasis on love as the most important ethical virtue. Jesus taught and practiced true ahimsa and true love. His whole life is an example of love and sacrifice for others.

Gandhi was thoroughly influenced by Tolstoy's book, 'The kingdom of God is within you', in which Tolstoy dismissed the role of the church in Christianity and laid more stress on the principle of love, sacrifice and honesty in realising God head than on the ritual. Leo Tolstoy was the first teacher and guide of Mahatma Gandhi. He was indebted to Tolstoy for his Philosophy on bread labour, (The philosophy of non-violence preached and practised by Mahatma Gandhi has been derived from Tolstoy's teaching.) Both Tolstoy and Gandhi tried to decentralise the powers of the state and encourage the method of informal co-operation. Tolstoy and Gandhi were firm vedantists. Both conceived that communion with God is possible to man. Tolstoy and Gandhi were seekers of truth. They denounced modern civilisation based on force and exploitation. Both opposed the violent methods of fighting evil. Both concerned themselves with the purity of means, ascetic

morality, simplicity, bread labour and celibacy for the moral growth of the individual. Gandhi's concept of non-violence is slightly different from that of Tolstoy. To Tolstoy non-violence means avoidance of force in all its form and in all circumstances. But for Gandhi in certain circumstances even killing may be called ahimsa, as life involves some amount of violence. He follows the Gita's ideal of action and resists evil with detachment of spirit.

Gandhi regards Islam to be a religion of peace in the sense as Christian, Buddhism and Hinduism are. Gandhi said, "I feel about the honour of Islam as much as I feel about my own religion"⁶ Gandhi observed that there is nothing in the Koran to warrant the use of force for conversion. The Holy Koran says in the clearest language that there is no compulsion in religion. According to Gandhi, Islam would cease to be a world religion if it relies upon force for its propagation. Gandhi was also impressed by the social and personal codes of behaviour as Islam prescribed. The five pillars of Islam prescribe rules for personal behaviours. Prayer, fasting, alms giving and hospitality are duties that every muslim has to perform. Moreover there are regulations for marriage, divorce, dowry, inheritance, funeral ceremonies etc. All these influenced Mahatma Gandhi's thought and that is why he liked Islam very much. Again Islam is unflinching monotheism i.e. faith in only the God and no other, is one important and attractive principle of Islam which influenced Gandhi very much. According to Islam, there is no God but Allah-'La'illaha ila' illahu'.

Gandhiji's thoughts and ideas were very much influenced and moulded by the teaching of the Koran. He also found in the history of Islam the blending of the political with the religious and this perhaps reassured him in his faith that politics could not be separated from religion and that the political struggle required long and patient suffering.

Moreover the Islamic ethics of the brotherhood of man and service to humanity impressed Gandhi a good deal. He found in Islam a firm base for real love and kindness for all. Gandhi found many of the injunctions of the discipline of brahmacharya in Islam in the form of its prohibition of perfumed oil, intoxicating drinks, illegal sexual intercourse etc. Virtue like obedience to parents, avoidance of adultery, cheating and lying, refraining from theft, murder etc. are also emphasised in Islam and all these influenced Gandhi in the formation of his code of ethical virtues.

Mahatma Gandhi derived his philosophy and religion from Bhagavad gita. Gandhi said "As for myself, I run to my mother, Gita, whenever I find myself in difficulties and upto now she has never failed to comfort me. It is possible that those who are getting comfort from the Gita may get greater help and see something altogether new, if they came to know the way in which I understand it from day to-day"⁷. Again Gandhiji said that the Gita was not only his Bible or his Koran; for him, Gita was his mother. He lost his earthly mother who gave him birth long ago. But this eternal mother had completely filled his

place by his side ever since. She (Gita) has never changed. Gita has never failed him when he was in difficulty or distress, he sought refuge in her bosom. Gandhi learnt from the Gita that religion is not opposed to material good. He learnt from the Gita's teaching that what cannot be followed out in day-to-day practice cannot be called religion. For Mahatma Gandhi, the Gita is a book of spiritual reference. He learnt from the Gita that God realisation is possible only through righteous action or non-violence. Mere telling of beads would not achieve anything for us. If the devotee refrains from action and does not wage war for establishing a righteous and spiritual universe, there can be no salvation for him.

The writings of Ruskin especially in his book 'Unto this last' influenced Gandhi so much that he tried to reform his life based on the teachings contained in it. The book brought about an instantaneous transformation in Gandhi's life. He translated it later into Gujarati under the title sarvodaya. Ruskin's writing made Mahatma Gandhi realise the dignity of labour and the ideal that action for the good of all is the most virtuous principle. He tried to translate these ethical precepts in his own conduct.

III.2 Religion and morality

For Gandhi, morality is the very foundation of life. Morality helps us to check the passions and impulses that lead to discord, strife and ruin. It promotes these feelings which create harmony, peace and

happiness. For him, morality has greatest value because morality is man's inner guide.

To Gandhi, true religion and true morality were inseparably bound up with each other and therefore Gandhiji without any hesitation rejected any religious theory which was in conflict with morality. He pointed out that there could not be any true religion without morality; religion and morality were two faces of the same coin where in neither of them could be separated from each other. He said that religion was to morality what water was to seed sown in the soil. Thus he found that the essence of religion is morality or ethics and true religion changes our nature and purifies our character. For Whitehead also religions are very intimately related to our character. He said "A religion on its doctrinal side, can thus be defined as a system of general truths which have the effect of transforming character when they are sincerely held and vividly apprehended". Again he pointed out that man cannot be untruthful, cruel and incontinent if God is on his side. Hence it is clear that Gandhi's ultimate end in equating religion with morality was to make religion dynamically operative in human life. He wanted to introduce morality and religion in every sphere of life so that men could be men in the real sense of the term. He said that moral progress stands in an inverse ratio to material progress. For Gandhi, without moral life one cannot be spiritual.

There is a moral vacuum in the affairs of man today. Lack of morality leads man's life to miserable and painful existence.

Hence in this case Gandhiji's principal of religion and morality cannot be avoided. For Gandhi, morality was the means. He took resort to non violence the criterion of the moral nature of means. Regarding means he agreed with the Indian law of Karma and Gita's view of Niskāma karma. "As you sow, so you will reap". This is the essence of the law of karma which all Indian systems except Carvaka materialist accepted. Gandhiji also adhered to this moral belief and found in it a great source of encouragement for a good moral life and for doing his duty for the sake of duty without expecting any results for his actions. This moral attitude has an essential similarity to that of the great western Philosopher Immanuel Kant. For Kant, rightness or wrongness are the characteristics of every action. Kant's theory is sometimes termed as 'duty for duty's sake'. According to him duty or right action means obedience to the moral law. Moral law is called by Kant 'The categorical Imperative'. The categorical Imperative is a command. It is to use Kants word an unconditional imperative. It is independent of desire and has abiding force upon our will. We cannot know the right without knowing that it is absolutely or unconditionally obligatory. According to Kant, consequences whether foreseen or unforeseen does not determine the morality of our action. For him rightness depends on good intention or what Kant calls a good will. Someone who acts in order to obey the moral law acts from good will which is a duty. Action from good will is always good and is therefore described by Kant as good without qualification. According to Kant, goodness can be the quality of will only. There can be nothing which can be called good without qualification

except a good will or good nature. Similarly for Gandhi only pure means could result in good end and impure means could not result in a good end. Again Gandhi believed in the Gita's famous sloka which we find in second chapter 47 number sloka of Bhagavad Gita. The sloka is :-

"Karmanye Vādhikārāste

Ma phalesu kadasana

Ma karmaphala heturbha

Ma te sangohasta Karmani"

Here the Gita says, "Do your allotted work but renounce its fruit — be detached and work - have no desire for reward and work"

III.3 Gandhi and Kant on morality

Both Mahatma Gandhi and Kant have contributed a lot in the ethical field. Though both of them lived at different periods and places. Yet there is similarity in their ethical approach. They are not only moral but also practical idealists. They established a new and revolutionary ethics of their times and applied it for the upliftment of society.

For both of them, truth was the staff of life. Gandhiji held that man must practise truth in thought, word and deed. For Kant, Truthfulness is the basis for all other duties and it should be followed with diligence

Both of them emphasized on humility, for both of them, lying

was a crime. Gandhiji stressed that we must do good even to the evil doer. He interpreted Ahimsa not only in the negative aspect of harmlessness but also in the positive aspect of love i.e. of doing good even to the evil doer. For Gandhi, it is non-violence only when we love those who hate us. On the other for Kant, love is a feeling not of will or volition. For him, we must always do good to other whether we love them or not.

Gandhiji considered that religious consciousness is absolutely necessary for spiritual life and for self-realization. He got this idea from his mother Putlibai. Kant also got his religious faith from his mother. But later on he turned away from Biblical Christianity. Gandhiji held that morality is the basis of all religions. That is why he rejected any religious theory which was in conflict with morality. On the otherhand Kant divided religion into two. They are - (1) Favour seeking religion and (2) Moral religion. The former is based on the principle — Ask and thou shalt be given. Thus by asking God for essential things he will be given. The later one i.e. the moral religion is the religion of a good life.

For Kant churches and conventions must assist people in their moral development. Fasts, pilgrimages and penance have no moral basis. But for Gandhi, fasting is potent weapon of purification. He observed that fasting and prayer are the two non-violence means or ways by which we can become better and attain a good life.

For Kant, dogmas should not be given importance in religion. He said that respecting other religion was a human discipline and therefore man should not mock at other religions, but man should respect them. Here Gandhiji also agreed with Kant. Gandhiji held that man should respect other religions as he respects his own.

Kant was of the opinion that it is not religion that leads to morality but religion must proceed from morality. Gandhiji also held the same view. For Gandhi, precedence must be given to morality and man must strive for the unity of moral life with religious one.

Proselytisation was considered by Kant as a rash move. He was against proselytisation. For him man can please God by following his own religion rather than any other religion. In this aspect Gandhiji slightly differs. Gandhi was against forcible conversion through material inducement. Gandhi held that conversion is a heart process known only to and by God. But Gandhiji accepted voluntary conversion.

For Gandhi, prayer is the very core of man's life. Gandhi held that he who seeks to find God within him, must stick to prayer. For him, real prayer is from the heart without words. Kant also agreed with Gandhi and held that prayers are essentially of subjective value and not objective. Both held that all our conceptions in Praise of God are erroneous. For them instead of repeating his name parrotwise, man must carry out his will and must lead a good life.

According to both Kant and Gandhi, man must lead a moral

life not for any worldly gain but for his own sake. For them, morality should be the basis for all our actions and we must perform moral actions voluntarily. Good acts done out of compulsion cannot be treated as moral.

For Kant, it is God who exists for the sake of morality. On the other hand for Gandhi, it is not God who exists for the moral life, but moral life exists for the fulfillment of God's purpose. God is the superior force and everything else is inferior.

Kant held that in a perfect state we do our duty without attachment to fruits. Similarly Gandhiji also laid stress on the performance of actions without attachment.

✓ Though there is much similarity between Kant and Gandhi on morality, Kant's morality differ from Gandhi's in some ways. Kant was a rationalist, so he gave more importance to reason. On the other hand Gandhi was a man of faith. He had immense faith in God. At the same time Gandhiji didnot completely neglect reason. He stured that he would not accept that which had not passed the test of reason and morality which were for him the twin God given implements for judging right and wrong.

✓ Kant rejected all feelings as false except the feeling of respect for the moral law. On the other hand Gandhi didnot remove the importance of all feelings, but he insisted on the eradication of lower or selfish feelings.

Kantian moral imperative is rigorous, formal and individualistic. On the other hand Gandhian moral imperative is centred round God and is not rigorous. For both of them lack of moral feeling leads humanity to animality.

Gandhi and Kant stressed that as a moral being every man has got conscience. Gandhi called it "The still small voice within" and Kant called it "The consciousness of an internal tribunal in man". For both Gandhi and Kant, the path to God-realization is through the conscience.

Gandhi observed that though man knows what is dharma he does not follow it and though he knows what is adharma he never desists from it. It is like St. Paul's statement, "The good that I would, I do not; the evil that I would not that I do¹⁰." Kant also accepted the Gandhian conception of good and evil. For Kant man is born good; he has been created for good, but this does not make man good. Kant was of the opinion that it is only when man adopts the moral law that he is called a good man.

Gandhi emphasized on the importance of will. For him, there is no power on earth which can make a man do a thing contrary to his will. Kant also stressed on the will which envisages the freedom of man as a moral being. A will which craves for sensuous desire is animal will. So Kant held that our will should be free from such desires and reason should be the guiding aspect. On the other hand Gandhi stressed that only those are free who are dearer to God. But Kant

did not agree with him, because this indicates barrenness of the moral law. For him, freedom is the realization of the moral law which is devoid of any content. Kant stressed on individual reason and for Gandhi to attain freedom universal Reason is required.

Both Gandhi and Kant accept the immortality of the soul. For Kant, it is one of the basic postulates of morality. Kant's morality is essentially individualistic whereas Gandhi's claims to be universalistic. Gandhiji held that man should sacrifice everything in the service of humanity. On the other hand for Kant, though we must consider the happiness of others, we must also give precedence to our own perfection irrespective of whether it brings us happiness or pain. Kant held that we must not only reject others but also our own selves. But for Gandhi, each individual should sacrifice for other individual, the individual in his turn should sacrifice himself for the country and the country for the world. In this manner he stressed on social welfare or common good.

For both Gandhi and Kant means justify the end. For Gandhi, means and end are convertible terms. For Kant also the categorical imperative stresses not on the means only but on the ends which thereby combines a concept of duty with an end.

In politics, Gandhi wanted to bring down the kingdom of heaven. His politics sought after moral and religious ends and he relied on the principles of moral law. On the other hand Kant was not

politically famous like Gandhi. Kant insisted that the aim of politics based on ethics should be the establishment of peace. He was aware that only through the moral ideal that he professed he could establish permanent peace.

From the foregoing discussion it is clear that though Gandhi and Kant believed that the main purpose of human life is to achieve moral autonomy and freedom Gandhi did not accept Kant's conception that man's Progress is slow and the goal is something beyond man's reach. Gandhiji held that the end could be reached by human endeavour. We can conclude here that Gandhi was much similar to Kant regarding his adherence to the Moral Principle specially in the belief in the universalizability of the categorical imperative of Duty. Both Kant and Gandhi's life style provide us with a way of life and their principle are useful to solve global problems. They never tried to teach people what is right but insisted on making them do what they ought to do.

III.4 Gandhi and Marx on morality

Marx, a German by birth, belongs to the whole world and is acclaimed as a prophet by the communist world. Gandhi born in India, belongs to Humanity. Both of them look upon the cause of the 'down trodden' and 'exploited' humanity. Both fought against social suffering, economic exploitation and inequalities.

The goals of Gandhi and Marx were to liberate man from the bondages and to create an exploitation - free society. Gandhiji believed

in oneness of man, of humanity and therefore the idea of class war did not appeal to him. Gandhi was an ethical revolutionary. He emphasized the moral hollowness of modern civilization and suggested the sanctity of ethical substance and criterion. He believed in converting his opponent through the peaceful pursuit of persuasion and education. To liberate a man from the bondages, the Marxists have adopted the means of torturing, harassment etc. Gandhi's way, methods, techniques etc. were such that they never permit power structure for centralisation. The decentralisation of economic and administrative power has to be worked out from the beginning under Gandhism. At the same time he gave the technique of satyagraha. That is why Donald Smith said, "Gandhi's revolutionary strategy of conflict was worked out in the theory and practice of satyagraha to save mankind from destruction as well as from exploitation"¹¹.

Gandhi was an idealist where as Marx was a materialist. Gandhi believed that the social changes originate from within the individual. Further he believed that a transformed individual can change the society by the example of love and sacrifice. That is why he propounded the theory of 'satyagrah'. The theory of 'satyagrah' and other important Gandhian theories like trusteeship and sarvodaya are based on Gandhi's peculiar concept of human nature. Gandhi's man represent essential goodness. For Gandhi, the essence of human nature was goodness inherent in each individual. Gandhi stood for equality, justice and freedom. He was opposed to exploitation or oppression of any segment

of the society and that is why he strived continuously for the uplift of the harijans and the downtrodden section of society and for advancing the status of women to a position of absolute equality. He passionately advocated the cause of decentralisation of power both political and economic and favoured equal distribution of wealth and termed as 'theft' anything beyond and in excess of man's immediate requirements.

For Marx, a classless society where in so far as material goods are concerned, there shall prevail a kind of primitive communism whose governing principle will be from each according to his capacities, to each according to his needs. On the other hand according to Gandhi it will be a society in which the dominant principles will be truth and non-violence. Hence 'Marxian ideal is a state of peace, plenty and prosperity while to Gandhi the ideal is simple living and high thinking

Gandhi opposed states ownership of material resources of the community which was the basic tenets of Marxism. Gandhi was in fact opposed to industrialization and favoured cottage instead of heavy industry. Gandhiji believed that social and economic ills of society can be removed and remedied by proper education, by a change of heart and moral education. The very basis of his theory of trusteeship is his belief in the conversion of the heart of the zamindars and the industrialists.

Gandhi was a votary of non-violence. The ideal society is only another name for a state of non-violence. To him means are as important

as the end and anything achieved by violence even swaraj is not worth having.

In Gandhiji, the realisation of truth by each and every individual is the paramount objective whereas in Marx it is the socio-economic and political structure that forms the pivot of his thinking. An individual irrespective of his class or creed occupies the central place in Gandhi's thinking, whereas the proletariat and its emancipation is the central theme in Marx.

Decentralisation of power and economy has direct bearing on Gandhi's concept of individual freedom. For Gandhi, man was not so much a material entity as a spiritual entity. Therefore he believed in the doctrine of trusteeship. Marxists and all other material thinkers laughed at his principle of trusteeship. But Gandhi had firm faith in this doctrine. To Gandhi man is primarily a moral being. He who always placed truth and non-violence above everything else, could have the moral courage and strength to have such a Himalayan faith in man's goodness.

From the foregoing discussions we can conclude here that both that Gandhi and Marx have a common goal— an exploitation— free society. But the path paved by them are different. Gandhi being born in India has the impress of the heritage of this country. Marx became mature in the climate of the capitalism and industrialism of the west. Both were the forerunners of hope to mankind. Gandhi's technique was

full of non-violent attitudes where as in the Marxist techniques, violence is prominent. India achieved independence under the inspiring leadership of Gandhi. Russia shook of the shackles of czarism under the inspiration of the Marxian ideology through by means of different techniques.

III.5 Truth and non-violence

Gandhiji was one to preach and practice truth and non-violence to the greatest extent. Truth and non-violence were the cardinal point on which Gandhiji had based the whole structure. For him the aim of life was the realisation of God. Gandhiji always said that he had nothing new to teach the world and truth and non-violence were as old as the hills. Truth and non-violence are so inextricably bound up together that it is very difficult to disentangle them. Means and ends were convertible terms for him, because he took the two as practically inseparable. He was of the firm faith that good end could be achieved only through a good means and an end, however good, it could not be desirable unless it was attained through good means. To practice ahimsa according to Gandhi would be to realise truth and to realise truth would be to practice ahimsa. In this connection he said, "Ahimsa is my God, and Truth is my God. When I look for Ahimsa, Truth says 'Find it through me', when I look for Truth, Ahimsa says 'Find it through me'¹². This shows that according to Gandhi truth and ahimsa are to be realised through each other. Both are inextricably bound up. Again non possession and absolute lack of self interest are essential conditions for the realisation of truth and for the practice of ahimsa.

according to Gandhi. So long as one is attached to worldly things and works for own selfish interest one can neither practice truthfulness and ahimsa nor can be able to realise truth.

Gandhiji regarded both truth and non-violence as inherent in human nature. No society can survive without that. Gandhiji pinned his political faith entirely on these two moral absolutes of truth and non-violence and stressed their close link between them. The link between truth and non-violence has been depicted by Gandhiji himself. He said that truth and non-violence are like the two sides of a coin, or rather the two sides of a smooth unstamped metallic disc. He felt that Truth should be wedded to Ahimsa and welfare of all for saving the mankind from a bleak and gloomy future. He visualised an ideal society which is based on truth and non-violence. Further he maintained that by the employment of truth and non-violence, it is possible to discover the underlying unity amongst all religions. He said, "That Master key is truth and non-violence. When I unlock the chest of a religion with this master key, I do not find it difficult to discover its likeness with other religions"¹³. He gave these religious principles a practical turn. He believed that the salvation of humanity depended on the practice of these principles. Gandhiji lived a life of truth and non-violence in a world riddled with evil and falsehood. He had to bear the hatred of those who could not purify their personal and social lives. And yet he loved them all. Hence it is seen how intimately truth and ahimsa are related according to Gandhi. These two principles were

elaborated into eleven principles i.e. eleven vows and a verse containing them was recited morning and evening at his prayers. His eleven vows are discussed below.

✓ III.6 Eleven vows

A vow is a determined will to lead a disciplined life. Gandhi's eleven vows are - (i) Truth (satya), (ii) Ahimsa (non-violence), (iii) Asteya (non-stealing), (iv) Brahmachaya (Chastity), (v) Aparigraha (non-possession), (vi) Sharirashram (physical labour), (vii) Aswada (control of the palate), (viii) sarvatra bhaya - varjana (Fearlessness), (ix) Sarvadharmā Samābhava (equality of all religions), (x) Swadeshi and (xi) Sparshabhavana (discarding of untouchability). The first five of these are basic moral principles of Hinduism and Jainism. And the six others are their derivatives suited to the requirements of the times. While emphasising the necessity of vows Gandhi said "A life without vows is like a ship without anchor or like an edifice that is built on sand instead of a solid rock. A vow imparts stability, ballast and firmness to one's character"¹⁴. The observance of eleven vows form an integral part of Mahatma Gandhi's religion.

i) Truth (Satya) : is first and most important vow because in deserving it other vows are required. Gandhi himself took the concept of truth to be more fundamental and more important than that of ahimsa. That is why he said, "As a Jain muni once rightly said, I was not so much votary of ahimsa as I was of truth, and I put the later in the first

place and former in the second. For, as he puts it, I was capable of sacrificing non-violence for the sake of Truth. In fact, it was in the course of my pursuit of truth that I discovered non-violence"¹⁴. Let us discuss what actually Gandhi meant by truth.

Truth was the cornerstone of the edifice of Gandhi's life. For Gandhi truth was something which was common to the theists as well as to the atheists, to the layman as well as to the scientist, to a religionist as well as to a rationalist.

In fact it can be expressed by the word law, the law which control and rules the whole of being and becoming. In this sense, it may also be expressed by the word Reality. For Gandhi, truth was not only practical but was absolutely necessary for progress in our living. He said that truth was not to be found in books and it was in every human heart. He commanded that all should devote themselves wholly to truth in all hours whether working, eating, drinking or playing till dissolution of the body made us one with truth. He pointed out that truth was not a concept but it was a reality an ideal to be sought and realised and that was mere by the sovereign principle of life and conduct. Gandhi has identified satya with that basic reality which holds together or sustains the entire universe. This is really the primary and the most important sense in which Gandhi has used the term 'Satya' and in that he has been very much influenced by the traditional Hindu concept of sat, Dharma or Rta. For Gandhi truth in itself is one and absolute but our glimpses of it are relative and many. Here Gandhi

was influenced by the *anekāntavāda* and *syadvada* of Jainism. All the different religions are different attempts at apprehending the absolute truth in partial and relative ways. All religions therefore are bound to be imperfect because all of them interpret truth only partially in their own ways. Again for Gandhi all religions were equally valuable and holy because all were the creations of the same God.

Gandhi's concept of religion was correspondent with his concept of truth. Just as relative truth were necessary to realise absolute truth, similarly Gandhi had glimpses of absolute perfect religion through particular historical religions like Hinduism, Christianity, Islam and all other religions. He harmonised all religions and gave them reality. Gandhiji enjoyed and showed respect towards all religions because they all contained an element of truth. From the foregoing discussions it is clear that Gandhi admits that human truth is relative and absolute truth is perfection which is God and may not be realisable in the flesh. He feels that through relative truth, absolute truth can be approached.

According to Gandhi, the inner voice as conscience is the sole source for knowing what the truth is. Again Gandhiji said that before one claimed to know truth on the strength of his inner voice, he must have fully disciplined himself by cultivating the virtues of truthfulness, humanity, purity and above all, non-violence and embrace the two ideals of poverty and non-possession. Such a man should be fully devoted to truth and should have fully controlled his senses from the worldly attractions. In the words of Gandhi one must reduce himself

to zero, before he begins claiming the realisation of truth through the voice of conscience.

ii) Ahimsa (Non-violence) : Gandhiji felt that it was very difficult to define ahimsa. The only way to understand non-violence was to practice it. He said that non-violence was the first article and it was also the last article of his creed. He said "My life is dedicated to service of India through the religion of non-violence"¹⁶. Ahimsa played an essential role in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism in different ways and it was regarded as equivalent to Dharma and was taken as an essential means to liberation. Gandhiji maintained that ahimsa in its negative form meant doing no injury to any living being either physically or mentally and ahimsa in its positive form meant love. In this concept of ahimsa in its positive form Gandhiji was greatly influenced by the teaching of love of the New Testament.

Gandhiji's non-violence was synonymous with love in the purest and widest sense of term. For him, if love was not the law of life, life would not have persisted in the midst of death. According to Gandhi (a) love never claims, it ever gives (b) Love ever suffers, never resents, never revenges itself. He said that where love was, there God was also. He pointed out that love was basic force or principle in the universe. He said, "It is my faith that we can conquer the whole world by truth and love"¹⁷. In this case, Gandhiji was very much influenced by the Christian Sermon, 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. It is Christianity which identifies God with love and it is Christianity

which teaches service of the poor and the needy. Hence Gandhi took religion primarily as consisting of love, kindness and sympathy towards others. He said that he was practicing non-violence for an unbroken period of over 50 years and he had applied it in every walk of life, domestic, institutional, economic and political. Again Gandhiji pointed out that cowardice and ahimsa did not go together. For him non-violence is not the non-violence of the coward or the weak, but that of the brave and the strong. Gandhiji preferred violence than cowardice on occasions of duties such as defending the honour of women or of ones nation etc. But here a problem arises. Gandhiji's intention of making ahimsa as absolute moral principle posed real problems for him. But Gandhiji tried to solve them beautifully. He has cited the example of a man who in a fit of madness goes about with a sword swaying in his hand and killing people indiscriminately. Nobody dares capturing this demon alive. So in such a situation it is necessary to kill such a man for avoiding further himsa and for protecting other members of the society. Similarly there might be other situations in which killing would be necessary as a moral duty. Again here one question arises — if killing sometimes may be a necessary duty, as in the case of lunatic then why not kill all those who oppress mankind ? But Gandhi believed in the inherent goodness of man and according to him no man was such who could not be reformed by proper education. Gandhiji distinguished between himsa and ahimsa by indicating that himsa meant killing from a sense of ill will or a motive of selfishness, anger etc

and ahimsa meant refraining from so doing. Gandhi's principle of ahimsa is absolute in the sense that, it was carried out in the true sense of non-attachment, love and charity towards all beings. It informs the spirit within about the circumstance in which violence becomes necessary. Perfect non-violence is not possible in human body. A man therefore, is to do what is morally possible for him to do in the particular circumstances. From the foregoing discussions it is shown that Gandhiji concerned ahimsa as a great moral virtue and at the same time he realised the practical difficulties of the ordinary people in observing the vow in true letter and spirit without any exception. That is why he only talked of such virtues and vows which could be practically observed. But Gandhi himself did never make those spiritual and moral virtues very cheap on the ground of practical difficulties. He stood firm to his faith in ahimsa more or less in an absolute manner and in that lies his greatness.

The principal of non-violence is not very much realised in the present day society and violence is raising in everywhere. There is no peace in the society. If all want to emancipate the society from all kinds of social evils, we should apply this principle because, it is non-violence which can bring peace in society. Hence the value of Gandhi's principle of non-violence cannot be avoided. Marxism believes that the end justifies the means. He does not hesitate to fight for a cause by all the means fair and foul. To them, the cause is more important than the means where as in Gandhian Philosophy means and ends are

convertible terms. Gandhiji pointed out that they are inseparable and shall be equally pure. He was rightly influenced by the Gita. He said that we can control the means but not the end; the end grows out of the means.

iii) Asteya (Non-stealing) : Non stealing means not to commit theft. one should not take anything which belongs to others without permission. For Gandhiji non-stealing means much more than it. Non-stealing is against not only taking others property but also receiving something which one does not need. For example (a) a father eating something secretly, keeping his children in the dark (b) improper multiplication of one's wants, (c) coveting anybody's belongings etc. Gandhiji wanted the human wants to be reduced to the minimum and for him it would be theft even if one uses more articles than one's daily needs. Gandhiji was very strict in regard to the practice of honesty in day to day matters. Mahatma Gandhi wanted to emphasise that man who wanted to deserve the vow of non-stealing must be humble, thoughtful, vigilant and simple in habits. But this vow is not fully realised in present society. Today it is seen that every person becomes self-centred. Everyone is busy to increase their wealth by any means. So, a gap between the rich and the poor arises. As a result the society cannot progress. So to live a better and happier life the practice of the non-stealing vow is essential for us.

iv) Brahmacharya (Chastity) : Generally brahmacharya means control over the sex-desire. Etymologically brahmacharya means the discipline

which leads to the realisation of Brahman. For Gandhiji brahmacharya didnot mean mere control of sexual passion, it meant control of all the organs of sense. He said "If we practice simultaneous self control in all directions the attempt will be scientific and possible of success"¹⁸. Chastity like all other observances must be practised in thought, word and deed. So brahmacharya means self control in all directions.

Moreover Gandhi did not mean that only unmarried people could observe brahmacharya. If a person is married he can observe this vow if he establishes with his wife a relationship based on purity and friendship and not on lust. He didnot consider physical union between married couples as violation of brahmacharya so long as such union was purely for the sake of progeny. He said that sexual act can be performed only when both desire it. Gandhi had himself practiced brahmacharya. He said that it would not have been possible for him to be pure satyagrahi without the vow of brahmacharya. So here we find that Gandhi's vow of brahmacharya is very necessary for making in day-today's life. Today, lack of control of organs of sense is seen every where. The cases of social evils like robbery, murder, rape, exploitation is destroying peace and harmony from the domestic and social life nowadays. So like Gandhi we should also try to practice this vow so that we can reduce the amount of social evils considerably.

v) Asangraha (Non-possession) : For Gandhi, if someone has more than what is needed, he should act as its trustee and make room for the have-nots. He said that a follower of truth could not held anything

for tomorrow. For him limitation of wants could only promote real happiness and contentment.

vi) Sharirashram (Physical labour) : Gandhiji took this idea of bread labour from Ruskin and Tolstoy. He believed that to live, man must work. Everyone should do some physical labour to earn one's bread. That is why Gandhi said "God created man to work for his food and those who eat without work were thieves"¹⁹. Mahatma Gandhi emphasised the importance of bread labour and thereby contributed immensely to the religion of service. Hence he said, "If this principle is observed everywhere all men would be equal, none would starve and the world be saved from many a sin"²⁰. So today if we try to practice this vow, we can at least save our society from many sins and violences.

vii) Aswada (Control of the palate) : Gandhiji observed that only that quantity of food which may be essential for the body should be taken by an individual and the quality of food which increased taste in food should be avoided. He was of the opinion that if one has overcome the pleasures of the palate primarily it was easy to observe the other vows, especially the vow of brahmacharya and a religious man must be a vegetarian. For Gandhi, vegetarianism was a part of his religion in practice. We should not live to eat rather we should eat to live. That is why he said "We must not be thinking of food all the twenty four hours of the day. The only thing needful is perpetual vigilance, which will help us to find out very soon when we eat for self

indulgence and when in order only to sustain the body. This being discovered, we must resolutely set out force against mere indulgence"²¹

Gandhiji did not like to take milk, because he found that it was slightly passion provoking. But once when he felt seriously ill, he was per-suaded by his wife to take goats milk to which he yielded. Therefore we find here that this vow of Gandhi is connected with other vows. Stimulating food or drinks should be avoided because these food hampered our natural and normal course of religious life. For Gandhi, vegetarian is the ideal food, because this food is not included in stimulating food.

viii) Sarvatra-bhaya-varjana (Fearlessness) : According to Gandhi, fearlessness means freedom from all external fear—fear of disease, body injury and death, of dispossession of losing one's nearest and dearest, of losing reputation and so on. He emphasised the need of cultivating self-confidence as a necessary part of the practice of fearlessness. Again he pointed out that perfect fearlessness can be attained only by him who has realised the supreme, as it implies freedom from delusions and one can always progress towards this good by determined and constant endeavour and by cultivating self confidence. He said "You will find that God is always by the side of the fearless. Therefore, we should fear him alone and seek his protection. All other fears will then by itself disappear"²².

Fearlessness is a sign and symbol of self purification. Fear and

realisation of truth cannot go together. In the pursuit of truth realisation of all fear must be shaken off. But it must be noted that fearlessness for the sake of killing others or taking revenge or deriving benefits is of no avail. It is no fearlessness in the true sense of the terms rather it is an extreme type of cruelty of selfishness. A fearless man must be humble loving and selfless only then he may rise in the religious goal. Fearlessness cannot be achieved in a day or two rather it requires constant effort and determined will.

ix) Sarva-dharma sambhāva (Equality of all religions) : This expression implies looking on all religions with an equal eye. In Sanskrit sambhāva means equal outlook. But in Gujarati sambhāva means "Sympathy". Gandhiji used the word in the later sense though the former is not excluded from it. It encouraged harmony and co-operation for common ends between different religions. It is also a necessary social virtue. It implies unreserved freedom of thought and worship and most of all it expresses a will to live in friendship with the whole world of humanity. Gandhiji felt that everyone should remain firm in his own faith and try to reform it from within. He did not overlook the lapses in his own religious tradition. He thought that by remaining a Hindu he could reform Hinduism better. He had realised that external criticism of the practices and popular beliefs of other religions would not help. His own mind in early life had revolted against Christianity because the Christian missionaries poured abuses on Hinduism. It had done more harm, than good. It is only after he came into contact with good and

Godly Christians and studied the New testament that he could overcome the effect of the earlier distaste given by the missionaries. Again there were some unfavourable injunctions and corruptions present in Islam. A Muslim friend questioned Gandhi why he did not denounce them. Gandhiji answered, "I have nowhere said that I believe literally in every word of the Koran, or for the matter of that of any scripture in the world, but it is no business of mine to criticize the scriptures of other faiths or to point out their defects. It is and should be however, my privilege to proclaim and practice the truths that there may be in them. I may not therefore, criticize or condemn things in the Koran or the life of the prophet that I cannot understand. But I welcome every opportunity to express my admiration for such aspects of his life as I have been able to appreciate and understand. As to things that present difficulties, I am content to see them through the eyes of devout Muslim friends, while I try to understand them with the help of writings of eminent Muslim expounders of Islam. It is only through such a reverential approach to faiths other than mine that we can realise the principle of equality of religions. But it is both my right and duty to point out the defects in Hinduism in order to purify it and keep it pure. But where non-Hindu critics set about criticising Hinduism and cataloguing its faults, they blazon their over ignorance of Hinduism and their incapacity to regard it from the Hindu point of view. It distorts their vision and vitiates their judgement. Thus my own experience of the non-Hindu critics of Hinduism brings home to me my limitations and teaches me to be wary of launching on a

criticism of Islam or Christianity and their founders"²³.

Gandhiji believed in advaita, He believed in the oneness of all creation. He said "Religion is one tree with many branches. As branches you may say, religions are many, but as tree religion is only one" . For him the soul of all religions were one, one should have the same respects for other religions as one has for one's own. He commanded that religions were not meant for separating men from one another but they meant to bind them. Gandhiji was born a Hindu. But his Hinduism was his own. It had its roots firm in ancient Hinduism, but it grew and developed in the light of his contact with other religions, more especially Christianity. He sought to drink at the spring of all religions and therefore he felt that he belonged to every religion. By religion Gandhi did not mean formal or customary religion, but that religion which underlies all religions. According to Gandhi we must help a Hindu to become a better Hindu, a Mussalman to become a better Mussalman and a Christian to become a better Christian. We should not think that our religion was more true and that others was less. So for him our attitude towards all other religions must be absolutely clear and sincere. He said that Hindu-Muslim unity had been his passion from early youth. He counted some of the noblest Muslims as his friends. Regarding the Hindu-Muslim unity he said, "I regard myself as a friend of Muslims. They are my blood brothers. Their wrongs are my wrongs. I share their sorrows and their joys. Any evil deed done by a Muslim just as that by a Hindu we may not look over the error of the least of our fellow" .

Though Gandhi was proud in calling himself a Sanatanist, he did not believe in the exclusive divinity of the Vedas or for the matter of that of the Bible, the Quran or the Zend Avesta. He gave equal place to all. He rejected the superior or inferior status of religion.

Forcible conversion of one religion to another was rejected by Gandhiji. He defended the right of those who voluntarily wish to change their religions because it was a personal matter. Gandhiji approved of the humanitarian work of Christian missionaries in the field of medicine, in the alleviation of the condition of the poor and in the field of education. But he rejected the conversion of Harijans and other poorer classes carried on by a Christian missionaries through monetary conditions. Gandhiji pointed out that conversion is a matter of heart and therefore by merely converting the label of man, real religious conversion could not be brought about. That is why once he said that if Jesus came to the world once again he would like to own some of the non-Christians more than such Christians who had forgotten the real message of Christ and were engaged in activities which went against Christianity. In this case Gandhi was very much appreciative of Hinduism because Hinduism has always been quite liberal and tolerant towards other religions and its philosophy has been to regard all religions as true and valuable in their own ways. There was no question of superiority or inferiority there. In fact Gandhi was also influenced by the several references in the Koran which spoke of religious tolerances.

For Gandhi, toleration was one of the salient features of

non-violence. He said that he wanted lasting peace that spring from toleration of each others religion. Again he pointed out that nobody could claim finality or infallibility for his own views and must be prepared to concede the possibility of other men's opinion being true from their own stand points. Hence he said, "The golden rule of conduct is mutual toleration, seeing that we will never all think alike and we shall always see truth in fragment and from different angles of vision. Conscience is not the same thing for all. Whilst therefore, it is a good guide for individual conduct imposition of that conduct upon all will be an interference with everybody's freedom of conscience. Even amongst the most conscientious persons, there will be room enough for honest differences of opinion. The only possible rule of conduct in any civilised society is, therefore mutual toleration"²⁶.

Toleration gives us spiritual insight which is as far from fanaticism as the North Pole from the South. Gandhiji advised people to read others religions sympathetically through the writings of such persons who were ardent followers of those religions and as a result this would increase one's understanding of other religion as well as of the inner unity of all religions depicting the same truth.

So from the above discussions we find that all organised religions are aids and guides for the development and enrichment of the inner life of man. Religion is not an end-in-itself but a means of attaining the highest moral and spiritual development. Again equality of all religions doesnot include irreligion. Gandhiji pointed out that we should

not cultivate toleration for irreligion and if anybody does not observe the law of love, he may be violent to us. Moreover Gandhiji gave a deeper and wider meaning of the word tolerance. He drew it out of his ahimsa (non-violence). For him toleration should give a positive recognition of all the great religions of the world.

x) Swadeshi : Swadeshi means belonging to or made in one's own country. Gandhiji defined Swadeshi as 'the spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote. He was of the view that it should be the duty of every individual to wear clothes and use one's country made goods. Gandhiji's first concern was to refuse to buy anything outside of our country, however nice or beautiful. He however advised people a) to buy useful healthy literature from every part of the world, b) to buy surgical instruments from England, c) Pins and pencils from Austria and d) Watches from Switzerland. But people should not buy an inch of the finest cotton fabric from England or Japan or any other part of the world because it would injure the millions of the inhabitants of India. Gandhiji's Swadeshi therefore chiefly centred round the hand-spun Khaddar and extends to everything that could be and was produced in India. For Gandhi Swadeshim was not a cult of hatred but it was the doctrine of selfless service that had its roots in the purest ahimsa i.e. love. Gandhiji had often been criticised by many intellectuals in India for his effort to revive cottage and village industries in modern times. It was said that he was putting back the clock of

progress. It has been argued that Gandhiji was against the development of science and technology. Throughout his life Gandhiji had been making experiments in the social field. Hence he has called his autobiography as experiments with truth. For him, the supreme consideration is man. He did not want science and machinery to produce goods and starve men. He said that the only condition was that such mechanical power must be available to every village who wanted to use it. He wanted the power made available though science and technology to be applied for purposes that would bring about greater production carried on in peace and harmony. From the foregoing discussion, it appears that swadeshi has for Gandhi a wide application to all spheres of life - religious, political, social and economical. According to him, the aim of swadeshi was to enable the individual to realise his spiritual unity with all life. Swadeshi of Gandhi's conception broadly involved the idea that one had a natural moral obligation towards one's neighbour to the exclusion of those remotely situated. Gandhiji is generally regarded as a votary of universal love and service and so his doctrine of Swadeshi in the above sense according to some thinkers goes against that spirit of universal service. But it is not so. Gandhiji took swadeshi as the acme of universal service. Gandhiji himself explained that our capacity for service was limited because we were all finite human beings. So for him, we must first dedicate ourselves to the service of the nearest, our immediate neighbour. He said that if the law of swadeshi is followed by everyone in strict dedication and sincerity each one's service towards one's neighbour will naturally extend to become

the service of all. Hence Gandhi's swadeshi when properly understood does not go against the spirit of sarvodaya. Swadeshi and sarvodaya are not mutually exclusive concepts. They can rather both be regarded as the two different means to realise one's unity with all being.

According to Gandhiji, moksha is self knowledge which is the same as the knowledge or the realization of God or Truth. Again we have seen that according to him Truth or God can be realised only through the service of our fellowbeings specially the poor and the neglected. Loving or serving our fellow being is basically ingrained in the concept of Swadeshi. Hence Swadeshi followed in its true spirit really stands for the final emancipation from the bondage of the world.

xi) Sparsha bhavana (Discarding of untouchability) : The removal of untouchability was one of the most important missions of Gandhiji's life. Removal of untouchability means love for, and sacrifice of the whole world and thus merging into ahimsa. Untouchability means pollution by the touch of certain persons by reasons of their birth in a particular state or family. Gandhiji pointed out that it was wrong to treat certain human being as untouchables from birth. Removal of untouchability spells the breaking down of barriers between man and man and between the various order of beings. Untouchability is a cruel and inhuman institution. It violates human dignity. Untouchability also raises economic problems. The untouchables were the poorest section of Indian society. To understand Gandhi's task of removing it, it is necessary to examine the traditional attitude to caste in India. Though it is difficult to explain

about the origin of the caste system it can be said that the Aryans who invaded India distinguished themselves from the original inhabitants of India, as twice born as distinct from the once born. Twice born consists of three classes i.e. (i) the Brahmin, (ii) Ksatriyas and the (iii) Vaisyas. The Brahmin upheld the cultural order and fulfilled sacred functions. The Ksatriyas maintained the political order and performed military function and the vaisyas supported the economic order performed the necessary function in agriculture. The once born are the non-aryans and were classified as Sudras. They were not allowed to hear the Vedas. But they were the servant of other three classes. Outside this fourfold divisions of society fell the out castes. They performed menial tasks such as scavenging. Out castes would always remain socially excluded.

Gandhiji named the untouchables as harijans. For him harijan service was a religious obligation. He refused to enter temples to which harijans were not allowed to enter. According to Gandhi "In the eyes of God, who is the creator of all his creatures are all equal. Had he made any distinctions of high and low between man and man, they would have been visible as are the distinctions between say an elephant and an ant. But he has endowed all human beings impartially with same shape and the same natural wants. If you consider the harijans as untouchables because they perform sanitary service, which mother has not performed such service for her children ? It is the height of injustice to consider the harijans who are the most useful servants of society as untouchables and outcasts. It can never be an act of merit

to lookdown upon any human being as inferior to us. We are all worshippers of one God whom we worship under different names. We must, therefore realise our essential unity and give up untouchability as well as the spirit of superiority and inferiority between human beings". Again he said "On God's earth nobody is low. It is wrong, it is sinful to consider some people lower than ourselves. On God's earth, nobody is low and nobody is high. We are all his creatures and just as in the eyes of parents all their children are absolutely equal, so also in Gods eyes all his creatures must be equal. Therefore I ask you to believe me when I tell you that there is no sanction in religion for untouchability". Gandhi pointed out that our duty to harijans did not end with giving them good houses or giving them separate wells, schools and so on. He said that if we gave them all these and still kept them untouchables, it would only mean replacing iron chains by golden ones, but the slave would still be slaves.

For Gandhi, birth and observance of form cannot determine one's superiority and inferiority; character is the only determining factor. Gandhiji said that if untouchability were to be considered an integral part of the Hindu way of life, he would have to stop calling himself a Hindu. Gandhiji compared untouchability with arsenic in milk and to a poison that destroys the life of Hindu society. He said that untouchability is grounded in ancient prejudices and is the greatest blot on Hinduism. For him untouchability cannot claim the sanction of religion because it is contrary to truth.

Gandhi's opposition to caste indicates also his attempt to abolish the caste levels that Hindus applied to themselves. He wished that all members of society would regard themselves as Sudras which would mean that there would be no restriction on marriage or any other issues of caste which lead to weaken Hindu society. He set up an organisation - the 'Harijan sevak sangha', which was to work for the removal of all their disabilities. This organisation functioned even after independence. Gandhiji brought a harijan family to live in the Ashram. He adopted their daughter as his own. He also blessed all the marriages that were celebrated between harijan and caste Hindu. Some of those marriages took place in his own Ashram.

The campaigning against untouchability may be said to have begun with the Buddha. Hindu reformers from time to time have denounced inhuman custom and have allowed, the untouchables to be members of their sects. Gurunank and his nine successors accepted the untouchables in the Sikh religion. Kabir and other religious sects of Santmat, through out the middle ages, freely allowed the untouchables to join their brotherhood. It is a tragedy that though the present age is known as the age of science and technology yet Indian people were not totally free from superstitious thinking. The problem of untouchability is not totally solved. Of course we cannot deny the fact that before independence India was more conservative about that than the present India. Hence it is clear that this blot on Hindu society will soon disappear if the government is cautious and prepared to enforce the law

Again Gandhi's concept of religion taught everyone that whenever there was distress which one could not remove, one must fast and pray. Let us discuss about Gandhi's concept of fasting and prayer briefly.

III.7 Fasting and prayer

Fasting : Gandhiji pointed out that fasting helped in the concentration of mind and fasting had a purificatory effect. Fasting is an institution as old as Adam. Fasting is an old practice in Hinduism. It is generally associated with religious festivals. Gandhiji had the experience of priceless peace and unending joy during all the fasts. He said that genuine fast cleanses the body, mind and soul. For Gandhi, fasting is model exercise not only in human compassion and faith but in patience and fullness of surrender. Through fasting, Gandhi wanted to attain self-realisation. He for the first time has used fasting for the correction of social evils and political wrongs. Not only individual but also collective fasting have been introduced into the society at the instance of Gandhi. For Gandhi fasting in the true sense of term means abstinence from food but it also consists in starving other sense and organs.

He believed in occasional fasting (i) The fast of September 1932 was undertaken by Gandhi to uplift the condition of the weaker class by giving them separate electorates, (ii) The Calcutta fast (September 1947) was an appeal to Hindus and Muslims to stop communal violence and live in peace, (iii) His last fast (January 1948) at Delhi was for the protection of the Muslim minority in India and the establishment

of communal harmony. He called it his greatest fast.

Gandhiji always advised the people to be non-violent. His fasts were non-violent in character and if the people revolted against the government it would be the violation of the spirit underlying his fast. He wanted to purify his self. He left the process of soul purification in the hands of God because he thought that if his soul was purified, his suffering would come to an end and his sayings and doings would then have a greater effect on the people. Gandhiji disapproved of people undertaking sympathetic fast. For him true fasting consists in detaching ourselves from the material nourishment that our material body needs.

Prayer : Gandhiji said that prayer was the only means of bringing of about orderliness and peace and repose in our daily acts. For him, prayer is the very soul and essence of religion and therefore, prayer must be the very core of the life of man. He pointed out that prayer should not be a compulsion and prayer is not to be performed with the lips, but with heart. That is why he said that he who would pray to God, must cleanse his heart. In his prayer no image or symbol was kept. He didnot believe in image worship for himself but he had no objection to it for those who needed such symbols. His prayers were not petitions but they were in praise of God and they were the yearnings of the soul and also they were meant to strengthen man and keep him away from early temptations. In fact he said that begining the day with prayer made it so useful that it may remain with us till the evening and closing the day with prayer may have a peaceful night

free from dreams and night mares. For him, prayer is a necessary spiritual discipline. Gandhiji said that when an individual or a nation suffers because of a greater calamity, the true awareness of that suffering is prayer. He commanded that prayer is a form of meditation which has as its aim self purification and knowledge of the truth. For him prayer helps in the concentration of mind on higher things and thereby helps us to attune ourselves to the spirit that illumines and elevates the world and sincere prayer purify our hearts and make us better man. That is why he said that by a long course of prayerful discipline he had closed (forover 40 years) to hate anybody. Again he said that just as food is necessary for the body, prayer is also necessary for the soul and a man may be able to do without food, for a number of days, but believing in God, man cannot live a moment without prayer. From the fore going discussions it is found that for Gandhi, fasting and prayer are the two non-violent means or ways by which we can overcome from any distress, hatred, hurt etc. He advised every people to follow these ways.

Gandhi's central aim was equal treatment for the whole of humanity and equal treatment meant equality of service or Sarvodaya. By Sarvodaya what Gandhi really meant is given below :-

11.8 Sarvodaya

For Gandhi, Sarvodaya or the welfare of all was an expression of truth. The word 'Sarvodaya' is a compounds of two words 'Sarva'

(all) and 'Udaya' (welfare or upliftment). Thus it means welfare or upliftment of all. According to Gandhi it is sarvodaya i.e. the good or the welfare of all, which should be the aim of all human activities. It is our highest end, the the Summum bonum. The good or welfare is the all round welfare, social, political, economic etc. and it is the good not only of man but also animals and even of the natural world. In this case Gandhi's view was different from the view of the utilitarians like Mill according to whom the aim of our action should be the greatest good of the greatest number. Gandhiji never accepted such a view that we should always care for the majority only and the minority which is neglected by the utilitarians was really his main concern. Mill says very explicitly that the standard is not the agent's own happiness, but happiness in general. Mill believes that there is good evidence in favour of utilitarianism. General happiness is the most desirable end. Pleasure alone is desirable or good because there can be no proof that anything is desirable beyond the fact that people actually desire it. "Each person's happiness is good to that person. Therefore general happiness is good to the aggregate of all person". From this it follows that the tendency to promote general happiness is the only criterion of the goodness of actions. Gandhi's concept of man is based on advaitic faith. For him all men are basically one, because, the same Brahman resides in all of them, they are all equal. Thus he said "If one man gains spiritually the whole world gains with him and if one man falls, the whole falls to that extent"²⁷. Moreover the ideal of Sarvodaya is definitely

based on essentially spiritualistic outlook regarding world and man where as the utilitarian ideal has a materialistic outlook and based on a rational and social consideration.

Gandhiji always worked hard for the social upliftment of the downtrodden like the shudras or untouchables and the women. His whole life is devoted to the upliftment and welfare of those two which were most neglected and suppressed. He felt that so long as one considerable portion of humanity remained down-trodden and suffering, the welfare of all could not even be dreamt of. He always fought for the economic freedom of the poor and the needy. He always preached equitable distribution of property and wealth so that the poorest and the most neglected could get their due share. Gandhi believed that no spiritual development of man was possible without his economic freedom. Gandhi took it to be our moral duty to help the poor in improving their economic condition. We must adjust our wants and undergo voluntary sacrifice for the sake of the poor. Hence for Gandhi, religion consisted not in seeking ones own salvation in seclusion but in helping the helpless and working for the poor and the needy. Gandhi's passion for serving the poor was so great that he claimed to find God not in temples and mosques but in the hearts of the poor. So he said "I am endeavouring to see God through the service of humanity. for I know that God is neither in heaven, nor down below, but in everyone"²⁸. To give food to the hungry was for Gandhi like giving gift to God.

It is already mentioned that by Sarvoday Gandhi meant all round

development or upliftment of all. By 'all' he meant not only the human class but also the sub-human sphere of existence including animals, plants etc. as well as the inanimate nature. He had a genuine feeling of love not only for the animal life but also for the inanimate nature. Hence he expressed his disapproval of the excessive exploitation of nature by modern industrial and technological society. The ideal of sarvodaya may in certain respects be compared to the ideal envisaged by socialism and communism. The former has for its necessary basis the spiritual unity of all beings which Gandhi so fervently believed in and the latter have no such basis because they stand only on certain material and social considerations. Unless one realizes within his heart the inner affinity and unity of all beings he cannot work from within for the equality and upliftment of all. Further more sarvodaya is essentially to be achieved through the path of ahimsa while the ideal of socialism or communism do not necessarily admit the path of ahimsa. The communist rather have openly preached the necessity of the path of himsa for bringing about social equality. Gandhi said that Sarvodaya was the highest end of man's life. He also said that the self-realisation or the realization, of God was our highest end. Self-realisation for Gandhi did not mean finding out some unique reality within oneself which is separate from all else in the universe. For him the self is one with God and God is one with the entire universe and so self-realisation means realisation of God and that in its turn means realisation of all within one's over being. Hence atma-bodha according to Gandhi

as according to Tagore and Vivekananda also, means seeing or finding ourself into others and others into one self. And this is the ideal of Sarvodaya also. Therefore working for sarvodaya and working for self-realization are one and the same thing. Both can be attained according to Gandhi through the path of ahimsa, univeral love, brotherhood and selfless social service. One point can be mentioned here i.e Sarvodaya is a social ethical ideal where as self realisation is a spiritual and religious ideal and so they cannot be the same thing. But Gandhi has shown that essentially the spiritual ideal of self-realisation or moksha is nothing different from the social ideal of Sarvodaya. Though Gandhi declared Sarvodaya and self-realization both as ends at the same time, he had committed no mistake or error. For Gandhi there can be no religion without morality and any spiritual ideal can be realised through the social and moral service. So the distinction between social and ethical ideal on the one hand and spiritual and religious ideal on the other doesnot hold good in the content of Gandhian thought.

III.9 Temples and Idolatry

Gandhi's concept of religion was not confined to temples, churches, books, rituals and other outerforms. In this sense he agreed with Rabindranath Tagore and Swami Vivekanand. "To quot Swami Vivekananda, "Temples and churches, books and forms are simply kindergarten of religion, to make the spiritual child strong enough to higher steps. Religion is not in doctrines in dogmas, nor in intellectual argumentation, it is being and becoming and it is realisation"²⁹. Again Tagore said

"leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads. Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a Temple with doors all shut? Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee"³⁰. Nehru also said that Gandhiji's concept of religion had nothing to do with any dogma or custom or ritual. Regarding temples or mosques or churches Gandhiji said that he made no distinction between these different abodes of God and they were what faith had made them and they were an answer to man's craving to reach the unseen. He did not regard the existence of temples as a superstition rather these were some forms of common worship and a common place of worship appeared to be a human necessity. Gandhiji said that he is both an idolator and iconoclast. He is an idolator in the sense that he valued the spirit behind the idol worship and this idol worship played a most important part of the uplift of the human race. Again he is an iconoclast in the sense that he doesnot have any fixed norms or a rigid set of rules in the field of religion. He is against any sort of fanaticism that is against any other form of worshipping deity except one's own.

III.10 Gandhi's concept of religion was attached to reason

Gandhi was opposed to religion which was not supported by reason. He would reject all authority if it was in conflict with reason or the dictates of the heart. He had regard for scriptures no doubt but for him scriptures cannot transcend reason and truth. Hence Gandhi never became slave to superstition protected by some ancient tradition

He argued that the faculty of reason is God given, so any tradition however ancient if inconsistent with morality is to be banished. Mahatma Gandhi the greatest social reformer was opposed to untouchability, child marriage, child widowhood, inferiority by birth, animal slaughter through reason.

In case of animal slaughter he argued in the following way. He said that he would never sacrifice a man in order to save the life of an animal, because man is a rational being. Respect for all life does not however necessarily mean equal respect for all life. Gandhi rejects the thought that in a situation of conflict, the life of an animal should take precedence over the life of a man. For Gandhi a man's life has greater value than that of an animal but it does not follow from this that an animal's life is in itself without value. It has a value although hierarchically there is difference of value of these two lives. In order to prevent violence to animals Gandhi like many Indians was a vegetarian.

III.11 The soul and its liberation

For Hinduism, the most important goal for each individual is to achieve freedom from past limitations and from the bondage of the wheel of birth and death by the realization of God within himself. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi - "Man's ultimate aim is the realization of God, and all his activities - social, religious, economic etc. have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate

service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavour simply because the only way to God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it"³¹. Gandhi as a Karmayogi, gave his own interpretation to the doctrine of individual salvation. He distinguished between those who renounce the world to secure spiritual advancement and those who live in the world and fight the ills of humanity in a spirit of detachment. Gandhiji preferred the later one for salvation. He conducted social experiments on a vast scale for the realisation of truth through love and service of humanity.

Mahatma Gandhi conceived that the human selves are the real modes of God's existence. As they are immortal and eternal, they cannot cease to exist after their salvation. But salvation is an ideal that is difficult to be realised. All that is left to us is to engage ourselves in ceaseless service to humanity.

Mahatma Gandhi emphasised the importance of the practice of means for self-realization. Love, service to humanity, non-possession, detachment, asceticism etc. help the perfection of the soul. Mahatma Gandhi did not want a condition of salvation which is a state of freedom, escape, cessation of existence, passivity and aloofness from the world. Mahatma Gandhi was of the view that birth and re-birth for human service are the divine works which give spiritual pleasure and happiness to an individual.

Mahatma Gandhi conceived that the individual salvation cannot

be realised so long as the entire humanity doesnot realise it. He said, "I donot believe that an individual may gain spiritually and those that surround him suffer. I believe in the essential unity of man and for that matter of all that lives. Therefore I believe that if one man gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him and if one man falls the whole world falls to that extent"³².

Gandhiji used the word satya or truth both in the sense of end and means. For him, the absolute truth is the highest end of human life and it is to be attained by the observance of relative truth in one's thought, speech and actions. Among all creatures it is only man who can worship God or truth with knowledge and devotion. Gandhiji optimistically believed that every human being in this world is capable of achieving the perfect state of his life, where he will feel the presence of God within his own self.

Moksa or liberation was not mere concept for Gandhiji. It was a fact to be realised in this life, and if not possible, in some other births by constantly striving through ahimsa or non-violence. Gandhiji by his own strenuous efforts showed that man's selfless service for humanity paves the way to salvation.

The desireless service for anāsakti or Niskāmakarma was considered by Gandhiji as the best worship. It can be performed only when man's soul is fully purified. This is also the teaching of Bhagavad Gita. In the Gita, Krisna advises Arjuna, "Arjuna, perform your duties

dwelling in Yoga, relinquishing attachment and indifferent to success and failure"³³. Gandhiji was greatly attracted by Gita's concept of Yajna. For Gandhi Yajña means an act directed to the welfare of others done without desiring any return for it, whether of a temporal or spiritual nature.

Gandhiji admitted the reality of re-birth and immortality. Gandhiji declared that though we cannot prove the life after death yet death is not the cessation of life. Therefore man should not fear death. It leads to another life. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, "A body that has out lived its usefulness will perish giving places to a new one. The soul is imperishable and continues to take on new forms for working out its salvation through acts of services"³⁴. And again he said "The soul is one, but the bodies which she animates are many. We cannot reduce the number of bodies, yet we recognize the unity of the soul" ³⁵. On the basis of the theory of rebirth, Gandhi optimistically believed that if he failed to establish the world fellowship in this birth, he would achieve the same in some other births.

From the foregoing discussions we find that Gandhi's concept of man is based on advaitic faith. For him, all men are basically one, because the same Brahman resides in all of them. In other words he emphasised that mankind constitute a single unit. Yet Gandhiji was a great believer in the liberty of the individual person. Whenever Gandhiji spoke of the greatness and divinity of man he always meant each individual man and not the collective man. While reflecting on the

problems of life, he generally started with the individual and he always proceeded from the particular to general. He also inherited the religious individualism of the Indian philosophical traditions centering round the concept of moksha. Individualism and universalism thus have equal importance in Gandhi's thought.

III.12 Conclusion

Religion today for most of us are nothing more than separating man from one another, restriction on food and drink. For Gandhi, religion didnot mean sectarianism, but that religion which underlies all religions which bring us face to face with our maker, which binds indissolubly to the truth within and which ever purifies. Hence his religion includes the idea of unity in world. His religion was highly practical. One could reach God by service to man. His religion may be characterised as ethical spiritualism. To him any religion without moral foundation ceased to be a religion. He interpreted religion with day-to-day problems. His mission was not only to humanise religion, but to moralise it. Gandhi's main aim was to remove exploitation and to give equal status to all people. The violence in the present society can be ceased if the people realised Gandhi's concept of religion fully.

Gandhiji felt that religion is more relevant today than before. Science has made tremendous progress in modern times. But mere science of matter cannot give us real knowledge or real happiness. Science and spirituallity must meet. Gandhi has made the greatest

experiment with the spirit in man. So for him, if science doesnot join with religion it will wipe out the human civilization. There is an inner vacuum in our life and only faith in religions and spiritual value can save us from an all round catastrophe. Hence we may conclude here that Gandhi discussed the concept of religion from a new stand point and he introduced religion which consisted of science and reason on the one hand and to guide us the new dimension of spirit on the other

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CHAPTER - IV

GANDHI'S CONCEPT OF GOD

IV.1 Introduction

The nuclear element of Gandhi's thought was his idea of God. It can be said that through this idea of God Gandhi had been able to defeat the biggest and most organised political power of Great Britain, because he did not use any of the traditional weapons in his struggle for independence. He had no guns, no band of trained soldiers at his command and no money even to bind his followers together into a cohesive unit. Moreover, Indian people were very much poor, divided, lifeless, illiterate during that period, whereas British people had the strongest and efficiently trained administrators and army commander at their disposal. They had possessed most scientific weapons and had vast monetary and military resources of every kind. Yet under the leadership of Gandhi India won this battle without a single shot because of Gandhi's unflinching devotion and faith in God. That is why he declared that one who depends on God will never be afraid of anybody. Most of the writers, scholars and Gandhi's followers command that Gandhi's unfathomable faith in God led to this miraculous victory in India against the British Government rule. For Gandhi, it was very difficult for us to describe the nature of God. He did not see God as a mere abstract idea. God was for him a living presence as well as inner voice as He has been to all the great saints and mystics of the world and to founders of religions.

Gandhi's conception of God was largely the product of Hindu conception of God. He himself professed to be a thorough Hindu, but

he was not a believer in many Gods. He believed in the absolute oneness of God, more or less in the spirit of Islam. But it doesn't indicate that he took Hinduism as polytheistic. It simply means that he was very much impressed by the strict monotheism of Islam. He took Hinduism also essentially as monotheistic in nature. He said that Hindus in practice worshipped many Gods and Goddesses, but all Hindus knew that different God and Goddesses were the various forms of the same formless truth. They have been taught about the truth by Vedas themselves. Hence Mahatma Gandhi refuted the charge against Hinduism that it is polytheistic in nature.

Gandhi's belief in God developed in his early life, and continued to the end of his life. To him, a life separated from God was of no consequence and could not exist with any degree of peace of mind or happiness. He said that he could also testify that he may live without air but not without God. For Gandhi, God is not an external entity but an abiding presence in the human heart. He gave various descriptions of God. He said, "God is that indefinable something which we all feel but which we do not know To me God is Truth and Love. God is Ethics and Morality, God is fearlessness, God is the source of light and life and yet He is above and beyond all these, God is conscience. He is even the atheism of the atheist. He transcends speech and reason He is a personal God those who need His touch He is the purest essence. He simply is to those who have faith He is long suffering. He is patient but He is also terrible He is the greatest

democrat the world knows, for he leaves us unfettered to make our own choice between evil and good. He is the greatest tyrant ever known for he often dashes the cup from our lips and under cover of free will leaves us a margin so wholly inadequate as to provide only mirth for himself at our expense. Therefore it is that Hinduism calls this sport - Lila, or calls it an illusion - Maya"¹. This description is very similar to the famous description of God by the great scientific mathematician — philosopher of the century Alfred North Whitehead. In his *Process and Reality* Whitehead wrote 'It is as true to say that God is permanent and the world fluent, as that the world is permanent and God fluent. It is as true to say that God is one and the world many, as that the world is one and God many'². The similarity between the two lies in their attempts to comprehend in one synthetic sweep the divergent aspects of God-head and the different religious traditions representing different points of view. About God again Gandhiji said "The Deity does not need my supplication, but I a very imperfect human being, do need his protection as a child that of its father". Mahatma Gandhi's theism has been greatly influenced by Indian poets, Tulsidas, Surdas, Mirabai, Narsingh Mehta and Tagore. His prayers also include the recitation of some Christian and Mohammedan hymns. God according to Gandhi was the vital force which was all pervading and all embracing. Under the influence of Buddhism Gandhiji described God as the law or the Dharma. Many people said that Buddhism was atheistic. But Gandhiji had never thought so. For him, Buddha never

denied God, rather he identified God with his Law. The law and the law-giver became one in Buddhism according to Gandhi.

As a religious man, Gandhiji has dedicated everything to God. Gandhiji experienced God in many ways. He has been a great admirer of God - His beauty and His light. As a votary of the Gita, Gandhiji stresses the need of inner voice. This voice he claims to be the voice of God. Voice of God is Truth which works for the well being of all. Gandhiji has been the champion for service to mankind. Gandhiji's joy in service is the service for living creature, a service to God. Here Gandhi appears to be a humble seeker of human truth, as distinguished from eternal truth, sought by ancient seekers of Moksha. And the expression of this human truth he found in human effort for moral perfection. Gandhiji, while trying to understand Truth as human moral efforts, does not make it a solely personal matter. He believes in the unity of mankind. For him, every act will have its social bearing and individual moral efforts are made in the context of social relationship and inspired by social concern.

Gandhiji had no academic philosophical training. But his study of religious book particularly Christian theology and his discussions on religious matters with all kinds of persons made him compelled to discuss most of the classical arguments for the existence of God.

IV.2 Proofs for the existence of God

Gandhiji did not like to waste his time on producing argument

to prove the existence of God. For him, there will be no value of argument for the existence of God without having faith in God. He believed in the existence of God above anything else. He was sure that God is such that its existence is indubitable, certain and beyond any doubt whatsoever. He said, "There is an indefinable mysterious power that pervades everything. I feel it though I do not see it". Gandhiji pointed out that it was not possible to prove the existence of God through reason as we prove existence of any mundane object because it was the unseen power which made itself felt and yet defies all proof.

But he knew that his statement 'God's existence cannot be proved' was wrongly interpreted, because human rationality did not satisfy by assuming that it was impossible to prove the existence of the supreme. That is why he later added that it is possible to reason out the existence of God to a limited extent. He had advanced two main arguments accordingly to prove the existence of God. To explain the first argument Gandhiji has cited the example of "Many poor villagers" of Mysore whom he met in his trip to Mysore. He found that the poor villagers did not know anything about the rule of that state, because they had no approach to him and yet they believed that some ruler did rule the state. Therefore, Gandhiji explained, "If the knowledge of these poor people was so limited about their ruler who are infinitely lesser than God than they than their ruler, need not be surprised if I do not realise the presence of God, the king of kings.

Nevertheless, I do feel as the poor villagers felt about Mysore that there is orderliness in the universe, there is an unalterable law governing everything and everybeing that exists or lives"⁴. From the first arguments we find that human ignorance about God did not logically imply the non-existence of God.

Let us discuss the second argument. The second argument implies that everything around us is ever changing and every dying. There is underlying all that change a living power that is changeless, that holds together, that creates, dissolves and recreates. That informing power or spirit is God. This argument is no doubt ontological in nature, but it is different from the traditional ontological argument which states that the idea of perfect implies existence of a perfect being. But Gandhiji's argument goes deeper and asserts that behind the changing world there must be some changeless entity and that is God. In this case we may mention Shankara who had advanced similar types of argument to establish the existence of Brahman. He asserted that what is permanent that alone is real and hence Brahman alone is the sole reality.

Mahatma Gandhi discussed a number of proofs for the existence of God. The causal proof is based on the view that everything has a cause and logically the entire cosmos depends on the ultimate cause which is God. In this case Mahatma Gandhi said, "If we exist, if our parents and their parents have existed then it is proper to believe in the parent of the whole creation"⁵.

Gandhiji discussed teleological argument for the proof of the existence of God. He observed, "That there is orderliness in the universe, there is an unalterable law governing everything and everybeing that exists or lives. It is not a blind law, for no blind law can govern the conduct of living being. That law then which governs all life is God"⁶.

Another argument for the existence of God is from the life of the rishis and the testimony of the scriptures. Gandhi called our attention to the testimonies of Chaitanya, Ramkrishna Paramhansa, Tukaram and Tulsidas. The testimonies of the sages about the existence and activities of God within us can only be verified in terms of their life.

Mahatma Gandhi attached a very high importance to the moral proof. He conceived that conscience of man receives intimation or directions from God. Immanuel Kant declares that religion deals with three fundamentals subjects i.e. God, freedom of will and the immortality of the soul and the greatest of these is God. He rejected the rational proofs for the existence of God in his Critique of Pure reason though in his Critique of practical reason he established it on a moral ground. Here we find a similarity between Kant and Gandhi. Gandhi said that the arguments were meant for the common man who didn't like to indulge into hair splitting argumentation. It is an allegorical way of pointing to the existence of God. Thus for him it was a matter of enlightened faith to believe that God does exist. He experienced the presence of God in the heart of his heart. According to Gandhi, "My

firm belief is that He reveals himself daily to every human being but we shut our eyes to the still small voice. We shut our eyes to the pillar of fire in front of us. I realise his omnipresence"⁷. In this context Radhakrishnan said that the men of experience feel the presence of God and do not argue about it. Hence Gandhi said that God cannot be realised through intellect and intellect can lead one to a certain extent and no further. Here it can be said that Gandhiji was right in giving more importance on faith than reason, because there was no God for them who have no faith in God. So they never think to prove God's existence. Moreover reason cannot go further. It has some limitations. But faith transcends reason.

IV.3 Faith

According to Gandhi God simply was to those who had faith. He said that faith can not be acquired by force of intellect, it comes but slowly after deep meditation and continuous practice. He pointed out that a man without faith in God is like a drop thrown out of the ocean and bound to perish. For him, if we have faith in the living God, all will be well with us. Gandhiji said "My life is largely governed by reason and when it fails, it is governed by superior force that is faith"⁸. For him, faith is not a delicate flower which would wither under the slightest stormy weather, but faith is like the Himalayan mountains. Gandhiji wanted everyone of us to cultivate that faith in God and religion. He said that there are subjects where reason cannot take us for and we have to accept things on faith and faith then does

not contradict reason but transcends it. He believed that without faith this world would come to naught in a moment. When Gandhiji said that 'Truth is God' he was totally dependent on faith. This faith required no external verification. For him, there would be no proofs for God's existence which were acceptable to human reason. Since God is beyond reason. He insisted that ultimately the existence of God was based on faith which transcended reason. Gandhiji observed that the world did not quarrel with those who had a true faith in God and who understands the true nature of religion. Here we find that since Gandhi was a practical man, he gave much more importance on faith than reason for God's existence. It is clear that the sole reliable path of God-realization is the path of faith, the path of devotion. For Gandhi, there is no difference between a life of devotion and the life of faith. He took the term Bhakti in a wider sense than the ordinary sense of the term bhakti. According to Gandhi true devotee of God is he who serves humanity and helps the have-nots and this service of humanity is rooted in a true love for God. The value of religious faith has been accepted even by an absolute logician and thinker like Bertrand Russell. He has specifically written in his book, "Religion and science", "I can not admit any method of arriving at truth except that of science, but in the domain of the emotion I do not deny the value of the experience which has rose to religion"⁹.

IV.4 Nature of God

Our opinions about God are not uniform. For some, God is

the abstract infinite being and for others, He is embodied and concrete entity. Gandhiji had no anthropomorphic conception of God. In other words he did not worship God as a human being. He only for himself took God as formless truth as Nirākāra and Nirguna. He did not believe God to be a personal being in the sense that we were personal beings. He pointed out that God, however could not be described in his fullness and we human beings describe Him in our own vocabulary. Gandhiji said, "My Rama is not the historical Rama. He is the eternal, the unborn, the one without second. Him alone I worship"¹⁰. He further said, "My kṛṣṇa has nothing to do with any historical person. I would refuse to bow my head to the kṛṣṇa who would kill because his pride is hurt, or the kṛṣṇa whom non-Hindus portray as dissolute youth. I believe in kṛṣṇa of my imagination as a perfect incarnation, spotless in every sense of the word, the inspirer of the Gita and the inspirer of the millions of human beings. But if it was proved to me that the Mahabahrata is history in the same sense that modern historical books are, that every word of the Mahabharata is authentic and that the kṛṣṇa of the Mahabharata actually did some of the acts attributed to him even at the risk of being banished from the Hindu fold, I should not hesitate to reject that kṛṣṇa as God incarnate"¹¹.

Here we find that Gandhi's conception of God seems to be one of a non-theistic nature. His God seems to be formless and impersonal like the God of the Hindu advaitins. Under the influence of Christianity, he so often characterised God as love. Sometimes, Gandhiji explicitly

expressed his preference for the conception of God as a formless truth. But he never held the inferior conception of God as personal. He openly said that God was personal for those who needed a personal God. Under the influence of his Vaishnava background as well as due to the great impact the Christianity had made upon him, he sometimes characterised God as personal and gave him such attributes as omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, benevolence etc.

It can be said therefore that Gadhiji was fully aware of the implications of his personal - impersonal characterization of God and he did it knowingly and consistently. It is well known that Gandhi was certainly not a philosopher in the technical or academic sense of the term. But he has been one of the most consistent thinkers and here also in his conception of God he has committed no logical error. Again under the influence of Jainism, Gandhi was an anekāntavādin and a syādvādin and therefore he had no difficulty in moving from impersonal to personal descriptions of God. He was an advaitin, and a vishistadvaitin — all at the same time but without any contradiction. Sometimes some critics argue that in characterizing God in personal-impersonal terms, Gandhi was really distinguishing in the characteristic advaitic fashion between the lower and the higher levels of reality. But Gandhi never took the two stands as higher and lower. Both the stands were equally important and valuable for him. He boldly stated that he recognised no God except the God that is to be found in the dumb millions. He worshipped that God, that truth through the

service of these millions. Besides Mahatma Gandhi regards God as a force. This shows that God is impersonal having no self consciousness and will. He said, "The truth is that God is the force. He is the essence of life. He is pure and undefiled consciousness. He is eternal. And yet strongly enough, all are not able to derive either benefit or shelter in the all pervading living presence"¹². For Gandhi God is the supreme Good. He is not only the highest Good but also a benign power that shows goodness upon man and His other creatures.

IV.5 The way to God

Gandhiji's ultimate spiritual goal is moksa or salvation which means freedom from the cycle of birth and deaths. He was guided by Bhagavad Gita in showing the way to the ultimate self or the realisation or moksa. He wanted to merge himself in the absolute. For Gandhi the path of self-purification is hard and steep and to attain perfect purity one has to become absolutely passion free in thought, speech and action. With regard to the three paths leading to God, Jñāna, Bhakti and Karma, Gandhi laid more emphasis on Bhakti and Karma of devotion and complete self-surrender to God. He pointed out that body persisted because of egoism and the supreme state of God realisation or freedom could be reached through an elimination of egoism. His was the way of bhakti and karma — of complete surrender to God, and unceasing selfless service of action. His quest for truth of God involves not only bhakti yoga, that is in the discipline of prayer and devotion, but also karmayoga that is in the discipline of action.

Gandhiji gave new orientation to the concept of bhakti by stating that worship of God implies service of the entire creation of God especially the human world. In this case Gandhi was influenced by the Isha Upanisad. Gandhiji believed that all men were the creations of God and all men were therefore a part of God. That is why he said that the best way to realise God, was to find him amidst his creation and we cannot find God apart from humanity. In this case it appears that according to Gandhi, service to humanity was the service to God. Hence he said, "A life of service must be one of humility. He, who would sacrifice his life for others has hardly time to reserve for himself a place in the sun. Inertia must not be mistaken for humanity as it has been in Hinduism. True humanity means most strenuous and constant endeavour entirely directed to the service of humanity. God is continuously in action without resting for a single moment. If we would serve him or become one with him our activity must be as unwearied as his"

It is not wrong to mention here that Gandhi very efficiently and clearly discussed the way to God. Though Gandhi was deeply influenced by Gita and Upanisad regarding his way to God, he explained the way to God from a new perspective. Moreover another important thing we find here is that for Gandhi, the individual salvation cannot be realised so long as the entire humanity does not realise it. Gandhiji believed that if one man gains spiritually the whole world gains with him and if one man falls the whole world falls to that extent. This statement can be compared to the Vedanta concept of 'Sarvamukti'

which was first stated by Appaya Dikshit and later on this concept of sarvamukti was discussed by Dr. Radhakrishnan also. Appaya Dikshit accepts the theory of plurality of jivas in the empirical level. He holds that the phenomenal world exists till all the Jivas or souls are liberated. So long as there are unreleased Jivas liberation can not be attained. Liberation means oneness with Isvara or God. But when all souls are liberated Isvara sinks into the Brahman and all released souls become one with the Brahman. Again Radhakrishnan regards that individuality is vanished only when the world is saved, when the values are realised. The most outstanding contribution of Radhakrishnan towards the problem of human nature and his ultimate destiny is his concept of universal liberation or sarvamukti. C.E.M. Joad has termed as social salvation. Radhakrishnan rejects the negative attitude of the ancient Indian thinkers. He maintains that the liberated soul is not to renounce the world but to work for the perfection of the rest of humanity. Radhakrishnan shows the importance of personal God in human society. He has tried to wipe off the gap between the empirical and the transcendental world.

Gandhiji further pointed out that in the attitude of silence the soul finds the path in a clearer light and what is elusive and descriptive resolves itself in to crystal clearness. For Gandhi the voice of God, of conscience, of truth or the inner voice or the still small voice mean one and the same thing. He said that voice is more real than his own existence and it is within everyone and also everyone who wills can hear the voice.

IV.6 God as Truth

'God is truth', Gandhiji used to say till 1931. He used to say that God may be love, but God is truth above all. Two years later he went a step further and said that 'Truth is God'. There was a distinction between the two statements — 'God is truth' and 'Truth is God'. Gandhiji pointed out that when we were saying that 'God is truth' it also meant 'God is love', 'God is light' etc. and when we were saying that 'Truth is God' it was more emphatic. For him, truth became much more important than any other concept. He himself gave reasons why he preferred 'Truth' rather than love. He said that love had many meanings in the English language and that human love in the sense of passion could become a degrading thing also. He found too that love in the sense of ahimsa had only a limited number of votaries in the world. But he never found a double meaning in connection with truth and even atheists have not demurred to the necessity of power of truth. In their passion for discovering truth atheists have not hesitated to deny the very existence of God from their point of view rightly.

Gandhiji pointed out that God may be denied for those people who don't believe in God but there was no denial of truth and even the atheist believed in truth. That is why he said that he was atheist of the atheist. He defined truth by saying that the word 'satya' is derived from 'sat' which means being and nothing is or exists in reality except truth and therefore 'sat' or truth is the only correct fully significant name for God. Again Gandhi declared that millions have taken the

name of God and His name committed nameless atrocities. The scientists did not commit atrocities in the name of truth. Gandhiji pointed out that we had another thing in Hindu philosophy, namely God alone is and nothing else exists and the same truth we saw emphasised and exemplified in the Kalam of Islam. Jawaharlal Nehru said in this context "so long as Gandhiji was talking about God I do not fully know what he meant. But now when he says that 'Truth is God' I understand him better"¹⁴. Here we find that Gandhi was a practical man and not a theorist at all. That is why there were certain practical expedients too which made Gandhi to transfer the statement to 'Truth is God' from the statement 'God is Truth'. For Gandhi truth is not only practical, but is absolutely necessary for progress in our living.

Again it is known by us that simple conversions of statements are logically prohibited. But there is an exception to this rule and that is that when the denotations of the subject and the predicate of a statement are the same, simple conversions may be done. For example 'All men are rational beings' are simply converted into 'All rational beings are men'. So in this case Gandhi was very correct in making the simple conversion of his statement 'God is truth' to 'Truth is God' because for Gandhi, 'Truth' has an identical meaning with the term 'God' and therefore Gandhi knowingly or unknowingly committed no mistake in converting his former statement 'God is truth' to 'Truth is God'.

Gandhiji realised that so long as he used term 'Truth' as the predicate term of the subject term 'God' people might understand the

identity of meaning between the two terms that he wanted to convey. Being in the predicate the term 'truth' might only form one of the several predicates such as love, kindness etc. as attributable to God. But when it was transformed to the subject place and it was said that 'truth is God' the identity between the terms 'Truth' and 'God' become quite clear. This means that Gandhi wanted to characterise God as truth and truth alone. Moreover he regarded truth as the highest virtue but he felt that if he simply told people that it was the highest virtue very few would take it seriously. Therefore Gandhiji hypostasized truth by identifying it with God. As he himself said "A mere mechanical adherence to truth and non-violence is likely to break down the critical moment. Hence I have said that 'Truth is God'¹⁵.

Gandhiji meant by truth both spiritual and scientific truth. His truth is not only individual but social also. Thus all the points of views regarding truth and reality merge in Gandhi's concept of truth. He is monist like Sankaracharya and pluralist and realist like the Jains. Man, society and the whole world are real for him, there are no illusion. But behind all those there is one and the only one spirit called Brahman, Ishwar or Satya. Thus in Gandhi's metaphysics scientific truth and spiritual truth cohere in one broader reality and hence both are complementary, not opposed to each other.

IV.7 Rāmanāma

Gandhiji has been taught as a child to take Rāmnāma i.e. the name of Rama or God when he was in trouble. In his childhood he

was very much afraid of ghosts and spirits. Rambha his nurse, an old servant of the family suggested him to repeat the Rāmanāma as a remedy for the fear. In his later days, he found the repetition of Rāmanāma a source of great strength and solace and became a part of his daily life. He told us that Rāmanāma was his greatest help in resisting impure thought and Rāmanāma saw him through agony of his fasts and through struggles of soul, which led a pioneer in the practical social, economic and religious spheres. Gandhiji pointed out that Rāmanāma is not those who give into temptation in everywhere possible and ever expect God to save. It is for those who walk in fear of God and who want to restrain themselves. Gandhiji recognised Truth by the name of Rama. He said that Rama belongs equally to all and there was no one God for Mussalmans, and another for the Hindus, or Christians. For him, there is only one omnipotent and omnipresent God and God is named variously. From the foregoing discussions we find that for Gandhi Rama is God or Truth or Allah or Khuda etc. And this one name i.e. Rama always saved him in his trouble and helpless and darkest period. Rāmanāma of Gandhi was not a mere automatic repetition of Rama's name without any significance. But it had a great practical and religious significance for Mahatma Gandhi. Rāmanāma to Gandhi was the symbol of his inner strength. Different people may have different names of their choice, the remembrance or repetition of which seems to them to be the source of joy and inner strength.

IV.8 Problem of good and evil and freedom of will

The problem of good and evil were one of those that arose from the thoughts about God. Gandhiji said that 'good and evil' was our own imperfect language and God was above both good and evil. He defined evil as good or truth misplaced and it had no separate existence at all. The existence of evil in the world was a fact which cannot be denied. It was only the other side of the medal which was good. Regarding the problem of evil Gandhiji said, "I cannot account for the existence of evil by any rational method. I am therefore humble enough to recognise evil as such. And I call God long suffering and patient precisely because, he permits evil in the world. I know he has no evil in him, and yet if there is evil, he is the author of it and yet untouched by it. I know too that I shall never know God, if I do not wrestle against evil even at the cost of life itself"¹⁶

Some question arises about the problem of good and evil. Firstly is God benevolent or malevolent ? Gandhiji replied the question that he is purely benevolent because he can see that in the midst of death life persists, in the midst of untruth truth persists and in the midst of darkness light persists. Again he observed that God has no evil. He is the author of it but untouched by it.

Secondly if God is free why does He not free us from evil? In this case Gandhiji in accordance with his religious belief described God as an all inclusive reality which included the diverse phenomena of the world. Gandhiji admits that man enjoys freedom of will. Man

can control his fate according to his own will. Gandhiji said, that man is the maker of his own destiny in the sense that he has freedom of choice as to the manner in which he uses that freedom. The same ideas are echoed by Jean Paul Sartre (modern existentialist). He said "Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself such is the first principle of existentialism Man's destiny is within himself"¹⁷. Gandhiji tried to explain like the Christian theists that evils, sins etc were due to the wrong acts of men who were endowed with free will. Referring to the freedom of will, else where Gandhiji maintains that God is the greatest democrat the world knows for he leaves us unfettered to make our own choice between evil and good. In this context he also agreed with Indian law of Karma according to which actions of men were responsible for good and evil. Gandhiji's view of evil could also be compared to the view of Ramanuja. According to Ramanuja only the Baddha or bound souls suffer, not the nityamukta and mukta. And thirdly is evil also made by God? Gandhiji said "Nothing can possibly exist without his allowing it. He makes many things inverted which must be put right. We must invert the process"¹⁸. In this case he pointed out that God has given us conscience and he has given us power to do right. He commands that if we take ones things with his permission it is right and if we take it without his permission it is stealing and we must put it back in its own place.

We find here that Gandhiji openly admitted his inability to explain the existence of evil in relation to God and the distinction

between good and evil was our creation and this distinction was imaginary. In the light of Gandhian view we should not be pessimistic about the existence of evil. It has no permanent place in the goodness of God. The evil of untouchability in Hinduism which was thousand years old was eradicated by honest sincere and determined efforts within a short span of time. Similar is the case with other evils that torture humanity. In this case he discussed some examples so that we can understand the problem of good and evil clearly. The examples are (1) there are certain problems in mathematics for the solution of which some workable assumptions have to be made. They help in the solution of the problems. But they are purely imaginary and have no other practical use. Similarly, psychologists have proceeded upon the assumption that opposite forces are warring against each other in the universe of which one is divine and the other is the devilish world.

Again the author of Mahabharata has described the war between the opposing forces of the Pandavas and Kauravas and has advised men to non-co-operate with the later.

The above discussions can be summarised in the following way
 (i) According to Gandhi, God is alone without a second. (ii) He alone is, (iii) He is indefinable (iv) In reality there is no God who is at war with satan, but we have imagined that there is a war going on between God and satan.

Some critics pointed out that Gandhi has ignored the dark side

of human nature. That is why sometimes he is called a puritan, a religious fanatic and also termed as a day dreamer or an utopian. But this is not true. Because Gandhi never ignored the animal aspect of man. He realised that man was a mixture of both animal and spiritual forces. But for Gandhi man's nature is not essentially evil but it is essentially spiritual and divine.

IV.9 Was Gandhi an advaitin?

Let us discuss one important point regarding Gandhi's view about the ultimate reality whether Gandhi was an advaitin or visistadvaitin. Gandhi believed in non-dualism. He said, "I believe in advaita. I believe in the essential unity of man and for that matter of all that lives". Again he said I believe in the absolute oneness of God and therefore also of humanity. What though we have many bodies? We have but one soul. The rays of the sun are many through refraction. But they have the same source"²⁰. God for Gandhi was nothing but truth. Truth in Sanskrit is 'sat'. God alone is 'sat'. Nothing is or exists in reality except truth. Therefore Gandhi realised that everything else is illusion. Truth or 'sat' is only correct and fully significant name for God. He pointed out that devotion to this truth is the sole reason for our existence. He said that all our activities should be centred in truth and truth should be the very breath of our life. From the above discussions we find that truth is the cornerstone of the edifice of Gandhi's life.

Gandhi was not a metaphysician. He was strictly a social reformer. For him, the aim of life was the realisation of God and truth

was his end. He pointed out that where there is truth, there is true knowledge and where there is true knowledge there is also bliss. Truth then is Saccidānand Being, consciousness and bliss for him. This may be one of the reason why Gandhi has no difficulty in describing himself as an advaitin or non dualist though to what extent it is accurate to regard Gandhi as an advaitin is another matter. But an eminent contemporary Indian philosopher who is also a devoted follower of Gandhi, Dr. D.M. Dutta argues that Gandhi should not be regarded as a follower of Sankara. He said that Gandhi was not advaitist in the sense of Sankarite who would neither support dualism nor the logic of the syādvāda. He pointed out that theistic vedandist Nimbārka tried to reconcile dvaita with advaita and this school rejected the advaita of Sankara. According to D.M. Dutta, Gandhi was rather a theist than an advaitin. The reasons that D.M. Dutta gives are in brief the following

- i) Gandhi was born in a family of Vaisnavas who followed Vallabhacarya. Vallabha did not accept Sankara's interpretation of Vedanta and Gandhi remained a Vaisnava all his life. Early in his life he was taught to repeat the name of Rama, regarded by some vaisnavas as an incarnation of God. He did not give it up even when he came to think that the name did not signify historical person, the son of Dasaratha. Gandhi therefore was a theist and not an advaitin.
- ii) For Gandhi, the world is not a mere appearance, which it is for Sankara. The Vaisnavas accept the world and therefore God's creatorship as real. Gandhi who was Vaisnava did not reject the world as what

is unreal. And moreover his strong sense of duty towards suffering fellow being stood in the way of his dismissing the world as wholly unreal.

iii) According to Sankara man and God the self and Brahman are absolutely identical in reality. The Vaishnava schools which are opposed to the advaita of Sankara do not accept this doctrine. Gandhiji's conception of the relation of man to God shows again his general affinity to the Vaishnava thinkers rather than to the Sankarites.

iv) Gandhi says that he is an advaitist and yet he can support dvaitism (dualism) and also declares that he has no objection to being called an *anekāntavādin* or *syādvādin*. From the above statement it appeared that Gandhiji is using the words *advaitism*, *dvaitism* and similarly *anekāntavādi* and *syādvādi* without precise knowledge of meaning of those terms in technical philosophical discussions. Hence Dr. Dutta concludes "But suffice it to say that his own words clearly show that he is not the advaitist in the sense of Sankarite who would neither support dualism nor the logic of *sayādvāda*"²¹. Gandhi brought the philosophy of *advaita* on a very practical level and interpreted its metaphysics in some what a practical and ethical manner. For Gandhi, the basic truth was only one and the entire creation was the expression of the same truth. Therefore there was no difference between one being and another. All were basically one. Hence Gandhi said that the best *sādhana* was to love the entire creation. It is in and through love that God or self could be realised. It appears that Brahman or God realization

was nothing else than the realization of the basic unity underlying all existence and that can be done by sincere love for all beings.

Moreover it appears that Gandhi's advaitic concept of God is different from Sankara's advaita. For Dutta, Gandhi's advaita has similarities with a theistic vedantist Nimbārka. Nimbārka was the founder of one of the four schools of vaishnava theism. Each of these schools advocate some kind of monism that tolerates plurality and change. Nimbārka admits three realities namely God, souls and matter and the last two are dependent on God. For him, identity and differences are separately and equally real. According to Nimbārka matter and souls are neither attributes of God nor do these form the body of God, but they are the parts or powers of God. It is already mentioned that Gandhi was a practical thinker and his main aim was nothing but to serve the poor and helpless people and through this way he wanted to become one with God. Moreover he was not a scientist but like a scientist his thinking and ideas cannot be divorced from facts or the world. He combined spirit and matter in every aspects. This is the unique characteristics of his philosophy.

IV.10 Conclusion

Gandhi's conception God can be summarised in the following way :

Mahatma Gandhi was essentially a man of God in whom he had immense faith. He was a practical man and that is why he said that faith transcends reason.

Gandhi was a staunch Hindu. But his conception of God is not a typical Hindu conception. It has impacts upon it of the religion like Christianity and Islam and also Buddhism which is so often regarded as a religion without God. But above all, his conception of God is typically his own. His conception of God is very radical and comprehensive.

It is a well known fact that he was a constant seeker after truth and non-violence. For him, Truth was his God and non-violence was the means of realising truth. He observed that service of the poor was the best way to realise truth i.e. his God. That is why he is known as a great social reformer. Gandhi gave a new meaning to the term devotion. His conception of God does not imply a mere chanting of his name and worshipping in a temple, a mosque or a church. For Gandhi it is God who rules the heart and transform it to the tune of one's suffering.

Though Gandhiji explicitly experienced his preference for the conception of God as a formless truth, he never held as inferior the conception of God as personal. He openly said that God is one, without second and God alone is. Here we have seen that the ideas about the nature of God had similarities with ideas contained in Paul Tillich's conception of God. Gandhi was a simple religious man and Paul Tillich was a great theologian of modern times. Like Gandhi Tillich also took God as Being. Tillich said that God is Being-itself is the only true literal and non-symbolic characterization of God and all other statements

about God are symbolic. But there is a vital difference also between the two thinkers. For Tillich God is a mere symbol of the being itself which is the true religious or philosophical reality. But for Gandhi, Truth or Being or Sat is the most apt characterization of God. God is not merely a symbol of truth, the two are identical. Like Gandhi, Tillich very often characterizes God as Being itself or the power of being. It appears that both of them took God as a power. This conception of God as power makes God lively and forceful than the conception of God as merely being or sat may reduce him to a mere static being.

Gandhi states - 'Truth is God' by changing his position from his earlier statement 'God is truth'. It is important to note about Gandhi's conviction that for him truth is the sovereign principle. This truth is not only truthfulness in word and thought and not only the relative truth of our conception, but the absolute truth, the eternal principle that is God. Hence the foundation of Gandhi's life was formed by his living and growing faith in God and in the oneness of the whole human family. According to Gandhi the discipline, which every man should follow is non-violence in order to realise his highest ideal, whether we call it God or truth or humanity, it is common to all.

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CHAPTER - V

**GANDHI'S VIEW ON RELIGION
AND POLITICS**

V.1 Introduction

Generally people think that religion has nothing to do with politics. But for Gandhi, Politics divorced from religion will be like a corpse. His political philosophy was the practical implication of his religious belief. Religion purifies human motive and conduct and stimulates the co-operative and sympathetic nature of man. Without purified motive and conduct, a man can not go ahead in the political field. That is why Gandhiji made religion and morality as the basis of politics. Regarding politics Gandhiji believed that the value of a government depended not on its form but on its spirit. Gandhi was a spiritual and moral thinker. Nothing could satisfy him unless it was guided by moral principle and this religious ideal found concrete shape in his political activity.

For Gandhi, politics is a means for the upliftment of all and therefore, the state should provide an atmosphere in which individuals can get equal opportunity of right and justice and equal opportunity of self-development. Religion was adopted by Gandhi as service to mankind and that he had done through politics. His religious basis of politics was the betterment of all, not through power but through love and morality. When Gandhiji uttered about the religious basis of politics, he did not mean that he stressed on any particular religion, rather he meant the moral basis of politics.

Hence we have seen that in his political philosophy Gandhiji

advocated non-violence and morality as the basis of politics. He was truly a religious person and Satya and Ahimsa were the two strong weapons for him. He was a true supporter and a votary of democracy. His political concept provided equal opportunity of right and justice to all through decentralisation of power that is self government or Home Rule.

Gandhi's conceptual frame work of political thinking and activities were derived from Hinduism made universal. The pancamahāvratā of satya, ahimsa, brahmacharya, asteya and aparigraha was the infra-structure which underlies his political movement. Real religion is the principle of imminent justice and real politics is merely the application of the moral Principle of justice in terms of social relations. Thus true religion is true politics. Both have a common basis in a common morality or social ethics. For Gandhi, "To bring God into politics is to bring in Truth and Love". It is this higher principle or as Jaspers says- 'religious politics of self revealing man' that can rescue us from our political crisis.

In politics Gandhiji introduced new phrases like satyagraha, non-cooperation, civil disobedience, fasting and swaraj. Let us discuss the above phases one by one.

V.2 The gospel of satyagraha

The word "Satyagraha" literally means agraha for "satya". The word agraha" comes from the root 'grah' which means 'to get hold

of, 'to hold fast to', 'to seize upon'. Agraaha for Satya therefore, means holding on to or holding fast to or seizing upon Truth. Regarding the concept of satyagraha Gandhiji was influenced by Bhagavad gita, the Sermon on the Mount and from the writings of Tolstoy and Thoreau. But still there was an originality, a freshness about Gandhi's concept of satyagraha and he applied this concept in sphere of individual, social and political life. Gandhi liked to give the name of his new non-violent movement as satyagraha, because this movement was linked more closely with his basic concept of satya and ahimsa. Hence Gandhi's conception of satyagraha came to mean Truth force, Love-force, or Soul-force. It proved to be a force generated out of love to realise Truth.

The concept of satyagraha involves various elements in it. But some of its essential elements are non-violence, love, self suffering and persuasion. Gandhi always said that satyagraha was a tapasya, a dharma yuddha and for that self suffering and self sacrifice in the spirit of the Gita were essentially required. Gandhi realised that even if men are rational by nature, they do not come to understand the nature of Truth due to the long cherished prejudices; the appeal of reason therefore doesn't always work. In such cases for Gandhi, it is self suffering which is the most effective weapon for arousing good sense and justice from within a man.

Satyagraha should not be confused with passive resistance. Gandhi distinguished between passive resistance and satyagraha in the following

way - (i) Satyagraha is a weapon of the strong while passive resistance is adopted by the weak. (ii) There is no scope for love in passive resistance, but in satyagrah there is no place for hatred but love for others including the opponent is its essence (iii) The use of physical force is totally forbidden in satyagraha, while it is not so in passive resistance. (iv) In passive resistance there is always an idea of harassing the other party, but in satyagraha there is no idea of harassing or teasing or injuring the opponent in anyway.

Now what are the qualities that a satyagrahi should possess? Apart from the cardinal virtues which the satyagrahis should observe Gandhi prescribed some qualifications for a satyagrahi which he should follow willingly. There must be common honesty among satyagrahis. They must be prepared to lose all, not merely their personal liberty, not merely their possessions, land, cash etc., but also the liberty and possessions of their families and they must be ready cheerfully to face bullets, bayonets, or even slow death by torture.

They must not be violent in the thought, word or deed towards the enemy or amongst themselves. Gandhiji further said that humility and self-restraint must be practiced by the satyagrahi, because humility and self-restraint give him mental strength.

Satyagraha to Gandhi was not the infliction of suffering on the opponent but on one's own self. Satyagraha is ingrained in non-violence, as such it does not permit violence in any form or shape. Ahimsa

and satyagraha are synonymous words for Gandhi. Satyagraha emphasises always the purity of means. It is a moral weapon in the hands of a morally strong person to fight injustice, tyranny or evil and can be applied in individual as well as in public affairs.

Gandhi preferred that a satyagrahi before practising this force in public life must practice it in domestic or personal life, because satyagraha like charity must begin at home. Satyagraha is a weapon to counteract the evils and obstacles that come in the way of realisation of truthful and just goals. A man engaged in satyagraha has to keep in mind a number of things to be done or to be avoided. He will overcome evil by good, anger by love, untruth by truth, himsa by ahimsa.

Satyagraha utilises non-violent methods of non-cooperation, civil disobedience, fasting, picketing and strike or temporary cessation of work as a protest.

Non-cooperation is in Gandhi's words an expression of anguished love. Non-cooperation according to Gandhi chiefly implies the withdrawal of cooperation from a state. Civil disobedience is nothing but the disobedience or breach of the unjust and immoral laws of the state. In Gandhi's words, it is civil breach of unmoral statutory enactments. Hence according to Gandhi, Civil disobedience and non-cooperation were both non-violent methods of resolving conflicts as well as peaceful devices for producing positive changes in social and political life. Some

charges are brought against Gandhi's weapons of civil disobedience and non-cooperation. It can be said that by adopting the methods of civil disobedience and non-cooperation Gandhi in a way forced the government to act contrary to its wishes and therefore it amounted to pressure and coercion. But this is not true. Because civil disobedience did not presuppose lawlessness, rather it was based on a willing observance of all laws which did not hurt the moral sense or violate individual conscience. Civil disobedience according to Gandhi was the purest type of constitutional agitation. Similarly there is no sense of co-ercion or immorality about non-cooperation, if one understood its true nature and spirit.

Fasting is an important form of satyagraha. Civil disobedience and non-cooperation imply suffering inflicted on the opponent, but fasting implies self-inflicted suffering. It is the highest means of self-purification. In Hinduism fasting has been taken as a penance and in Jainism and Islam, it is a religious vow for self-purification. Gandhi was really touched by all these effects of fasting as mentioned in these religions. A fast undertaken for selfish ends is not the fast of a satyagrahi, it is rather a duragrahi fast or hungerstrike which Gandhi condemned like anything. Moreover Gandhi said that no fast should be taken against an opponent, it was to be taken only against one's near and dear one with a view to reform him or them and if fasting is directed against an opponent, it becomes a coercion and ceases to be non-violent. But Gandhi himself fasted atleast thrice

against the British Government. Here Gandhiji was right in being faithful to his principle that fasting was to be resorted to as the last non-violent remedy, when all other non-violent means were exhausted. Fasting removes all such chances of violence and therefore as a technique of non-violent resistance it may be sometimes resorted to against the opponent also. Picketing and strike are another forms of satyagraha. Gandhiji advocated the use of picketing for liquor opium and foreign cloth. Ahmedabad strike in 1918 was very important when Gandhiji supported the strike of the workers by fasting. Gandhi had the knack to qualify the popular use of these methods in different situations to prevent them from taking a violent form. We find around ourselves strikes, fasts, dharras, satyagrahas, picketing, gheraos and many more things of the kind. All these are undertaking to fulfil some demands. Today people have accepted the forms of Gandhian techniques and thrown to winds the spirit behind them. Ends are more important to them than means. Hence it can be said that if Gandhian sprit is imbibed by the new generation, many of the problems could be solved without recourse to violence or offence to individual dignity.

V.3 Swaraj

Mahatma Gandhi has been the champion of Freedom Movement. He tried to penetrate into the minds of Indians for the cause of political freedom. His experience with national movement of Africa compelled him to feel the importance of swaraj for a country or for a nation. Swaraj means own government. It is self-rule or home rule. But Gandhi

defined swaraj as a condition where "every country is free to eat, free to drink, and to breathe. Even so is every nation free to manage its own affairs, no matter how holdly."

There is no anarchism in Gandhi's political ideal. In his ideal state, every one is his own ruler, he rules himself in such a manner that is never a hindrance to his neighbours. He was not in favour of excessive state interference in the life of the individual. State should provide atmosphere for the all sided development of the people. Hence Gandhiji stressed on democratic self-government. For him, the power of the government should be decentralised. Centre should delegate its powers to the states and from states to villages.

Gandhiji adopted this word (Swaraj) from the vedas and maintained in his conception its essential vedic character. Thus swaraj or self-rule meant for Gandhi not only rule of or by the self i.e. one's own rule or government, but also rule over the self. Gandhi took swaraj not merely as a political concept but also as a spiritual concept. Swaraj for Gandhi, in the ultimate analysis was a spiritual goal, a goal of spiritual freedom for each individual and such a pious goal could not be achieved by adopting the wrong path of violence and hatred. Only the path of ahimsa and love could give political freedom and ultimately the real freedom. Gandhi did never take the swaraj of a nation to be anything different from the swaraj of each and every individual of that nation. He openly said, "Swaraj of the people means the sum total of the swaraj (self-rule) of the individuals." Again Gandhiji said, "I

have therefore endeavoured to show both in word and deed, that political self-government - that is self-government for a large number of men and women is no better than individual self-government and therefore, it is to be attained by precisely the same means that are required for individual self-government or self-rule."⁴

Gandhi's concept of swaraj was not in any way in conflict with his concept of sarvodaya. Purna swaraj was to be attained according to Gandhi not simply by the substitution of home rule for foreign rule. It was really achieved when it was for the welfare of all and everyone felt his definite role in the government of the country. It is clear that political freedom of Gandhi was merely a prelude to the real freedom, the true swaraj. True swaraj consisted for him in every one's rule upon himself, such that all lower selfish motives were either removed or restrained and every man was related to all others by the thread of love. Even political swaraj we have seen could be won according to Gandhi by the path of complete love, self-suffering and self-sacrifice. And these were all the ways of the realization of moksa or God or Truth. Hence Gandhi took real swaraj as synonymous with moksa itself.

Gandhiji stressed that everybody must try to bring Rāmrajya on earth. Gandhi had treated swaraj as a synonym of 'Ramraj'. The concept of Ramrajya is a symbol of ideal state based not only on political and economic ideal but as that which represents the moral spirit. By Ramrajya he did not mean Hindu Rajya rather it meant a state with sovereign moral authority. Ramrajya is a kingdom of God.

full of justice, love, cooperation and morality. Gandhiji has identified Ramrajya with swaraj of the dumb-starved millions. Hence he said, "The swaraj of my dream is the poor man's swaraj. The necessities of life should be enjoyed by you in common with those enjoyed by the princes and the moneyed men. But that does not mean that you should have palaces like theirs. They are not necessary for happiness. You or I would be lost in them. But you ought to get all the ordinary amenities of life that a rich man enjoys. I have not the slightest doubt that swaraj is not poorna swaraj until these amenities are guaranteed to you under it."

V.4 Gandhi's concepts of state, the individual and the government

According to Gandhi, the state is justified in so far as it helps the realization of the ethical ideal. The state was to him an organised community of people of all shades and categories, it was organised to make them live happily. The state will perform its function with the minimum use of coercion. Gandhi wanted to bring about an equalisation of status. Gandhi's conception of state was the ultimate goal of sarvodaya social order. The basis of Gandhian state was the active co-operation of the people. Like the Russian, Gandhiji also said that military power of a state can never be a sign of its progress and development but a sign of decadence. The work of the police is to check anti-social elements in a non-violent state. He was confident that

our adherence to the ideal of non-violence will provide every success.

The chief purpose of the state is to promote the well-being of the individuals. In the ideal state of Gandhi's conception there will be no political power, i.e. government, because there will be no state. He did not favour majority rule, and he believed that the minority has a perfect right to act differently from the majority.

To Gandhi the individual in the state had the right of freely and fearlessly expressing his views. Gandhi looked upon the Government as a necessary evil and that government he considered the best which governed the least. Gandhi stood for a really self-governing individual who would as a law-abiding member of the state would be self-reliant, self-evolving and self-supporting. To him it was the duty of the government to remove all causes of immoral or unmoral life. Gandhiji founded his state on the basis of thriving, self-supporting and self-governing small communities. Co-operation, not coercion was to be the cementing material between such communities and their individual members.

According to Gandhi, swaraj or self-government is the best form of government. Out of the three traditional forms of government Gandhi preferred democracy, in which all people participate on the basis of equality. He believed that true democracy could only be an outcome of non-violence. Such a democracy should ensure equal freedom for all.

Gandhiji wanted the government of free India to rest on the foundation of the revived and revitalized village panchayats. The panchayats were not to be organised by the central and state government. The state and the central governments were to be based on the village units and not viceversa. He held that democracy could be most effective in small units, where people could carry the cementing material between such communities and their individual members.

✓ In his opinion India is a country of villages, hence the power should be given to Panchayat Raj. India lives in villages, hence village upliftment and constructive programme can only assure its development. In the Panchayat Raj, the labour and the rich capitalist would be treated as equal. The village Panchayat would govern the village and would act as judiciary, legislature and executive body combined together. The panchas would be elected by the village people on the basis of adult franchise. Every panchayat of five members (men and women) shall form a unit. Two such panchayat together will elect one leader. After 100 panchayats, the 50 elected leaders will be known as First Grade Leader and work under him. In this way, panchayats shall cover the whole Nation. These leaders will act for their own respective areas and jointly serve the village and whole Nation. The aim of Gandhi was to organise the whole country on the basis of panchayat.

A non-violent state or democracy must be secular. Gandhi's concept of religion in its broad sense, accepts secularism. It is nothing but unity in different religions or we may say that secularism can only

guarantee the universal brotherhood that can bring peace in the nation, peace in the world.

From the foregoing discussions we can conclude here that Gandhi's 'Ramrajya' will be a state of perfect anarchy, a stateless society governed by no other law except the moral law implicit in human nature and by no other force except the force of love. Gandhian concept of democracy is a non-violent one. He never believed in power politics that exploits the individuality, the root of all progress. Opinion of the majority will be of great consideration but the opinion of the minority must be honoured, even the opinion of an individual should be honoured if that is sound. Hence a real democracy should discard the tyranny of the majority if it offends the moral sense.

Politics is absolutely devoid of morality today. There is everywhere an atmosphere of mutual distrust and doubt and people have lost their peace of mind. We can very well realize the relevance and value of the great teachings of Mahatma Gandhi today, if we want to lead an honest and a peaceful life.

V.5 The Gandhian approach to world peace

In every country spiritual values are declining and moral standards are weakening under the pressure of growing appetites and demand for all forms of excitements and self-indulgences. Gandhi's chief concern was to liberate people from all sorts of bondage. He viewed everything from the standpoint of religion. It was the main spring of his activities.

He revealed that the prime motive of all religions is to awaken the spiritual consciousness of humanity and to uphold the values of love, peace, self control, service and above all commitment to truth and righteousness. Religion should never be the cause of any scandal, but it must be essentially a moral force in guiding the people towards the attainment of eternal peace.

Gandhi's theory of satyagraha and non-violence has placed before the world a substitute for the bloody revolution. He declared, "If man kind were to live, it had to come under the sway of truth and non-violence."⁶ For Gandhi, material progress is not enough, the real progress of man consists in his spiritual advancement. He had been giving more importance on ethical forces than material forces.

Gandhi was against war. His satyagraha may offer assistance to civil-defence in a nuclear age. He said "We have to make truth and non-violence matters not merely of individual practice, but for practice by groups, communities and nations. This can only be done if the mind of man is convinced and his heart is converted to accept the new values. Once it is done, it will not be difficult to devise external organisation and machinery for settling international problems peacefully. But so long as the need for regulating international conduct through moral principles is not recognized by organized groups and nations and by individuals working in their name, mere mechanical and organizational device for ensuring world peace is likely to fail, as did the League of Nations."⁷

Gandhi's ideal of non-violence inspired many leaders like Vinoba, Martin Luther king and so on. For Gandhi the ultimate happiness lies only in peace whether it was confined to the individual or extended to the whole of society. He wanted his weapon of non-violence to abolish wars, to destroy all conflicts and to settle all tensions. He wanted to bring about peace not only between British and India, but also between all warring nations on earth. In order to work out his peace ideals he founded Peace Brigade (Shanti Sena) which he desired to make it a world movement. Gandhi has shown us the path of peace through his exalted principles of non-violence which are of vital importance in the context of the present political situation of the world. In his view, religion could help us to imbibe and to live out the basic principles of life in order to live in peace. All religions must foster a sense of solidarity and fellowship to advance the cause of peace and justice. Gandhi said, "what policy the National Government will adopt I can not say. I may not even survive it much as I would love to. If I do, I would advise the adoption of non-violence to the utmost extent possible and that will be India's great contribution to the peace of the world and the establishment of a new world order. I expect that with the existence of so many races in India, all of whom will have a voice in the government of the day, the national policy will incline towards militarism of a modified character. I shall certainly hope that all the efforts to show the efficacy of non-violence as a political force will not have gone in vain and a strong party representing true non-violence will exist in the country."⁸

Gandhi always indicated the possibility and necessity of a peaceful co-existence of communities of different faiths. That is why whenever he found an opportunity whether it was in prayer meetings where Christian, Hindu, Mohammedan scriptures were read or in other gatherings, he preached the equality of all religions and emphasized the necessity of removing all the superstitions and the views that have crept into society during different stages of history. He continued his unceasing effort to secure communal unity and peace till the very end of his life.

In his experiments with truth Gandhi showed a way to bypass the inevitability of war and to work for social progress, political freedom, and world peace. Non-violence is a technique of resistance to injustice. It is a method of struggle to build the contours of a peaceful society. It is the basic principle not only with regard to war but also with regard to social and economic development. Non-violent struggle is a peaceful means to political and social change. According to Gandhi love and persuasion, not hatred should be the means of change. He asserted that in democratic societies non-violence is the only means available to settle social, racial and national problems. Gandhi considered non-violence as a religious attitude and an inner discipline which springs out of the deeper realisation of one's essential unity with the entire humanity. The spirit of non-violence is to be cultivated with great patience and compassion.

V.6 Conclision

From the foregoing discussions we find that we should not forget that Gandhi was not primarily a political and social thinker. At the same time he differed from other politicians in that he introduced religion into politics. He showed to the world that there is nothing bad about politics so long as it is guided by moral and religious principles. He himself selected the path of politics as a means to realise his spiritual goal. We have seen here that all the political ideas of Gandhiji whether it be of satyagrahis, swaraj, state, government or his attitudes towards war were all influenced by the lofty principles of religion. Gandhiji not only imbibed the moral ideas of the great teachers of the world, but he also applied them in practical politics.

Gandhiji was a man of action, a leader of a mass movement. He had a definite end, namely the liberation of the country from foreign yoke. He was necessarily influenced in the formulation of his ideas by what he saw all around him. He wrote, "I have always derived my politics from ethics. It is because I swear by ethics that I find myself in politics. A person who is lover of his country is bound to take a lively interest in politics."⁹ Again Gandhi, said that political power is not an end but one of the means of enabling people to better their condition in every department of life.

Gandhi was the first to promulgate and realize the principle of ahimsa while acting as a leader of a nation fighting for freedom. The

ideas of non-violence and fellow-feeling had been advocated as universal moral obligations in various cultures, long before. But these ideas were represented by those people who remained outside the sphere of politics and never acted as a political leader. Gandhi's political genius had spread in many countries and his sole aim was to unite nations and people irrespective of their faith.

In the present age there is violence everywhere. Our ideal of service is now replaced by power. Everywhere there is brute force. These must be replaced by love. Violence is useful in protecting external things where as for protecting atman non-violence is essential. The path of non-violence alone can give one happiness. Hence Gandhi dedicated himself to the religion of non-violence. In this time of crisis where everywhere there is chaos and confusion, Mahatma Gandhi shows us the path to perfection and peace. Nobody can deny the relevance of Gandhi. Gandhi is no more, but his spirit prevails. We must tread on the path in which he led as a pioneer.

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CHAPTER - VI

GANDHI'S RELIGION AND OTHER CONTEMPORARY INDIAN PHILOSOPHERS : A COMPARATIVE STUDY

VI.1 Introduction

In contemporary times man started losing interest in the classical philosophy in which metaphysical and epistemological issues were discussed. Complexity of life and multiplication of human problems compelled philosophers to think again, a search for aim and function of philosophy which could help mankind to carve out more secure and peaceful life. The contemporary philosophy i.e. twentieth century philosophy is characterised by a sharp reaction against the classical philosophy. They had a modern approach to human problems. Philosophers of this period devoted more to the existential problems of man. For the philosophers of this period, philosophy must cooperate with science in investigating the possibilities of better life in the future. For this, it was necessary to find out the real aim and functions of philosophy in the changed human situation. This is the remarkable philosophical tendencies of the contemporary period. It brought in a completely new area in this country and unleashed powerful forces which revolutionized Indian society and changed the face of India in the last few decades. All the thinkers of this period were very influenced by Upanisadic philosophy and also by the teachings of the Bhagavadgita. Except Tagore, all philosophers of this period have written commentaries on the Gita and show its deep influence on their thought, life and action. Contemporary Indian philosophy is both interpretative and creative with in certain limits because contemporary Indian thinkers not only tries to re-interpret some of ancient ideas derived chiefly from the

Upanisads and from the Quran in the case of Iqbal. Yet in their philosophies we get some refreshingly new notions and rational demonstration. Contemporary Indian thinkers have certain general agreements among them. These general agreements are given below

i) All these thinkers are monists. But monism expresses itself differently in all of them. Some asserts the oneness of the absolute and according to some others the monistic character of reality carries it into the realm of the indefinite.

ii) Unlike ancient Indian thinkers, all contemporary Indian thinkers give to the world a reality and assert the dignity of humanness.

iii) All contemporary Indian thinkers believe that the apprehension of reality is possible only through some intuitive awareness. This awareness has been named differently by different thinkers but they all believe that the awareness of reality is possible not by sense experience or by intellectual reasoning but by a kind of super consciousness an intuitive insight into the reality. They assert that this faculty is inherently present in every individual.

iv) Contemporary Indian thinkers believe that philosophy is essentially tied up life. Ancient thinkers was not concerned with normal civic life. They were concerned with peculiar estoric life of escape. The contemporary Indian thinkers relate philosophy not to a life of escape, but to this very life. They assert that after realising moksa the work of the individual is not over, he has to continue to be in the world, living

in the midst of fellowmen, helping them in making their lives, healthier and purer. No man, they say can be saved unless the race is saved.

v) Contemporary Indian philosophy is integral and synthetic. It is a synthesis of the east and west, because it has grown up in the environment of the west. The great modern Indian thinkers, viz Radhakrishna, Rabindranath Tagore, Vivekananda, M.K. Gandhi, Aurobindo and K.C. Bhattacharya have sound study of the western religion and philosophy. These are synthetic personalities. The western thoughts are so immensely imbibed in the minds of the Indian revivalists that they have neither the narrowness nor the orthodoxy with them.

vi) The contemporary Indian thinkers attach great importance to man's existence in the world and to the fulfilment of his entire being — his empirical as well as spiritual personality. Modern Indian philosophers have given immense importance to the development of man's ethical and social nature and to the cultivation of the secular values along with the spiritual ones. Man according to them has to work not only for his own individual liberation but also and in a greater measure for the upliftment and all sided development of his own society and nation and for human race as a whole.

vii) Modern Indian philosophers have full faith in religion. But they believe in a religion which is above all denominational religions, which is universal and embraces the whole of humanity. Such a religion has to be free from all dogmatism, sectarian outlook, narrow mindedness and

conservation. It has to satisfy the spiritual aspiration of the whole of humanity.

viii) All modern Indian philosophers have given great importance to the performance of Niskāmakarma or selfless services as prescribed by Gita. For the modern Indian philosophers, liberation does not mean simply attainment of freedom from rebirths and merging one self into the depths of eternity. According to them, the liberated souls take their higher births to guide the rest humanity on the way to spiritual perfection. In this respect their attitude differs from that of the philosophers of the Vedānta and other classical systems who seem to be more concerned with seeking freedom from the cycle of birth and death by attaining liberation of soul, rather than engaging themselves in the activities of the world.

From the above discussions it appears that though Gandhi was not an academic philosopher he was truly a contemporary thinker. Because he discussed each and every ideas of the contemporary philosophy in his discussions. Contemporary Indian thought cannot be complete without Mahatma Gandhi's ideas and views about religious and social problems. Gandhiji was essentially a man who would be counted in the ages to come with Buddha and Christ. He was a unique combination of ancient Indian ideals of sainthood and contemporary statesmanship. Gandhiji was a practical idealist and wanted to attend to the immediate problems of life and society without sacrificing the basic principles of religion and ethics.

In this chapter Gandhi's religion is compared with the following contemporary Indian philosophers. They are :

1. Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920)
2. Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)
3. Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902)
4. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975)

It is already mentioned in the introduction chapter that Mahatma Gandhi was born on 1869 and died on 1948. So, this shows that B.G. Tilak, Rabindranath Tagore and Swami Vivekananda are predecessors of Mahatma Gandhi and Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan is post Mahatma Gandhi. Let us compare the above philosophers ideas on religion with Gandhi one by one briefly.

VI.2 Gandhi and B.G. Tilak

Tilak was the first nationalist leader who sought to close contact with the masses and in this respect Tilak was a fore-runner of Gandhiji. B.G. Tilak was popularly called Lokmanya (respected by the people). From his teacher father he inherited his love of Sanskrit, which gave him deep respect for the ancient religion and traditions of the country and its people. Gandhiji said that B.G. Tilak was the most important nationalist leader. Tilak always talked about India and not of international matters like Gandhi. To freedom from British rule Tilak devoted all his abilities and thoughts. By his supreme dedication he laid the

foundation of India's freedom without which Gandhi could not have raised the edifice. While Mahatma Gandhi is the father of the nation, Lokamanya Tilak is the father of Indian nationalism. Tilak felt more strongly that for the strength of any nation and the success of any nationalist movement the people of the country must have a strong activist out look. That is why Tilak wrote his secret of the Bhagavad Gita (Gitarahasya) in which he wanted to prove that without the path of action, no salvation was possible. Tilak had moulded his entire life on the basis of the teaching of the Gita. According to the Bhagavad Gita, karma comprises all types of action which a man performs, no matter whether these actions are bodily (Kayika) or vocal (vacika) or mental (manasika). Tilak has put emphasis on the Gita's concept of karmayoga and tried to apply the same for the upliftment of humanity as a whole. To Tilak there is no exposition which is so scientific as the karmayoga of the Gita. In this case Gandhi was very much influenced by the Bhagavad Gita. That is why Gandhiji said that the Gita was his mother.

Tilak taught that whether it is violence or non-violence, one should follow the law of action. But Gandhiji said that one should follow the law of action without violence. According to Gandhi and Tilak, obedience to the law of action should be without any personal consideration (Niskāmakarma). Tilak was using Karma as an instrument for the attainment of swarajya. Tilak as a political philosopher has given us a theory of nationalism. His theory of nationalism was a

synthesis of the teaching of both eastern and western thinkers. His philosophy of nationalism was a synthesis of the vedantic ideal of the spirit as supreme freedom and the western concept of Mazzini, Burke, Mill and later on Wilson. In the famous trial speech of 1908 he quoted with approval John Stuart Mill's definition of nationality. In 1919 and 1920, he accepted the Wilsonian concept of self determination and pleaded for its application to India. Tilak held that the attainment of Swarajya would be a great victory for Indian nationalism. Tilak regarded Swarajya as not only a right, but a dharma. He gave a moral and spiritual meaning also to the concept of Swarajya although he did it only a few occasions. Tilak encouraged two festivals of Sivaji and Ganapati. Sivaji is the symbol the boldness and greatness and Ganapati is the symbol of wisdom. Tilak tried to establish unity among the men through these festivals. Like Tilak, Gandhiji also tried to understand politics in terms of religion. Gandhi also wanted to establish Ramrajya where there is no exploitation. But in comparison to Tilak, Gandhi discussed the above concept in a larger and comprehensive sense. Gandhi's country men were under political subjugation and were suffering under tyranny. Politics had become a sphere of immorality, injustice, tyranny and all such evils. He therefore wanted to introduce religion into politics. He wanted purification of politics. He wanted liberation of his people. Politics without religion according to him is like a corpse fit to be burnt.

Tilak emphasised the economic dimension of the Swadeshi

movement which indicate his awareness of the economic roots of Indian nationalism. The swadeshi movement in India assumed a spiritual and political character. Tilak's concept of swadeshi was different from Gandhi's concept of swadeshi. Tilak adhered to the concept of the economic emancipation of all section of Indian from the exploitative measures of an alien imperialism. On the other hand Gandhiji said that people should buy anything from every part of the world what is needed for our growth but not to buy anything from outside which interfere with our growth however nice or beautiful. This shows that Tilak was more rigid than Gandhi. For Tilak boycott is the right weapon if we act with unity to improve the nation's political and economic condition. To him, "Boycott" is a means of exercising pressure on British in order to get Indian's legitimate rights. Here Gandhiji also agreed with Tilak in this respect.

Regarding dharma, Tilak has not supported the view of certain ancient sanskrit treatises which bifurcate the same into niti dharma meaning legal-jurisprudence and good conduct respectively. To him, niti, kartavya or dharma are all synonymous. We have seen that religion meant for Gandhi the all pervasive Dharma or Rta and because truth was taken to constitute the essence of Dharma or Rta, naturally truth constitute the highest religion for him. Like Tilak Gandhiji also described God as the law or the dharma under the influence of Buddhism. That is why Gandhi never thought that Buddhism was atheistic. For Gandhi, the law and the law giver become one in Buddhism.

Tilak was not in favour of asceticism. He rejects the idea of renunciation of the worldly life after the attainment of the ultimate goal. According to Tilak there is an underlying unity between God, man and the world. The world is in existence, because God will it so. Man strives to achieve union with God. He must also seek unity with the world and act for it. Otherwise unity will not be perfect. Though for Gandhi religion was the basis of his life, his religion is nothing but to serve the poor people. For him to serve the poor is to serve God and through the service of the poor he wanted to become one with God. So in this cases there is very much similarity between Gandhi and Tilak.

Tilak was not prepared to discard the traditional structure of the Hindu society, Tilak has proposed the following social reforms -

- a) girls should not be married before sixteen years and boys before twenty years
- b) after forty years men should not marry or marry only widows
- c) The custom of dowry should be abolished
- d) widows should not be tortured and
- e) every man should contribute 1/10 of his income for the promotion of these social reforms.

Tilak exhorts the youth of India to sacrifice even their lives for the cause of prohibition of liquor. Like Tilak Gandhiji also tried to reform the traditional structure of Hindu Society. Gandhiji was essentially a religious man. So he tried to solve social problems in terms of religion. Tilak agreed with Sankara in making a distinction between Nirguna Brahma and Saguna Brahma, the absolute without attributes and God as endowed with attributes. He

was also in agreement with Sankara when he said that the endowment with attributes was the result of the illusory maya. But Saguna Brahma and Nirguna Brahma are equally valuable for Gandhi, though he regards God only for himself as Nirākāra and Nirguna.

Tilak was sometimes not consistent in his teaching. At some places he said that Jñāna, the path of knowledge was the only way for realising the identity of Atman and Brahman. But at other places he considered means to consist of a combination of Jñāna and Karma. But this combination is not possible in the view of advaita. The reason is that the content and the fruit are different. Jñāna is different from Karma. The self which is the content of Jñāna is one, independent and eternal where as actions are many and are dependent on causal correlates and are transient. The fruit of knowledge is release while the enjoyments of that actions that yield fruits bound the soul all the more in samsara. The non-dual self is ever existent and it doesnot depend on human activity. It cannot be the object of doing, not doing or doing otherwise. It is unmodifiable. Though karma cannot be combined with Jñāna but karma yoga becomes an auxiliary of the path of knowledge. Disinterested and dedicated action (Niskāmakarma) serves to purify the mind. Like Tilak Gandhiji also gave importance on karma to reach God and not the path of Jñāna. Gandhiji laid more emphasis on bhakti and karma to realise God.

VI.3 Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore

Rabindranath Tagore was the most powerful leader of Indian renaissance in art, music, dance and literature. He was the famous poet of India. Poetry was his life breath. He calls his religion the religion of a poet. Tagore was greatly influenced by his father Devendranath Tagore and the verse of the Upanisads. The family as a whole opposed all forms of superstition and fanatical belief and rituals of orthodox Hinduism. In his family the texts of the Upanisads were used in daily worship. The first mantra of Isa upanisads was the guiding principle and perennial source of inspiration in his life. He owed the concept of divine immanence directly to the Upanisad. Dr. Radhakrishnan and Dr. S.N. Gupta called him an absolutists thinker where as Dr. D.M. Dutta took him to be a theist. Dr. Dutta observed "Rabindranath was temperamentally opposed to puritanism, asceticism and impersonal absolutism. He rather chose to emphasize like the vaisnava those aspects of the Upanisads which taught that the finites were created by the infinite out of its own endless joy of love, and they are, therefore, not illusory but real". Rabindranath assimilated both theism and absolutism in his exalted Philosophy. Though Tagore synthesised theism with absolutism, he was more concerned with God and took the absolute as his secondary aspect. It is to be noted that Tagore didnot mention the word "Absolute" in the "Religion of Man" even once. Tagore denounced the empty absolute of the Advaitins who reduced the world to nothingness. For him, God is greater than the impersonal absolute.

He conceived God to be the supreme person who was absolutely perfect, absolutely omniscient, absolutely omnipresent, absolutely kind and absolute in all his powers, qualities and existence. He pointed out that God is the absolute in an absolutely absolute way.⁴ On the other hand for Gandhi none of the two forms in God was to be regarded as inferior or superior to the other and both are equally valuable. Gandhi openly said that God was a personal God to those who needed personal presence and only for himself he preferred taking God as formless truth, as Nirākāra and Nirguna. Like Tagore, Gandhi was also not a puritan, because Gandhi never ignored the animal aspect of man. Unlike Tagore Gandhi was an ascetic, but not in the strict sense. For Gandhi religion was the basis of his life. In this sense he was an ascetic. His religion is nothing but to serve the poor people. For Gandhi to serve the poor people is to serve God so it appears that Gandhi can be regarded as a practical thinker than an ascetic.

Rabindranath Tagore initially was a follower of Brahmasamaj. Later on he developed a religion which combined some elements of Brahmasamaj with some elements of orthodox Hinduism. Finally he came to believe in what he called 'The Religion of Man'. Tagore explicitly believed that religion could not be confined to any group or sect or tribe or nation. He said that man picked up that particular form of religion that suited him, but in the final analysis religion transcends all such particular forms. The aim of true religion is the realisation of one's kinship with everything. Religion according

to Tagore was a sort of home sickness. Tagore insisted that true religion must not be confused with what is called 'Institutional religion'. Tagore sincerely believed that religious organisations have almost debauched religion. For him they took away from religion their life-spirit and instead emphasized only the superficialities of religions and true religion preached freedom, whereas religious organisations made religions slave of their own institution. The institutional religions according to Tagore were dogmatic and false and the true religions must have the qualities of spontaneity and naturality in it. He pointed out that there cannot be any compulsion about it. Like Tagore, Gandhi's religion was also not confined to temples, books, churches, rituals and other outer forms. According to Gandhi, religion does not mean a set of dogmas nor does it mean conformity to rites and rituals. Gandhiji tried to give equal status to all religion. He was also strictly opposed to forcible conversion. There was no compulsion in Gandhi's religion also.

Tagore had a very sound human reason for believing in personal God. Tagore felt that man could not take an active and living interest in unapproachable Brahman, because that was merely an abstract principle so he thought that God has to be brought nearer to man. For him, man could take interest in the absolute only when it was humanised. In Tagore's philosophy God and man go together. He said that man was called the spark of the divine and the supreme was conceived as the ideal which man has to realise and this ideal consequently could not be an impersonal and indifferent Absolute. Tagore was not prepared

to accept that Divine personality could in anyway, be a limitation of God. For him, personality was a limitation only when it was a finite personality, a personality of wants and defects, but the Divine personality was infinite personality not subject to finitude and limitations. Tagore felt that it was not proper to ascribe the characteristics of our finite personality to the infinite. He said that infinite personality is conceived as comprehending the finite ones and yet being unaffected by the finiteness of the finite personalities.

Rabindranath conceived of the ultimate reality as the personal God, the infinite being, who included all finite souls and the world of matter. The poet even said that the infinite becomes the finite without losing its infinity. He observed that there was one infinite centre, the supreme person, to whom all the personalities and therefore all the world of relativity are related. God according to Tagore, is the superperson who is in the innermost shrine of our own heart and the goal of the individual soul is to get united with the infinite person or God. On the otherhand God for Gandhi was nothing but truth. He said that his religion is based on truth and non-violence. Truth was his God and non - violence was the means of realising God.

Like Gandhi, Tagore didnot feel the necessary of offering regular proofs for God's existence. For Tagore God is the postulate existence, therefore proofs are not necessary. Like Gandhi, Tagore also observed that rational proofs will not be able to comprehend the Divine unity. But Tagore was also aware that in ordinary discourse of day-to-day

life rational proofs and logical demonstrations do play a part. In awareness of this Tagore offered some arguments which may be treated as proofs. Some of them have similarities with the traditional proofs for God's existence, and some bear the mark of Tagore's own insight. One of his most favourite proofs has similarities with what is traditionally known as the Teleological proofs or the Argument from Design. The poet was himself a lover of beauty and naturally an argument based on evidence of order and harmony appeared to him as fascinating. Tagore conceived that such proofs are not at all necessary. God according to him could only be realised. On the other hand Gandhi gave much importance on faith than reason for God's existence, because there was no God for them who have no faith in God. Tagore introduced the concept of *Māyā* also in his philosophy of God and the world. *Māyā* according to Tagore was ignorance. On the universal scale, it was the principal of the cosmic error. Truth according to Tagore stood for unity and *Māyā* stood for separateness. For Tagore, evil denoted the fleeting character of our finite existence. Tagore did not hesitate in accepting evil as facts of life. For him evil was an impermanent aspect of our finite existence and its nature was like that of error, which we always come across in our intellectual life and yet which is always impermanent. He pointed out that evils were many, but they were aids in the process of the attainment of good. For Gandhi the world was not a mere appearance. His main aim was the upliftment of the fellow being so in this sense the world was real for him.

Moreover he defined evil as good or truth misplaced and he said that it had no separate existence at all. Again Gandhiji pointed out that the distinction between good and evil was our creation and this distinction was imaginary.

Tagore was greatly influenced by the humanist tradition of the Buddha and the Buddhist way of life appealed to him most. He said that to live in perfect goodness is to realise ones life in the infinite. Under the influence of Buddha, Tagore also stressed that man must come out of the shell of his individual self in order to enter into the larger self in humanity and so long as he remained confined within the wall of his individuality, his selfishness, his own material longings, joys and sorrows, he could not realise the universal man, neither could he get relief from the misery of the world. Hence Tagore wanted the exaltation of the spirit of man. Tagore had also propounded a humanist conception of truth. Like Tagore Gandhiji was also very much influenced by Buddhism as a religion.

Tagore was a poet of universal harmony. He preached harmony throughout. He felt that there was harmony between God and man. He also stood for harmony between nature and man because the immanence of God had to be realised in external nature and human recesses. According to Tagore, truth consisted not in fact, but in the harmony of facts and beauty and love were the expressions of harmony. Like Kabir, Tagore considered the universe as the manifestation of God.

Tagore was influenced by the Gita like all contemporary philosophers. Tagore accepted the idea of Karmayogin as advocated by the Gita. In sadhana he said, "There is no freedom from action, there is only freedom in action"². Like Tagore, Gandhi was also very much influenced by the Gita especially by the concept of Niskāmakarma.

Tagore's spiritualism was humanistic. He stressed the role of national humanistic religion. Like Gandhi, Tagore was also pained at the division of the Hindu society on the basis of caste, religious beliefs and sex. Tagore said, "In my language the word religion has a profound meaning. The wateriness of water is essentially its religion; in the spark of the flame lies the religion of fire. Likewise man's religion is in his inner most truth"³. Thus for him, religion consists in the endeavour of man to cultivate and express these qualities which are inherent in the nature of man, the eternal and to have faith in them. According to Tagore, religion of man is the realisation of unity of individual soul with the supreme soul. ✓

Tagore may be described as an unique humanist, because unlike any other, he tried to raise humanity to the level of the ultimate Reality. Tagore's view of God and man reconciles the extremes of immanence and transcendence. He regards human personality as the principle of Unity. It is no individuality but universality. According to Tagore the personality is self conscious principle of a living unity. So like Tagore, at times Gandhi's religion seems to take the colour of a humanistic religion. For Gandhi, God is everywhere in everything.

but he resided specially in the poor and the helpless. Therefore serving the poor was the greatest form of religion according to Gandhi. For Gandhi, religion was not something which concerned a man in his isolation from his fellowbeings. He pointed out that true religion consisted in helping the helpless and the poor and working for the welfare of humanity or rather of the entire creation. His concept of man was based on the advaitic faith. For him all are basically one, because the same Brahman resides in all of them, they are all equal.

Tagore's humanistic attitude pervades all aspects of his thought. Tagore humanises not only nature and objects, but also God. The outer world according to Tagore, is nothing but a cradle for the human spirit. That is why in Tagore's thought the notion of life, rhythm, beauty, harmony, order, love, delight, music etc. have become important. All these are human concepts. They become meaningful when they are related to human values.

In Tagore's religion man is necessary to God as God is necessary to man. Tagore's humanistic interpretation of religion finds expression in his statement, "My religion is the religion of man in which the infinite is defined in humanity"⁴. He said at another place", Humanity is necessary factor in the perfecting of the Divine truth"⁵. Tagore gave humanity a variety of roles ; sometimes man is considered as the art work of God, sometimes co-worker with God ; and sometimes as friend and play mate. In the evolution of the religion of man Tagore was deeply influenced by the medieval Indian saint like Kabir. The main

idea was to reject abstract notions of Reality and Truth. Tagore wanted to exalt humanity's status in the scheme of things. That is why he did not hesitate to call God as Man-God and supreme man. The religious person, according to Tagore, must dwell in the world, must work-sincerely in making it a fit place for the habitation of God. Worship of God means loyalty and service of the mankind. Tagore's advice was to serve mankind for being true to God. Through his religion of man Tagore wanted to help man of all religions and sects in coming closer to one another. He made use of his poetry in communicating the highest truth of religion to humanity. According to Tagore all our problems are due to the wrong attitude to life and lack of respect for the divine in man. For Tagore materialistic attitude and too much importance to physical consideration could not bring peace and happiness and for solving all individual and social problems, our attitude must be rational and humane. Like Tagore, to Gandhi also there can be no religion without morality and any spiritual ideal can be realised through the moral and social service.

Tagore assimilated western humanism and appreciated the grand quest of man for knowledge and progress of science. But he was also conscious of the complexity of man-machine relationship. Material prosperity of the western civilisation has created problems of distance between rich and poor nations. For overcoming this situation spiritual oneness of all human being must be recognised. Although Tagore was not a metaphysician and never tried to build a system of philosophy,

he tried to reconcile metaphysical doctrine of Indian philosophy with the need to respect the dignity of human individual through love. He said that when our self is illumined with the light of love, then the negative aspect of its separateness with other loses its finality. His message of love and universal brotherhood, his ideal of universal man and one world will always inspire man in future to work for greater co-operation in all fields of life. Like Tagore, Gandhiji also took religion primarily as consisting of love, kindness and sympathy towards others. Gandhi also had faith that people could conquer the whole world by truth and love. Gandhi's non-violence was synonymous with love in the purest and widest sense of term.

VI.4 Gandhi and Swami Vivekananda

After the death of Sri Ramakrishna in 1886, Vivekananda made a extensive tour of India. He came to feel that India, inspite of its rich spiritual heritage and very strong cultural history could not remove poverty, weakness and social evils. So he took a decision that he must work for the improvement of the Indian people in all spheres. Especially he strongly felt the need of bringing about a spiritual revolution.

Swami Vivekananda propounded the open religion based on the spiritual texts of the Vedas and the Upanisads. For him, religion was a matter of experience and not a system of dogmas. He wanted to break all barriers between religions and remove all conflicts and oppositions. He pointed out that religion must be limitless and Infinite like God.

He said that it was the same Brahman that manifested in different forms and powers. He observed, "May he who is the Brahman of the Hindus, the Ahura Mazda of the Zoroastrians, the Buddha of the Buddhists, the Jehovah of the Jews, the Father in heaven of the Christians, give strength to you. The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth"⁶. Swami Vivekananda vehemently criticized fanaticism, priest-craft and exclusive tendencies in religions. For him all religions are true and they all lead to God. He did not want that a religion should grow by defeating other religions. He wanted diversity in religions which reveal spiritual awakening and evolution in humanity. Like Vivekananda, Gandhiji also pointed out that religions were not separating man from one another, they meant to bind them. According to Gandhi, we must help a Hindu to become a better Hindu, a Mussalman to become a better Mussalman and a Christian to become a better Christian and we should not think that our religion is more true and that another's is less true. So for him, our attitude towards all other religions must be absolutely clear and sincere.

For Swami Vivekananda, religion has to be scientific. For him, science and religions are not opposed to each other, the former purifies the later.

Humanism was the dominant note in Vivekananda's Philosophy

and religion. Vivekananda demonstrated a number of ways how religion could be regarded as a necessary aspect of life. Religion according to Vivekananda, is a growth from within, it is inherent in the very constitution of man, and therefore, the nature of religion can be known by analysing the religious sense. Vivekananda described this sense more or less in the manner of psychologist. Firstly, he said that this is universally present - even the atheist has it and secondly like all other mental aspects, it has all the three elements in it, the cognitive elements, the feeling element, and the conative elements. He pointed out that these elements are never present in equal proportion or degree but the nature of religion is determined by preponderance of this element or that.

A very important characteristic of religion according to Vivekananda is that it invariably has a super natural content. For him, super natural may be anything - a personal God or the absolute or a super natural law or anything of this kind. He said that this element was the object of religious aspiration and hence represented the core of religion. Vivekananda further said that religion transcends not only the limitations of the senses but also the power of reasoning.

Another important characteristics of religion according to Vivekananda is that religion does have a value and significance for the individual but it has a social content also. In this case, Gandhiji also agreed with Vivekananda. Gandhiji discussed the concept of religion not only in individual life but in social life also. He did not much

approve of the individualistic and private character of religion. According to Gandhi religion was not something which concerned a man in his isolation from his fellow beings. Gandhiji always worked hard for the social upliftment of the down trodden like the shudras or the untouchables and the women. His whole social life as a matter of fact was devoted to upliftment and welfare of these two classes which were most neglected and suppressed. His social philosophy is important because he wanted to bring about total social transformation without creating ill will, violence and injustice to any section of the society. Caste and class division only impeded social progress hence the socialist ideal of classless society must be accepted. The ideal of Sarvodaya - upliftment of all was given by Gandhi to Indians and to the world as a means of complete social change. Gandhiji's non-violent approach towards social reconstruction made him a distinct and unique kind of social reformer and ushered in a new era of humanism. Gandhiji was a great socialist of this century. His socialism implied state control over means of production and elimination of all forms of exploitation from the society. But this was to be achieved by the force of love and in non-violent way. Gandhi didnot approve socialism of the western type which gives no importance to the reformation of the individual. For Gandhi society cannot be reformed without reforming the individuals. Gandhi believed, as Ruskin has put in his book 'Unto this last that "good of the individual is contained in the good of all". The only real and dignified human doctrine is the greatest good of all and this can be

achieved by utmost self sacrifice. Gandhiji was opposed to the exploitation in any form. He directed all his energy towards removing the economic inequality and social injustice he saw around him. According to Gandhi economic equality meant the levelling down of the rich people on the one hand and levelling up of the poor people on the other. Gandhiji said that Sarvodaya was the highest end of man's life. He also said that self-realisation or the realization of God was our highest end. Self realization according to Gandhi doesnot mean finding out some such unique reality within oneself which so separate from all else in the universe. To realise other in one self and oneself in others is the first lesson of Sarvodaya. Again working for Sarvodaya and working for self realization are also one and the samething. Both can be attained according to Gandhi, by adopting the path of complete ahimsa, universal love and brotherhood and selfless social service and not through any tapasya in the jungle.

Vivekananda said that a simple insight in the nature of different religions will show that they were not actually contradictory to each other, they were in fact supplementary to each other. For him, the truth of religion was so comprehensive that different religions concentrated only one aspect or on a few aspects of religion. Again he said that there may be contradictory points of view of the same thing, but they were basically views of the same reality and so all the same and hence supplementary to each other. That is why Vivekananda pointed out that the universal religion already exists. By universal religion he did not

mean a religion that will have one universal philosophy, or one universal mythology or one universal ritual. He said that they may differ from sect to sect, or even from individual to individual and yet universal religion is there. The one watch word for universal religion, according to Vivekananda was acceptance. He recommended positive acceptance. That is why he said that he could worship in any form with any individual or sect. He said that he could enter and offer his prayers anywhere in a temple or a church or mosque or any other place. For Vivekananda the believer in the universal religion should be broad minded and open hearted, and he would be prepared to believe in the scriptures of all religions and keep his heart open for what may come in the future. Such an attitude led Vivekananda to discover atleast one such element which could be said to be common to all religion in a general way, and which consequently may represent the essence of universal religion. That common point for Vivekananda was God. He pointed out that man and women were different but as human beings they were alike. He said that all living beings men, animals and plants were all one and in that way all different religions talked of different aspects of the truth, as aspects of the same truth, they were all one. According to Vivekananda that truth is God. In Him we are all one. Vivekananda used the word God in its most comprehensive sense, it may be personal omnipotent and good God or it may be described as the universal existence or the ultimate unity of the universe. He observed that every religion consciously or unconsciously is struggling towards the realisation of this unity or God and therefore this may

be said to represent the ideal of universal religion.

For Vivekananda another important characteristics of universal religion is that it should be acceptable to all minds. He said, "What I want to propagate is a religion that will be acceptable to all minds it must be equally mystic and equally conducive to action"⁷. From the fore going discussions we find that like Vivekananda, Gandhiji also tries to give equal status to all religions. But like Vivekananda he did not talk about universal religion. Gandhi said that all religions had imperfections, because all of them revealed only partial and relative truths, but again all were equally holy, because all were the creations of the same God. He took the essential and good elements of all the religions especially, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, Hindum and Islam and then he tried to assimilate it in his way. Again Gandhi openly rejected the mistaken elements of religions, such as he was very much critical of the Christian missonaries which were engaged in converting the poor Hindus to Christianity by means of material inducements. So it is this fundamental religion which Gandhiji designated as the religion with capital 'R'. On the practical side, there are many religions giving vent to the different ways of life, but fundamentally religion is one. Moreover for Gandhi, toleration is one of the most salient features of Gandhiji's religion. For Gandhi, different religion were different interpretations of the same truth and it was not possible to decide conclusively which interpretation was correct and hence the necessity of religious tolerance. This shows that Vivekananda's acceptance is not

just tolerance. Tolerance indicates something which is allowed inspite of its being wrong where as Vivekananda recommended positive acceptance. Like Vivekananda Gandhi did not refer to religion either as an institution or as an association, he referred to the spirit of religion.

Vivekananda did not consciously enter into the controversy regarding personal and impersonal nature of God. In fact he described God on both ways and he was convinced that this distinction between a personal God and an impersonal God do not effect Gods nature in any way. He observed that God is what ~~He~~ is and the distinction between personal and impersonal was the result of our attempts to apprehend God. Vivekananda pointed out that God cannot be described and our language is inadequate to represent Him accurately. For him to call God father, or brother, or our dearest friend were attempted to objectify God which could not be done. Vivekananda observed that God was the eternal subject of everything. On the other hand in Gandhi's conception of God he had committed no logical error. Under the influence of Jainism, Gandhi was an *anekāntavādin* and *syādvādin* and therefore he had no difficulty in moving from impersonal to personal description of God. Though Gandhi said that the two stand points were equally important and valuable for him, but he only for himself preferred to take God as *Nirākāra* and *Nirguna*. The greatest contribution of Vivekananda to Indian Philosophy consisted in a new interpretation of the Advaita vedanta. This new interpretation of vedanta was known as Neo-vedantism of Swami Vivekananda as distinguished

from the traditional vedanta propounded by Sankaracharya. A remarkable feature of Vivekananda's philosophy was the formulation of what he called the practical vedanta. It is true that Vivekananda borrowed the doctrine of Māyā from Advaita vedanta, but his conception of Māyā was not exactly similar to that of Sankara. In Advaita vedanta, Māyā is the power that creates illusion, it is that Divine sakti which has the capacity of deluding man into believing that the world is real. But Vivekananda did not accept this position. According to him Māyā did not necessarily mean being illusory or unreal, māyā is conceived just as a fact about the nature of the world, it seeks to express the essential characters of the world as it exists. For Vivekananda another name for Māyā was contradiction. He said that our whole life was a contradiction, a mixture of being and non-being. He tried to explain the concept of Māyā with the help of the analogy of 'Ocean and waves. Vivekananda said that waves even as waves are nothing but water and yet they have a name and form. He observed that so long as the waves are rising and falling they have reality of their own and when the waves subside, nothing remains but the ocean, because the ocean is never separate from the waves, Vivekananda applied this analogy in Māyā also. He said that like wise when Māyā gives way, it gives way only to find that all the time it was lying within the bosom of the Brahman itself. This shows that Vivekananda somehow gave to the world also a reality. But it cannot be denied that the metaphysics and disciplines of Vivekananda did not deviate an inch from the stand point

of Advaita vedanta of Sankara. We observed that Gandhi, Tagore discarded the traditional concept of Māyāvada (world as illusion). But Vivekananda accepted the old position without deviation or slightest hesitation. Vivekananda taught the people that service of man was essentially the same as service to God. Hence Vivekananda preached his famous doctrine of daridranarayana seva the doctrine of worshipping Narayana in the poor. Thus it was not mere social service but service of man as worship of God. He introduced social service as a part of the monistic discipline though the monk was only to practise meditation and teach spiritual truths. Like Vivekananda Gandhi was always thinking about the upliftment of the poor and helpless people and through the service of these people he wanted to realise God. Gandhi's concern for the poor and the downtrodden and his exhortation for the betterment of their physical and mental condition was entitled as Daridranarayan. He said "I claim to know my millions. All the 24 hours of the day I am with them. They are my first care and last because I recognize no God except that God that is to be found in the hearts of the dumb millions. They donot recognise his presence, I do and worship the God that is Truth or Truth which is God through the service of these millions"⁸. Gandhi's ideal was that wealth should be equitably distributed among those who have produced it. No person or labourer should be denied the essentials of living, food, clothing and a roof to live under. For Gandhi some one has more than what is needed he should act as its trustee and make room for the have nots. Gandhi belived that limitation of wants could only promote real happiness. Gandhi was not

a monk. He was a practical thinker, a religious man as well as a social reformer.

Through Yoga Vivekananda tried to build a universal religion. Yoga has two meanings. It may mean union or it may stand for path, method, means and discipline. Vivekananda used the term Yoga in a very comprehensive manner and therefore incorporates both these meanings in his sense of the word 'Yoga'. So Yoga for him means the process as well as the realisation. Thus the path leading to the realisation is the path of discipline and union. The aim of Yoga is union, realisation of oneness. He proclaimed all paths of God-realisation as equally sacred. The Hindu scriptures, the Upanisads and the Gita have outlined four Yogas for God-realisation. He has given systematic account of all of them. Jñāna Yoga is the path for self realisation through discriminative knowledge. It is a form of spiritual discipline based mainly on philosophical discrimination between the real, the unreal and the renunciation of the unreal. Vivekananda said in agreement with the Advaita vedanta that in Yogic consciousness idols, temples, God's images, mind, life, body, and cosmos disappeared as dream or illusions, there was no trace of them in the experience of the mystic vision, all disappeared into nothingness, so he pointed out that the Absolute alone existed and that everything else was false or unreal. The path of Jñānayoga advocated by Sankara according to traditional interpreters insist on the giving up all activities (Sarvakarma Samnyāsa) as the method of spiritual realisation. The concept of sannyāsa was a negative ideal, it stressed renunciation.

But Vivekananda made the ideal of sannyasa practical and positive by adding service to renunciation.

Karmayoga is the path of ethical actions which leads to the identity of one's self with God. It is system of ethics and religion intended to attain freedom through unselfishness and by good works. Vivekananda seems to very impressed by the Gita ideal of Niskāmakarma and the life of Lord Buddha. He said "He works best who works without any motive, neither for money, not for fame, nor for anything else, and when a man can do that he will be a Buddha, and out of him will come the power to work in such a manner as will transform the world. This man represent the very highest ideal of Karma-Yoga"¹ In Vivekananda's Philosophy individuals are architects of their own destiny, if an individual does realise salvation, it is entirely his own effort. For him, man's activity is not determined by God's will. So Vivekananda's Karmayoga has the philosophical bias. The path of devotion to God for salvation is called Bhaktiyoga. According to Vivekananda devotion or love is natural to man and the Bhaktiyoga is the path of pure love in which the object of love or devotion is not the finite or limited but the supreme. For him this love will be universal love, love for all, because this will be based on the realisation of oneness and everything. He made moral life indispensable to God's bhakti like Gandhi.

Rajayoga is the path for the realisation of salvation through the control of the mind and the body. Rajayoga is the path of physical

and mental disciplines leading to concentration and samādhi. Vivekananda is aware that this method is not for the weak as it requires an immense faith in oneself and also physical and mental strength. He said that it gradually enables the yogi to acquire certain excellences and power and finally the yogi is able to practise complete concentration leading to the realisation of unity with the Divine.

Thus Vivekananda described the above four different ways to the realisation of the same goal. He felt that one can choose the path he lives and if one follows anyone of these paths with sincerity and earnestness, he will be able to reach the goal. Again he said that these paths are not completely exclusive of each other, in fact in certain respects they overlap. On the other hand Gandhi gave more importance on Bhakti and Karma for the realisation of oneness. According to Gandhi the aim of religion was to lead man face to face with God in other words face to face with truth. Gandhi believed that God is everywhere and in everything, but he resided specially in the poor and the helpless. Therefore serving the poor was the greatest form of religion according to Gandhi. Again for Gandhi, a person become one with God through prayer also. He pointed out that prayer is not to be performed with lips, but with hearts. Again he pointed out that prayer is a form of meditation which has its aim self purification and knowledge of the truth.

VI.5 Gandhi and S. Radhakrishnan

Dr. Radhakrishnan is universally accepted as one of the greatest religious philosophers of the world. He was a thinker and an idealist of the 20th century. He could be regarded as a Neo-Vedāntin. He had given a new orientation to classical Upanisadic thought. He restated the advaitic vedanta of Sankaracarya. Dr. Radhakrishnan was not recapitulating nor endorsing the views of the Upanisads. He was interpreting them as a scholar, thinker and an idealist of the 20th century. Therefore his vedanta is not ideantical with that of Sankara and the Upanisads.

Radhakrishnan's salient features comprised universal outlook, synthesis of the east and the west in religion and philosophy, the spiritualism and humanism and openness to the influence of science, art and values. The interaction of the eastern spritualism and the western humanism, fusion of cultures, ancient, modern medieval and the interchange of thoughts and values gave rise to a new system of Radhakrishnan's philosophy.

Radhakrishnan was profoundly influenced by western education. It helped him to have a closer views of western, culture, thought and civilization. The influence of them enabled him to evaluate Indian classical thought from a new perspective.

Radhakrishnan had been influenced by modern science, modern industrialisation and technology. He accepted the biological theory of

evolution. He was aware of good and bad effects of modern industrialisation and technology. He observed that humanity was facing spiritual crisis as it appeared from an analysis of merits and demerits of modern technology. Here like Radhakrishnan, Gandhiji was also aware of the good and bad effects of modern industrialisation and technology. He saw the problems created by industrialisation and machine in human society. He tried to show that colonial economy was essentially based upon exploitation, exploitation of villages by cities, large scale over small scale industry, one region by another, the rich over poor and the educated over the ignorant. He suggested an alternative economy which he found in self-reliant economy. He used the symbol of Charkha. When he talked of Charkha, it was not charkha alone, it included many other industries under it. Gandhi was repeatedly saying that mere playing of the wheel would lead the country nowhere. He wanted everybody to understand the philosophy behind it. The All India village Industries Association was a by product of charkha. Similarly basic education and eradication of untouchability were also the by product of charkha which stood for a new life style, a non exploitation economy and a technology which could be controlled by human beings. The competitive economy are based on exploitation. Gandhian economy is based on economy of Swaraj. Under Gandhian economy each unit of economy is judged by its self-reliance. His aim was to create a new civilisation where all people would have an equal role to play.

To Gandhi, some economic and technological development is

essential for mental and spiritual growth, but only upto a point, beyond which it becomes an obstacle in the path of development. Gandhi wanted an economy in which people mattered. Moreover Gandhi welcomed the use of modern machines provided it helped the labourer to lighten their burdens but does not create unemployment. He said that such mechanical power must be available to every villages who wanted to use it. He wanted that science and technology should be applied for purposes that would bring about greater production carried on in peace and harmony.

Radhakrishnan showed the necessity of political consciousness and freedom in his various works. He analysed the merits and demerits of contemporary politics. He emphasised the revival of spiritualism to meet political demand. Like him, Gandhi's aim was also to spiritualise politics, economics and social aspects.

19th century thinkers revolted against the evils of Hinduisim. Radhakrishnan was enabled by the 19th century to become aware philosophically of these evils. On the other hand Gandhi was not a philosopher in the academic sense. He was born a Hindu. His Hinduism was his own. His Hinduism grew and developed in the light of his contact with other religions, especially Christianity, Buddhism and Jainism. The removal of untouchability was one of the most important features of Gandhi's life. He refused to enter temples to which Harijans were not allowed to enter. Radhakrishnan had deep study of the classical literature of Hinduism at the start of his professional carrier and as

a teacher in philosophy. The study of the Upanisads, Bhagavad Gita, commentaries of Brahmasutras by Shankara, Ramanuja, Madhava, Nimbārka and other the dialogue of the Buddha, and the Buddha and Jain scriptures broadened his thought. Plato, Platinus, Kant, Bradley, Bergson and Whitehead also had been absorbed in him in his inner most recesses of thought. Among the contemporary thinkers of India, Tagore and Gandhi influenced him by their association and lived in his unconscious mind. Radhakrishnan's religious experiences served as data to his Philosophy. He was depending more on his experienced inspiration than on his study. Though he was widely reading all the ancient medieval and contemporary philosophical systems, the real sources and materials of his philosophy were based on his own spiritual experiences. Similarly Gandhiji was also not acquiring his ideas and knowledge merely from books. He was a man of the masses. He addressed them not about what he had read and studied in books but what he had seen, sensed experienced and thought about. In Gandhi's philosophy the emphasis is not on idealism but on practical idealism. Radhakrishnan described some of the characteristics of religious experience. They are -

- i) It is that experience which is not anything extraordinary or supernatural and that every man is capable of it and also that it involves an awareness of our objective kind.
- ii) It is an integral and undivided consciousness which is different from

ordinary experience. In ordinary experience the duality of the subject and the object is always maintained, where as in this experience there is no subject object differentiation.

iii) It is not in anyway determined by the extraneous factors. It is autonomus in character in so far as it is an independent factor of the mind.

iv) It is essentially innner and personal.

v) It constantly aims at the attainment of perfection.

vi) Religious experience as he says is the total reaction of mere knowing or mere feeling. It is a total reaction of the total man including the intellectual moral and aesthetic aspects of the whole man.

vii) Radhakrishnan uses the word 'saint' for this and defines it as a positive feeling of calm and confidence, joy and strength in the midst of outward pain and defeat, loss and frustration.

viii) The religious experience enables the individual to throw the burden off and to have a feeling of relief and release. In this way this experience creates a feeling of freedom.

ix) This experience is the most certain and the most ineffable possessions of man's life, doubt and disbelief are no more possible.

x) This ineffability can neither be demonstrated nor proved. Radhakrishnan uses the expression 'self established', self evidencing, 'self-luminous' etc.

to describe the nature of such an experience.

xi) Radhakrishnan is aware of the inadequacies and limitations of language and he is aware that it is not possible for our modes of expressions to comprehend fully the nature of this experience.

Radhakrishnan defined religion as the insight into the nature of Reality or experience of Reality. For him, this experience was the response of whole personality, the integrated self to the central Reality. He defined religion also as a strenuous endeavour to apprehend truth. Dr. Radhakrishnan pointed out that the purpose of life was not the enjoyment of the world, but the education of the soul. Radhakrishnan stated that *sravana*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana* (hearing, reflection and disciplined meditation respectively) are the three stages of religious life, and one has to rise from one stage to another.

To Radhakrishnan no religion is perfect, because religion is a movement or growth in which the new rested on the old. To Gandhi also religion is not fixed. It is an experience which is ever growing, ever developing and religion is a dynamic process. Gandhiji didnot think that religion was to be practised in a cave or on a mountain top. He commanded that it must manifest itself in all the actions of man in society. For him, religion is not merely a belief, it is a way of life also. The way of life which constituted religion must be rooted according to him in a faith or conviction in God or truth. By God Gandhi did not mean personal God, it rather meant a way of life based

on the spiritual conviction that the world was sustained by truth, by Dharma and that there was an ordered moral and spiritual basis behind it. Gandhiji regarded all the different religions as different roads leading to the same goal and this goal is the goal of truth which the different religions conceive or apprehend in their own relative ways. On the other hand the different religions Radhakrishnan felt were like comrades in a joint enterprise for facing the common problems of peaceful co-existence, inter national welfare and justice, social equality and political independence, Radhakrishnan used these as the basis for the development of human culture. Like Radhakrishnan Gandhi also agreed that no religion is perfect. For Gandhi each particular religion contains some element of true religion and that the true primordial religion find concrete expression only in and through these particular religions. Dr. Radhakrishnan also asserted that a religion which has not given importance to social reforms and international justice has no appeal to the modern mind like Gandhi.

To quote Radhakrishnan "The believer in God loves his fellow-men as he loved himself seeking their highest good as he seeks his own by redemptive service and self-sacrifice. He will put justice above civilization, truth above patriotism"¹⁰. For Radhakrishnan, religion may be many on account of the divergence and the same like Gandhi. Radhakrishnan says, "Religion is not a creed or a code but an insight into reality"¹¹. For him this insight will reveal that man is always confronted with something greater than himself which is somehow

immanent in the human soul and this is the eternal or the Absolute Reality which is present in the soul of man as its secret ground and forms a bridge between the finite and the infinite. Insight into this truth is the essence of religion.

(The Absolute or the Brahman is designated by Radhakrishnan both in the Indian way and in the western manner. He at times called it the Brahman, and at other times the Absolute. His absolute contained in it the element of both- the Advaita vedanta and the Hegelian tradition. Like the advaita vedantist Radhakrishnan also believed that the Absolute did not have any internal differentiation. For him, the differentiations that appeared to us is so only from the point of view of creation. The Absolute is conceived by Radhakrishnan as pure consciousness and pure freedom and infinite possibility. The first two characters are described more or less in the vedantic manner. The third character is explained in the manner of Hegel's Absolute Idealism. The Absolute according to Radhakrishnan has to be spiritual in nature. He called the Absolute the whole of perfection. For him, everything else is imperfect. There may be degrees of perfection, but the wholly perfect is the Absolute.) On the other hand Gandhi was using the word advaita and dvaitism and similarly anekāntavādi and Syādvādi without much technical or philosophical discussion. He was using these words in his own sense. He brought the philosophy of advaita on a very practical level and interpreted its metaphysics in some what a practical and ethical manner. For Gandhi the basic truth was only one and the entire

creation was the expression of the same truth and hence all were basically one.

(Over and above the principles of the Absolute or Brahman. Radhakrishnan also told about the principle of God. Radhakrishnan also distinguished between the Absolute and God although he did not reduce their distinction to the empirical and transcendental point of view as it had done in the vedanta. The supreme conceived as revealing itself in two ways— Absolute and Isvara. The Absolute is the object of metaphysical aspiration, God of the religious aspiration. Radhakrishnan was not prepared to reduce God to unreality by making it a product of Maya and ignorance. For him, God is real in so far as creation is real and God is an aspect of the Absolute. Following Gandhiji Radhakrishnan said that God is truth. Like Tagore he maintained that God is love but he added that God is not mere truth and love, but also justice. For him, God is the perfect as well as the highest moral being, free from all evils and God performs his act according to his own laws.

For Radhakrishnan, the world is the actualisation of one of the infinite possibilities. This means that it is not a necessity for the creator. It is a result of a free act. The world therefore is an accident of the Absolute. Like Sankara, Radhakrishnan also believed that the world is not necessary to Brahman. Radhakrishnan borrowed this element from ancient Indian thought. Again he added another aspect from the Absolute Idealism of the west. For him also creation is lila and this

lila is real. Here Radhakrishnan was facing a logical difficulty. If creation is real lila then it follows that creation is a necessary to the Absolute and in that case, the free character of the reality is affected. But according to Radhakrishnan the distinction between 'accident' and necessity is unwarranted in the content of reality. Therefore Radhakrishnan said that it is in the nature of the Absolute to grow into the world - the world is the affirmation of the Absolute. In that sense creation is necessary for him, but it is not necessary for the Absolute to have this very creation and in that sense creation is an accident.) On the other hand for Gandhi, the world is not a mere appearance. As a Vaisnava he accepted the world as real and his main aim was to upliftment of the poor, suffering fellow beings who belonged to this world.

For Radhakrishnan, prayer, modes of worship, rituals, the various religious rites and ceremonies even ideal-worship all these may have a significance, all these may have different meanings for individuals in different ways, But the basic thing is silent meditation. Radhakrishnan used the terms 'yoga', 'realisation', 'dhyāna', 'intuitive' apprehension etc. to denote this state. On the other hand Gandhiji gave much more importance on fasting and prayer. He said that his devotion got strength from fasting, prayer and recital of God's name vize, Rāmanām. For him, a person must become one with Divine through prayer and therefore prayer is the very soul and essence of religion. Moreover

Gandhi had given more importance on Bhakti and Karma as the ways for God realization.

VI.6 Conclusion

Form the foreging discussions we find that contemporary Indian thinkers took great pains to advocate the idea of a casteless and classless society. The twentieth century thinkers have given great attention to the social upliftment of humanity. They stood for the emergence of a society where nobody suffered from discrimination, inequality, fear, want and other evils and which was alogether freefrom the prejudices pertaining to colour, community, race, religions and so on. In this respect we can mention the name of Mahatma Gandhi who endeavoured through out his life for the upliftment of the poor and the downtrodden. Tilak, Tagore, Vivekananda and Radhakrishnan have also made substantial contribution in these cases, but in comparision to them, Gandhiji discussed this factor in a much wider sense.

Gandhiji observed that truth and non-violence were the supreme ideals for mankind. His view of religion was based on truth and non-violence. Gandhi's most significant contribution is that he gave a positive interpretation of non-violence. He said that non-violence and love are identical. He considered love as the greatest force which can be used in solving all our problems. Most of the contemporary Indian thinkers held Ahimsa as an individual virtue. But the special contribution of Gandhi widened its application to the national and international

spheres of action. He made it a universal moral principle. We cannot deny the contribution of the above mentioned contemporary Indian philosophers. Because if the contemporary Indian thinkers did not have their contribution to the people of India, India would have been backward in every aspect. But Gandhi appears to be the greatest among the above mentioned contemporary Indian philosophers, because it can be said that no man in twentieth century had a greater impact on the thinking and action of men than Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi said that he would feel at home everywhere and that he could live even in a village or in any part of the world engaged in improving its condition. This is because he loved all humanity. His love was neither intellectual nor sentimental. It was based upon the fact that in his eyes there could be no bad men in the world who must be liquidated and all were the creatures of the same God. His synthesis of the ideal and the practical made him greatest among the contemporary Indian thinkers. The above mentioned contemporary thinkers were also great. But Gandhi's contribution and ideas are getting more applause through out the world.

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CHAPTER - VII

CONCLUSION

Mahatma Gandhi was neither an academic philosopher nor a religious seer. He was Primarily a social reformer and a practical man who worked for the benifit of the human society. Today the technique of the old great philosophies of India are being revived in accordances with the modern western emphasising. But Gandhian thought is suited for all ages, because Gandhiji assimilated modern India in thought, lived them in his life and gave them social and political shapes through his philosophy. Even most of the countries of the world regard Gandhi as the 'Man of the Millennium', on twenty first century also. Gandhi's message was meant for every body in the world. Though he was born in India, he was the universal personality deeply in love with mankind as a whole. He used to say, "I am fully aware that my mission can not be fulfilled in India alone, I am pining for the assistance of the whole world."¹ That is why people all over the world accepted him as a model. Though he worked primarily for the Indians he considered himself to be a citizen of the world and yet didnot cease to be a nationalist. By his spiritual and moral dialectics he synthesised the idea of nationalism with that of universalism. Gandhi himself said that he didnot seek to recapture only the spirit of Hinduism but the spirit of all religions, which according to him, is love of God expressing itself in love of fellow beings. His call was therefore not that others should become Hindus, but the Christian, Buddhists, Muslims and others should live upto the best teaching of their own religion. Gandhiji only wanted that man can live in peace with his fellowmen and promote each others welfare.

It is seen here that there was an impact of the different religious scriptures like the Bible, the Quran and the writings of Tolstoy, Ruskin and others on the formation of some of the more important Gandhian concepts. But above all Gandhi was greatly influenced by Hinduism. That is why C.F. Andrews said, "The more we study Mahatma Gandhi's own life and teaching the more certain it becomes that Hindu religion has been the greatest of all influences in shaping his ideas and actions". But at the same time it should be noted here that Gandhi's views of Hinduism was much deeper and broader than Hinduism as generally understood. In other words he was a reformer of Hinduism. His Hinduism was based on the teachings of the Upanishads and the Gita. He moulded his life in accordance with the basic teachings of this scripture. In his Hinduism, there was no place for untouchability, suppression of woman, casteism, communal disharmony etc. He thought that if these evils were not removed, his Hinduism couldnot attain its religious goal.

Mahatma Gandhi was accused of being ascetic in character. But this didnot stand because he was not in favour of the mortification of the body. He took food, lived walk, enjoyed humour and felt blessedness in the natural surroundings. For Gandhi, religion was not a mere belief. He lived in the life of religions. He stressed on ethical religion based on moral principles. He was a true man in word and action. Mahatma Gandhi opposed the practice of rituals and sacraments, because it made the religion stagnant and sometimes dead. It become a formed and closed religion in which real spiritual Progress becomes

stunted and retarded. Gandhiji took religion not as something which the individual does with or in his solitariness, but as that which he does amongst his fellow beings. So his view of religion is different from Whitehead's view of religion. According to Gandhi religion is a way of life which means it consists in the activities of every moment that one does with in his daily life and not in certain special actions that he does at certain special moments. For him, religion is not merely an adherence to a particular creed. It is a pervasive pattern of life. In this case Gandhi was very near in his approach to some of the recent western thinkers on philosophical theology such as W.E. Kennick, Paul Schmidt, and R.B. Braithwaite. These are all thinkers of the recent western analytic tradition. Religious statements according to these thinkers, are expressive of a pervasive behaviour pattern of the religious believer showing his intention to lead a special way of life and this way of life consists not only in behaviour but also in thinking and feeling. By taking religion as a way of life, these thinkers want to point out that religion is very near to morality and that morality constitute the very essence of religion. In comparing religion and morality of all these thinkers Braithwaite's contribution is more important. He said that being a Christian, Christianity for himself means nothing but leading as having an intention to lead an agapeistic way of life i.e. a life of love and hence religion in its essence is nothing but morality.

Claiming superiority for ones own religion over others was very wrong and misleading according to Gandhi and such tendencies must

be given up. He observed that there was no need of any universal or world religion and what was needed was a true sense of tolerance towards other religions which meant love and respect for them, because all religions at bottom spoke of the same truth. The one religion, for Gandhi is beyond speech. Different men put it in different ways. We cannot say that one interpretation is correct and the other is false. Therefore Gandhi observed, "The necessity of tolerance which does not mean indifference to one's own faith, but a more intelligent and purer love for it True knowledge of religion breaks down the barriers between faith and faith."³ Since his youth onwards, Gandhi made a persistent effort to understand the truth of all the religions of the world and adopt and assimilate in his own thought, word and deed all that he has found to be the best in those religions. For Gandhi, the different religions are "beautiful flowers from the same garden, or they are branches of the same majestic tree. Therefore they are equally true, though being received and interpreted through human instruments equally imperfect."⁴ Gandhi's interpretation of different religions was akin to the religious ideas of saint philosopher like Swami Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. Swami Vivekananda symbolised different religions as differently formed vessels with which different men came to bring water from a spring. The forms of the vessels are many but the water of truth that with which all seek to fill their vessels with, is the same. Vivekananda said, "The goal of religions is the same, but the language of the teachers differs". For

Radhakrishnan different religion represent not truth but views which are apprehension of truth, what men have believed. They are varied historical expression of one truth, which is universal and timeless in its validity. Gandhi said that as all religions are fundamentally the same, we should respect all religions equally. We should not merely tolerate but also respect the faith as our own. Gandhi prefers the term ahimsa to the word tolerance because tolerance may imply an assumption of the inferiority of other faith to ones own. But ahimsa teaches the same respect for other religious faith as we accord to our own.

Gandhiji was emphatically against proselytization. He was really opposed to conversion which were forced or which were attempted through material inducements. The aim of everyone of us should be according to Gandhi, to help a Hindu to be a better Hindu, a Musalman to become a better Mussalman and a Christian a better Christian and not to convert people of other faith to our own religion. But Gandhi was not opposed to voluntary conversion since religion was for Gandhi a personal matter and it was for him to decide and see which particular religion gave him the best satisfaction. But for that no dubious methods need be employed. Gandhiji said that if a religion had certain special qualities, certain attraction for a man, he would be naturally drawn towards it. In this case Gandhiji was very much appreciative of the attitude of Hinduism and Jainism on matters of religious toleration.

For Gandhi, religion has got practical importance in life. He tried to spiritualise all aspects of human life. Gandhiji said that religion

which took no account of practical affairs and didnot help to solve them was no religion. Religion according to Gandhi must necessarily be pragmatic. He didnot accept traditional or conventional religion. He didnot adhere to any religious principle uncritically. Gandhiji dedicated his life to the service of the masses which was the essence of religion. He had a different concept of religion. He deviated from the traditional view of religion as belief in God, but believed in truth which helped him to embrace all religions. Hence he used the term religion in a wider sense. In all Gandhi's thought and action he took his stand on the principle of religion and morality. In this respect he seems to be very much influenced by Buddhism as a religion. Buddha has given an ethical path by following which, misery may be removed and liberation attained. This is known as the Noble eight fold path. The Noble eight fold path consist of eight steps which are (a) Right faith, (b) Right resolve (c) Right speech (d) Right action (e) Right living (f) Right effort (g) Right thought and (h) Right concentration. Morality according to Gandhi also formed the essence of religion. He said that religion must pervade every activity of men. Truth was his God and morality was his religion.

Some critics said that Gandhiji's concept of sarvodaya and stateless democracy are only example of Gandhiji's utopian ideas which could never be realised in actual practice. But Gandhi was not a visionary or a utopian. He himself said that he was a practical idealist. His ideas of sarvodaya was fully developed by in keeping with his

conception of the equality of all beings and he always tried to give equal dignity of individual man.

Mahatma Gandhi's moral ideas supersede the utilitarian maxim of the greatest good of the greatest number, because his morality consisted in doing good to all irrespective of caste, creed, nationality etc. It necessarily refers to self sacrifice and self suffering but the utilitarian will not agree to it.

Gandhiji advocated an open and dynamic form of Hinduism which finds no room for customs and traditions that choke a society. Gandhi's approach was that of a seeker of truth and of votary of non-violence or love. His mind was always open, fresh and receptive to truth as he went on finding it from day to day by experience.

Mahatma Gandhi had never accepted in principle the theory of the Hindus and the Muslims belonging to two distinct nations and he tried hard to convince both of them its pernicious character. He continued to the last day of his life to instil the lesson of unity among the communities of India. But there was one fundamental difficulty. The ruling power (The British Government) based its policy on the age old Machiavellian Principle of 'Divide and Rule'. Gandhiji expressed his views as follows : "Divided we must ever be slaves. This unity therefore cannot be a mere policy to be discarded when it doesnot suit us Hindu Muslim unity must be our creed to last for all time under all circumstances."6 Again Gandhiji said "For good and

for ill, the two communities are wedded to India, they are neighbours, sons of the same soil, they are destined to die here as they are born here. Nature will force them to live in peace if they do not come together voluntarily"⁷. In 1924 Gandhiji fasted for 21 days for the sake of Hindu Muslim unity. Gandhi had earlier whole heartedly supported the Muslims in their khilafat campaign and had agitated for the release of Ali brothers. But today we have seen in our country that many instances of conflicting views arises between Hindu and Muslim community. So these instances of conflicting views can be destroyed if we follow the principle of love, not fear, of trust and good faith, not hatred and distrust as advised by Gandhi.

Gandhiji wanted to establish secular democracy in India. The word secular has different descriptions and definitions. For Gandhi secularism didnot imply that there was no place of religion in our lives, it indicated that the state didnot patronise a particular religion but allowed to practise and propagate all religions. Gandhi's movement for independence was a secular movement where religion was intertwined with the character of the movement. A deep analysis of Gandhi's view of religion points out to its secular nature. Gandhi's secularism didnot reject spirituality and religion. His secularism preached equality, humanity, universal love and tolerance. By secularism he meant equality of religions in the eyes of the state.

The real fathers of the ideology of secularism were the Americans who argued that the Indian thinkers have arbitrarily sought to understand

and explain secularism with a definite reference to religion and Indian mind is not able to see the basic dichotomy between secularism and religion. Western thinker claimed that the modern thinkers like Swami Vivekananda, Swami Dayanand and Gandhi were men of religious heritage and spiritual experience. The protagonist of western concept of secularism have overlooked the fact that the concept of secularism which is applicable to the west is strictly inappropriate in the Indian content. Spirituality is conceived in India as the foundation of social economic and political good. In the west religion is a way of worship and implies a separation of church from the state where as in the Indian content, religion is a way of life and cannot be separated from the state and social life is determined by religious norms. Hence Gandhi is justified in interpreting secularism in his own terms giving it a spiritualist bias. Spiritualism is awakening afresh with all the essence of humanism. To Mahatma Gandhi it is something more than mere awakening. It is a practice and poignance for manifestation of inward perfection for a better beyonding of consciousness. That religion and spiritualism are closely interlinked is an age old truism that Gandhi emphasized from the practical point of view. Gandhi stood for secularism though he claimed to be a staunch sanatani Hindu and Vaisnava. He wanted to restore the relationship between the church and the state which was snubbed in the west. The Gandhian concept of secularism may be considered as the most humanist and human rights oriented concept. His concept of humanistic secularism is not only

opposite to dogmatism or rigidity but also a search in continuity for finding the means of establishing harmonical human relation. His secularist ideology refrained a man from taking revenge and instead inspires him to convince and to be convinced by judgement.

For Mahatma Gandhi, the field of religious life is not separated from the social, economic and political life. Mahatma Gandhi shows the way to humanity how a man even in the heart of social and political life remains as pure as is necessary for God realization. By the introduction of religion into politics he simply meant to found politics on a pure moral ground. Politics as generally understood, is a nasty game of foul play where the purity of means is nobody's concern. Gandhiji really wanted to eradicate the game of nasty and foul means from politics and wanted to find it on a pure moral ground.

Some critics said that his concept of swadeshi and bread labour are symbols of narrow nationalism. But this is not true. Gandhiji was deeply concerned about the quality of the ordinary man who was engaged in physical labour. He tried to destroy the level of status i.e. high or low. The same concern for the dignity and quality of life of the ordinary worker may be seen in Gandhi's emphasis for khadi and such other small scale industries in opposition to heavy industries. He believed that the economics of heavy industries had no place for the dignity and value of man. The latest advocate of decentralisation in backward Asian countries is the noted swadeshi economist, Dr. Myrdal. In his recent study 'Asian Drama' in three volumes, he advocated

decentralised industry which was suited for India and other similarly situated countries. He said that Indian economy should not follow the western pattern and should be 'job oriented'. This was the very thing that Gandhiji used to talk and which we have failed to follow. Consequently the unemployment problem arises, the gap between poor and rich is widened and Indian has to take many foreign aids for its development. Indian economy is under a great trap due to the heavy loan burden from foreign countries. So in these cases Gandhi's vow of swadeshi cannot be avoidable. Gandhian economic attach more significance to man than machines, more emphasis on human values than money values. Today also this vow has most valuable significance. We have thus seen how through out his thought and practice Gandhiji has been thoroughly religious man and all his important concepts have been formed under the impact of his deep religious conviction.

God occupied the supreme place in Gandhi's philosophy. His deeper thought moved around God. Gandhiji conceived his God to be the Eternal, the Unborn, the One without a second. Gandhiji believed in absolute oneness of God. He could not find God apart from the rest of humanity.

Though Gandhi's concept of religion was attached to reason yet in his conception of God he gave more importance on faith than reason and specially for proving God's existence. Here Gandhi committed no mistake, because for him religion did not mean only worship of God, it was the foundation stone of all the activities of his life. On the

other hand God is infinite being so it is not possible for finite human being to prove God's existence through reason. Hence Gandhiji was right in giving more importance on faith than reason for God's existence.

For Gandhi, the statement 'God is truth' is partial and the statement 'Truth is God' is all inclusive. It is by this principle that he has been able to unite and draw into his fold the Christians, Mohammedans, Buddhists and others. It brings about religious co-existence, co-operation and harmony. Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of God as Truth expanded and universalised his religious faith. Without entering into the controversy about the correct conception of God Mahatma Gandhi called Him Truth. He avoided the opposed and divergent conception of God and arrived at a position which may be acceptable to all men. To him the whole of human life, individual and collective is a field for experimentation. The purpose of the experiment is the attainment of Truth.

Gandhiji did a great job in reconciling spiritualism with social service. For Gandhi, moksa or salvation did not require one to go to the jungle by renouncing the world for sadhana or meditation. He said that the best sadhana was to love the entire creation and through this God or Truth could be realised. For Gandhi, the social and the spiritual goals were not different. They were basically one and the same. He observed that it is only by a selfless service of others that one could realise God and giving up of the world is not necessary for moksa but the giving up the selfish motives.

✓ Gandhiji did not disregard the idol-worship of the people. He said that all human beings were not philosophers, capable of contemplating God as an Invisible Reality. For him, idols or images are simply media of worship by which layman can purify their souls and can keep living faith in God. Gandhiji hoped that every man was capable of reaching the blessed and the indescribably pure state where he would find himself one with God. Here Gandhi's approach was very near to that of Paul Tillich, a famous modern American theologian. Of course, Tillich's approach was theological and that of Gandhi's practical, but still there was a similarity between the two. Both of them recognized the role of symbols in religion as valuable media for our establishing a relation with the Deity. Like Tillich, Gandhiji also recognised that symbols point beyond themselves and at the same time they partake of the nature of the reality which they point to.

Critics sometimes pointed out that Gandhi was not a consistent thinker, because he made different statements on different occasions on the same point. But Gandhi did not bother much about being consistent. Hence he said, "At the time of writing I never think of what I have said before. My aim is not to be consistent with my previous statements on a particular question"⁸. This statement clearly removed the doubt and proved that Gandhi never even cared for being consistent. Here we may mention one statement i.e. he transferred from the statement 'God is truth' to 'truth is God'. He observed that someone may not believe in God, but the truth can never be denied; truth is

always truth. Again another instance can be mentioned here i.e. when he said that he is an advaitist and yet he can support dvaitism (Dualism). For him, the world is changing every moment and is therefore unreal. But though it is constantly changing, it has something about it which persists and hence it is real to that extent. Gandhi has no objection to calling it real and unreal and therefore he is an anekāntavādin or syādvādin. His syādvāda is not the syādvāda of the learned. It is his own. Gandhiji was not a philosopher. So he was not using these words in philosophical sense. He was using these words in his own sense. Moreover it is known that Gandhi did not worship God as a human being in the sense that we are human beings. But he said that God is personal to those who need his personal presence. The foregoing discussion shows that there is no question of his beliefs or statements being mutually inconsistent or contradictory. His statements were the result of some of his basic convictions which he so unshakingly cherished. His basic convictions were the result of the influences of Hinduism and various other religions which had made deep impression on him. So we cannot call Gandhi a sceptic. He always tried to avoid doubt in all his discussions.

Mahatma Gandhi is an apostle of non-violence. It is in the pursuit of Truth that he discovers his principle. Non-violence is the working of the soul force against brute force. It stands for selfless action, universal love and right knowledge. It is a yoga for God realisation. For Jaina and Buddha tradition as well as in the Hindu

epics complete ahimsa could be practiced with success only by a saint or a monk. But Gandhiji refused to accept different stands for saints and ordinary man. For him, all the higher moral and spiritual virtues could be practiced by ordinary people also, if they made sincere effort for that. Hence it is clear that for Gandhi non-violence was not meant for the saints and monks alone, it was meant for the common people as well. He tried to reconcile Vedantic Advaitism and Jain pluralism and relativism. He was not an absolutist although he believed in his principle absolutely. He took Truth as absolute but he believed that man could know it only relatively. Man's idea of truth could never be fixed and static. Man's idea of truth had always a scope to grow. Similarly moral principle like that of ahimsa were to be cherished absolutely. But in some occasions it might demand concession. Man doesnot have any omnipotence like God. So they must concede to the demand of the occasion. So in this case Gandhi was a moral relativist. But still Gandhi's moral convictions were absolute and he hardly ever liked to compromise with them.

Moreover Gandhiji also did a great job in emphasising for the first time in modern Indian thought upon the purity of means as a necessary condition for the attainment of good end. Gandhi didnot believe that means was after all means. For him, means was everything. Hence he said "we couldnot expect a rose by planting a noxious weed"

Gandhi's life was a burning example of how people without arms could fight successfully against the injustice of armed men. Gandhiji

is the only answer to the nuclear age. No one will be able to continue his existence by pursuing the path of violence. All must come in the end to the path of non-violence. Regarding atom bomb Gandhiji observed "Non-violence is the only thing that the atom bomb cannot destroy. I did not move a muscle when I first heard that the atom bomb had wiped out Hiroshima. On the contrary, I said to myself, 'unless now the world adopts non-violence, it will spell certain suicide for mankind'"¹⁰ Gandhiji resisted the danger of atomic war with prayerful action. So we find here that the creation of nuclear weapon free world is essential for peace and stability. On the other hand if it is allowed to possess of nuclear weapons to all states it will lead to a highly dangerous and unstable world. The noble peace prize winner of 1995 Joseph Rabinovich worked on the Manhattan Project that built the first atomic bomb during the second world war. But he campaigned tirelessly against the use of atom bomb for mass destruction and nuclear disarmament. He was banned from entering the United States. But today the United States claims to spread a campaign for nuclear disarmament. Hence today everyone feels that the world should adopt non-violence for peace and stability. Gandhiji had been able to defeat a most powerful British Government through applying non-violence means without firing a single shot. For a peaceful and stable world nuclear weapons altogether should be eliminated except of course for peaceful purposes though the present age is known as the age of science and technology.

Gandhi is not modern for those who in this country pretend

to behave like western sahibs, living according to the western ways. In the words of Swami Vivekananda imitation is not civilization. In this case J.B. Kripalani says, "If adherence to truth and the supremacy of the moral law is modern, Gandhiji was modern. If keeping one's word and fulfilling one's engagement is a sign of modernity, Gandhiji was modern. If recognition of the dignity of physical labour is a sign of modernity, Gandhiji was modern. If tolerance and good understanding are modern, Gandhiji must be considered modern. If feeling at home with those who differ from one on who are opponents is modern Gandhiji was modern. If universal courtesy, without caring for position or power or wealth is modern then surely Gandhiji was modern. If the democratic way of life is modern Gandhiji was among the elect. If identification with the lowly and the lost is modern then Gandhiji was modern. If untiring work for the poor, the needy, the down trodden, the unfortunate, daridranarayan is modern then Gandhiji was modern. If standing aloof in the midst of raging human passions is modern, then Gandhiji was modern. Above all if dying for a noble cause is modern, then Gandhiji was modern."¹¹

From the foregoing discussions of religious and philosophical thoughts of Gandhi we find that he did not make an attempt to evolve new system of thought. He gave much more importance on the problems of man's nature and his ultimate destiny. Gandhi made remarkable attempts to effect reconciliation between the ancient religious thought and the modern ideologies which do not show their hostility towards

religion. But it cannot be said that the work of reconciling the two extremes of thought has been completed and the contradictions and conflicts between them have been solved. Indian philosophers have still tried to look at the world and meet the challenges or the new ideological forces coming from the different directions of the world. That is why D.M. Dutta expresses his great hope that the twentieth century Indian Philosophy will form the 'Steps towards the evolution of a world philosophy'. There was for a long time controversy related between the philosophers of science and religious philosophers in the west. But the Indian thinkers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries do not involve themselves in any such controversy. The contemporary Indian thinkers gave a place of supreme importance to religion and at the same time they have full faith in the utility and the necessity of science and technology. In this respect science does not really come in conflict with religion which is essentially concerned with the moral and spiritual development of man and with revealing the mysteries of man's existence and the ontological reality. As Aurobindo puts it, "The religion of India is nothing if it is not lived. It has to be applied not only to life, but to the whole of life, its spirit has to enter into and mould our society, our politics, our literature, our science, our individual character, affections and aspirations."¹¹ The biography of Tilak reveals how he organised the Ganapati festival to arouse the patriotic feeling of the people. Tagore tried to spiritualise education by establishing his great centre of learning 'Viswa Bharati'. He was establishing this great centre

not only to impart education in an academic and technical sense but also to enable one to realise the ideal of internationalism and human fellowship. Gandhiji and many of them can not be called philosophers in the academic sense. They did not develop their thought in a strictly logical and dialectical way. But they revealed in a remarkable way man's situation in the world, his secular and the spiritual urges and the goal of his life. Gandhi's thinking was not only confined to his thought, but it also revealed through his personal life, his teaching and through his self sacrifice and selfless service for his people and for humanity as a whole. Mahatma Gandhi looked at the whole of the individual and social life from religious angle.

Here we find that Gandhi's life, thought, teaching and actions are relevant for all aspirant of ethical and spiritual life. By proper study of Gandhi's life and teaching we can come to the conclusion that Gandhiji was idealistic in his approach and he was eminently pragmatic in the translation of his ideals into practice. Like Plato Gandhi did not derive values from any vague concept. His concept of value was derived from the spiritual depth that he felt and lived with an essential communication with God and his fellowmen.

When we are facing a crisis due to dichotomy between the material and the spiritual, Gandhiji as a thinker has laid down certain basic principles and strategy to remove this dichotomy through an integral perspective.

We see that today science and technology have much more developed. Man has an advance knowledge of science and technology today. The development of science and technology explain physical nature of human being only and do not satisfy the goal of entire mankind. The main goal of entire mankind consists in spiritual perfection which can be realised only in and through the life of moral action. In that case Gandhian thought would be relevant to the twenty first century. Gandhi's ideology provides a sense of awakening spirituality in man which is today absent from human mind. At the same time it should be noted here that Gandhiji wanted the development of that science and technology which promotes peace and harmony in mankind. It is obvious that if we want to get rid of the ills of the modern world and intend to install a world free from any form of inequality, exploitation, deprivation and conflict, there is a need to adopt Gandhi's religious principles. It is no doubt that Gandhi is relevant today and for centuries to come. Jawaharlal Nehru said, "The light is gone and yet it will shine for a thousand years."¹³ When Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. the noble peace prize winner of U.S.A. came to India as a pilgrim in 1959 he said that Gandhi is inescapable. The relevance of Gandhi's message is not local, regional or general and personally relevant to some but relevant universally for all.

Gandhiji is fitted to be a good guide to the entire humanity. His searching for truth through love alone proved that Gandhi's mind was always open like that of a scientist to new discoveries. Spirituality

in India is generally associated with world denying and ascetic attitudes towards life. It has been a subject of individual's practice for getting liberation from the cycle of re-birth. A seeker of God or aspirant of Moksha was suggested to live in the cave and jungle of the Himalayas and go through the way of meditation. Lord Mahavir and Lord Buddha both preached the path of renunciation and meditation for the realization of spirituality. To Sankaracharya, this world is an illusion. Those who believe in the path of devotion try to realise spirituality through prayer, worship and other prescribed rituals. But for Gandhi spirituality is embodied in the whole of our life and action, it does not need to give up the world and sit in the cave of Himalayas. Gandhiji remarked that God is neither in heaven nor down below, but in everyone. For Gandhi self less service of the needy helps us in self realization. He said that self realisation is impossible without service and identification with the poorest. Gandhi therefore identified Satyanarain-truth and God with daridranarain - God in the poor.

Religion in India is not dogmatic. In India religion is closely associated with philosophy. No religious movement has ever come into existence without developing as its support a philosophic content. The problems of religion stimulate the philosophic spirit. The Indian mind has been traditionally exercised over the question of the nature of Godhead, the end of life and the relation of the individual to the universal soul. Every Indian school discussed the views of other schools before coming to a conclusion and in this process they became

richer in content. All the schools of Indian philosophy depend on reasoning as the chief means of speculation. Mahatma Gandhi was born in India. Mahatma Gandhi also occupies an important place as an interpreter of Hinduism and as a moral religious thinker on twentieth century. We have earlier discussed that though Gandhi's own religion was Hinduism which he loved very much, he at the same time loved other religions as well. Gandhiji inculcated many points from the other religions of the world in his practical life. Hence it cannot be denied that Gandhiji also tried to relate religion and philosophy in his discussions though he was not a philosopher in a strict sense.

It is known by all that reverence for the past is one of the important characteristics of Indian philosophy. The Indian civilization (minimum 4,000 yrs old) still survives with its essential features. Since Vedic times the Indian civilization has been flourishing without any discontinuity. It is not changing and all the time it professes to be only a new name for an old way of thinking. The Upanisads are regarded as a revival of something found already in the vedic hymns. The Bhagavad gita professes to sum up the teaching of the Upanisads. This respect for the past has produced a regular continuity in Indian thought. As an India thinker Mahatma Gandhi also could not escape from the influence of this characteristic. Gandhi's thought and ideas are new and revolutionary and yet he claims no originality for them. He often asserts that in his ideas he merely follows in the footsteps of the old prophets and reformers and tries to fulfill the law and commandment

and is offering nothing new to the world. At the same time it can not be denied that though he had not propounded a philosophical system in the academic sense of the term yet a 'new philosophical out look' is clearly discernible in his writings.

Some critics commend that Gandhiji was outdated, backward, traditional and unprogressive in his outlook. But he has taught a great lesson to modern man which if properly understood and thought over will bring real peace and progress. Gandhi has played in recent times the role that was played by the Upanisads in India and Socrates in Greece in ancient times and by the Danish thinker Kierkegaard in modern times. The Upanisads took knowledge of the self to be highest human ideal. Both Socrates and Kierkegaard in their own ways raised and propagated slogan of 'know thyself' for man. Kierkegaard advised people in modern times not to be mad after objective and scientific knowledge and he asked them to return their inner life and know their inner being. Similarly Gandhi took it all useless to have big power structures and heavy industries if man couldnot remain man. Gandhi had a real concern for the man to be man in the true sense of the term. If his conception of man is understood in its real spirit and everyone in the present world realizes the diginity of the individual man, all acts of suppression, tyranny, discrimination aperttheid etc will automatically go away. Similarly if one understands the real spirit of his philosophy of advaita, the rivalaries between man and man, between

one society and the other, between nation and nation will automatically vanish.

Gandhiji's thought can only be understood in terms of a distinction between the possible and the ideal. In his remote ideal of society, there would be no army or police. But in the actual state he would recognise the need for those institutions since many would not observe the ethical standards. Of course Gandhiji laid down certain conditions which would make the ideal the practical. But his critics and even some of his followers deliberately or unconsciously target those conditions and make him absurd. So Gandhi has given a definite direction, the path that we should follow though he has allowed certain amount of relaxation to suit the conditions of life. Gandhi's religion is a highly inspiring one and serves to lead humanity marching towards a better, happier and more harmonious world.

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