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सरकारी एवं निजी विद्यालयों में कार्यरत् शिक्षकों की व्यवसायिक सन्तुष्टि का तुलनात्मक अध्ययन - डा0 राहुल गुप्ता	55

## **Relevance of Religion based in Mahatma Gandhi's philosophical thoughts**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Gandhi was a man of religion. Gandhi was of the firm opinion that man cannot live without religion. His religion was based on truth and love, Peace, Fearlessness, and non-violence. His religion became his philosophy of life, and it gave him strength. He believed that different religions were the different roads going towards the same destination. Mahatma Gandhi, out of his own experiences and readings, came to the conclusion that all religions are based on the same principles, namely, truth and love. Gandhi found God within creation. Gandhi's religion was spiritual humanism because he declared that the service of the poor whom he called "Daridra narayana" is a true service of God. Gandhi pictured to himself how an ideal society, based on love, truth and nonviolence must look and function, and he tried to realize it. His concept of simple living and high thinking is the one prescribed by the religion.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Gandhi's life philosophy was 'Simple living and high thinking'. It means that thoughts of an individual have a great role in shaping his/ her life. It appears to be simple to everyone but in a real sense practicing it in day to day life is difficult. For instance, remaining truthful, tolerant, non-violent and respecting others in difficult circumstances of life require a great degree of commitment. Gandhi's philosophy exposes in his own words on various topics namely Truth, Peace, Fearlessness, Love, Nonviolence, Vegetarianism. According to Mahatma Gandhi 'All my actions have their rise in my inalienable love of mankind.' 'I have known no distinction between Brothers relatives and strangers, countrymen and foreigners, white and coloured, Hindus and Indians of other faiths whether Mussalmans, Parsees, Christians or Jews. I may say that my heart has

been incapable of making any such distinctions.' 'By a long process of prayerful discipline I have ceased for over forty years to hate anybody.' All men are brothers and no human being should be a stranger to another. (Page No5)

## RELIGION

Etymologically, the word 'religion' is derived from the Latin root religare and it means 'to bind fast'. Literally the term 'religion' stands for the principle of unification and harmonization. Religion is thus founded on the faith in the ultimate unity of humans and God. It is something that binds the members of it together. It includes manifold elements and aspects of life like beliefs, feelings, experiences, values, symbols, worship, rituals, festivals, cult and cultures, myth and mythology. Ethical element is of fundamental importance in determining the quality of a religion. The very often accepted world religions are Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, and Sikhism. Philosophy of religion involves all the main areas of philosophy: metaphysics, epistemology, value theory (including moral theory and applied ethics), philosophy of language, science, history, politics, art, and so on. Religion is ordinarily defined as devotion to some higher power or principle.

## GANDHI 'S VIEWS ON RELIGION

Religion helps in accepting and realizing God. Religion is also closely related to morality. Gandhiji used to respect all religions. The secular ideologies of Gandhiji are not only there in the Indian constitution but also there in Indian society as a core value system. The basic conviction of Gandhi is that there is one reality-that is God, which is Truth. Gandhi is not against such a description of religion. He only qualifies it, that higher principle being Truth, devotion to Truth or God is religion. Gandhi cannot be regarded as originating any new system of philosophy or any new religion in the academic sense of the term. He learned simply the principles or eternal truths from the greatest traditional philosophical and religious teachers of the world. Gandhi's thought has originality and freshness about it. Gandhi also mentions that God is personal to those who feel his presence and embodied to those who need his touch. God is personal in the sense that He is approachable to man and is in close relation with him. According to Gandhi, the

main aim of religion is to make a one-on-one interaction between God and humans. He believed God is identical with truth. He perceived God through the service of humanity, because God lives in the heart of every human being or for that matter in every one of his creations. Gandhi regarded religion as self-realization, as the striving of the human personality to express itself in service, suffering and sacrifice. Gandhi firmly opined that man cannot live without religion. Two factors are closely interrelated with Gandhi's concept of religion, morality and true service of mankind.

Gandhi's family belonged to the traditional theistic faith called Vaishnavism which believed that salvation could be attained by devotion to God and service to humanity. Being brought up in a Vaishnava household, Ahimsa (Non-violence) was in his blood. At a very early age, Gandhi had studied the Gita and the Ramayana. Gita was the main source of inspiration for him and he referred to the Gita as his mother. For him, it was a book par excellence for the knowledge of Truth. Gandhi strongly appreciated and he himself practiced the doctrine of 'anasakti' as advocated by the Gita in all aspects of his life. During his studies in England and his work in South Africa, he continuously and thoroughly studied the major religions of the World, such as Jainism, Christianity, Buddhism or Islam.

## **HINDUISM AND GANDHI**

According to Gandhi, a Hindu is one who believes in God, Immortality of the soul, Transmigration, Law of Karma, Moksha and one who practices Truth and Ahimsa in daily life. He called Gita his spiritual dictionary, for it never failed him in distress, and he found it was free from sectarianism and dogma, and had universal appeal (Harijan, 16-2-39). He says that it is possible to attain Moksha (salvation) without reading the Vedas. He also says that the Shastras are not above reason and any Shashtra, which reason cannot follow, can be rejected.

## **GANDHI AND JAINISM**

Gandhi acknowledges the influence of Jainism in his upbringing, and subsequent career; his entire outlook is molded by Jainism. The first influence on

Gandhi was that of his mother, who took up fasting for self purification, even though they were not Jains. Fasting was a part of her life, and this influenced the children profoundly. She was deeply religious. She would not think of taking her meals without her daily prayers...She would take the hardest vows and keep them without flinching. Illness was no excuse for relaxing them. (AMG, 12-13)His concept of simple living and high thinking is the one prescribed by the religion. Gandhi defined non-violence in different contexts and circumstances, and some of them are inspired by the Jain thought-form: Non-violence is a law of suffering. Gandhi's theory of Karma also comes close to the Jain perception. In Jainism, Karma is both the cause and the effect. Karma is a cause for getting the past corrected, and also necessary for the future, so that good deeds lead to good happenings in future, as per the belief of Gandhi. Gandhi's theory of Karma also comes close to the Jain perception. In Jainism, Karma is both the cause and the effect. Karma is a cause for getting the past corrected, and also necessary for the future, so that good deeds lead to good happenings in future, as per the belief of Gandhi. Gandhi's adherence to the tenet of Ahimsa is legendary, and his nonviolent resistance attracted the world's attention, and brought in many practitioners, who by following the principle, brought about dramatic changes in their society.

## **GANDHI AND BUDDHISM**

Gandhi considers all the great religious leaders as great teachers. "Buddha, Jesus and Muhammad- they were all warriors of peace in their own style. We have to enrich the heritage left by these world teachers" (Harijan, 28-1-1939). It is my deliberate opinion that the essential part of the teachings of the Buddha now forms an integral part of Hinduism. It is impossible for Hindu India today to retrace his steps and go behind the great reformation that Gautama affected in Hinduism". (Buddhists' Address, Colombo, on November 15, 1927.) In Buddhism, Gandhi was impressed by the message of compassion given by Buddha and the four noble truths and the eight fold path to Nirvana.

## GANDHI AND CHRISTIANITY

Gandhi's interaction with Christianity has been long and fruitful. Gandhi was much impressed and inspired by Christianity as it contained the gospel of love and a spirit of sacrifice. The New Testament impressed Gandhi. The gospel of personal suffering to win over the enemy was a lesson that was learnt by his readings of The New Testament. He read the "Sermon on the Mount", which, he says, "went straight into my heart". The Concept of Brotherhood was given a new meaning by Christ, and it became universal brotherhood, all being the children of one father 'God'. Not just the brotherhood had to be assumed, it had to be demonstrated and practiced. Jesus said, "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you". The Law of Kindness principle has enormously influenced Gandhi.. When the ancient world was holding on to the concept of "eye for an eye, limb for the limb", Jesus gave the call for kindness. Fellow men are to be treated "as a loving Father would treat his loved and erring children". He taught men to "love their enemies, to do good to those that hate them". made it the guiding principle of Gandhi's lives. The New Testament though impressed Gandhi. He read the "Sermon on the Mount ", which, he says, "went straight into my heart". He further continues: "I compared it with the Gita. The verses- 'But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also', and 'If any man take away thy coat, let him have your cloak too' delighted me beyond measure and put me in mind of Shamal Bhatt 'For a bowl of water, give a goodly meal' etc., My young mind tried to unify the teachings of Gita, The Light of Asia, and the Sermon on the Mount. That renunciation was the highest form of religion appealed to me greatly." (Autobiography, Part I, CH XX)

Gandhi emphasized that prayer is important, He quotes Jesus, "When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; but enter into thine inner chamber and having shut the door, pray to the Father, which is in secret". Gandhi called Jesus "one of the greatest teachers of the world". It brought out the concepts of brotherhood, faith in the Lord, adherence to truth, kindness and empathy towards women and children, and above all, the simplicity of teaching through parables and psalms. Truth is the first thing to be sought for, and Beauty and Goodness will



then be added unto you. Jesus was, to my mind, a supreme artist because he saw and expressed Truth

## **GANDHI AND ISLAM**

Islam had its origin in Arabia, among the Bedouin tribesmen. It spread all over the world with vigorous preachers, who brought the word of God, 'Qur'an', which was given to the world through Prophet Muhammad.

Gandhi observed Islam 'to be a religion of peace', love and above all, that of brotherhood of man. He was very much impressed with its tenets of faith in only God and its unqualified submission to God (K. N. Tiwari, World Religions and Gandhi, p.33). Gandhi included the "Kalimah" in the Ashram prayers. Gandhi included the well known verse from Qur'an into the Ashram worship, known as "Al Fateha". Muhammad, the Koran being, the most perfect composition in all Arabic literature - at any rate, that is what scholars say. Gandhi was drawn to some of the most tolerant and universalistic tenets of Islam. It speaks of the spiritual upliftment of all human beings and the religion has displayed its simplicity and purity, making it a pure monotheistic religion. Islam highlighted the virtue of prayer, fasting, almsgiving, hospitality and code of personal conduct. This had a profound impact on Gandhi. Virtues like obedience to parents, avoidance of adultery, cheating and lying, refraining from theft, murder, etc. are also emphasised in Islam to which Gandhi too prescribed in the code of ethical virtues.

## **PHILOSOPHY OF MAHATMA GANDHI**

### **Truth**

According to Gandhiji, truth is supreme principle. God is truth and truth is God. 'Truth is satya. Satya is derived from Sat, which means being or that which exists. Gandhi considers devotion to truth to be the only reason for our existence. Truth should be the very breath of our life. There should be truth in thought, word and action and one who has realized it becomes perfect, as all knowledge is included in it. He often used to quote a Sanskrit verse 'satya nasti paramo dharma' which said that there is no religion higher than truth. Gandhi's word about Truth is

the sovereign principle, which includes numerous other principles. Absolute Truth, the Eternal Principle, that is God. There are innumerable definitions of God, because His manifestations are innumerable. They overwhelm me with wonder and awe and for a moment stun me. If we believe in God, not merely with our intellect but with our whole being, we will love all mankind without any distinction of race or class, nation or religion. There should be Truth in thought, Truth in speech and Truth in action.”

### **Non Violence**

Another philosophy of Gandhi is non-violence. Non-violence was the great weapon used by him during the freedom movement of India against the British Raj. People say that non-violence is the weapon of the weak but in reality non-violence and tolerance require a great level of courage and patience. Non-violence as the best means for solving all problems, national and international. Gandhi was a practical idealist. Non-violence is the law of our species, as violence is the law of the brute. Gandhi was the first in human history to extend the principle of non-violence from the individual to the social and political plane. According to Gandhiji, ahimsa is the only means to realize truth and God. The ahimsa – has a central role in every Indian religion which influenced the thought of the Mahatma. We have just to remember the “Satyan Nasti paro dharmah” or “there is no Dharma higher than Truth” But equally known is the postulate “Ahimsa paramo Dharmah” or the “Non-violence is the supreme religion or engagement”. These terms can be easily found in the religious texts of Hinduism (such as the Upanisads, Bhagavad Gita, the Mahabharata, The Laws of Manu, etc.) and, at the same time, it could be considered basic concepts both in Jainism and Buddhism. He opined that ahimsa as the supreme religious duty in accordance with the teachings of the Mahabharata. If one does not believe in non-violence, he has no kindness for others. Thus, sympathy and kindness towards all men becomes the basis of true religion. When Jesus said an enemy should be won over through the power of love, he was preaching non-violence.



## **Satyagraha**

Satyagraha means holding fast to truth) Satyagraha is the practical application of non violence. For Gandhi, satyagraha includes three basic values: truth, nonviolence, and self-suffering. The purpose of satyagraha is to bring an end to injustice by changing the heart of the wrong-doer by awakening, through love and self-suffering, one's sense of justice. Gandhi's main tactic in his fight against the British was what he called Satyagraha, which means "Soul-Force" or "The power of truth". Gandhi developed Satyagraha as the practical extension of ahimsa and love; it meant standing firmly behind one's ideals, but without hatred. Satyagraha took the form of civil disobedience and non-cooperation with evil.

## **Fearlessness**

Fearlessness is the first requisite of spirituality. Cowards can never be moral. (YI, 13-10-1921, p. 323) Fearlessness counts freedom from all external fears of diseases, bodily injury, and death. Perfect fearlessness can be attained only by him who has realized the Supreme, as it implies the height of freedom from delusions.

## **God**

God is the source of light and life. Gandhi says, 'God is love'. According to Gandhi, God is Truth and Love; God is ethics and morality; God is fearlessness. God is conscience. For in His boundless love God permits the atheist to live. God is invisible, beyond the reach of the human eye. In his opinion, Ram, Rahim, God or Krishna is all attempts on the part of man to name that invisible force which is the greatest of all forces. Man can describe God in his own way, in accordance with his belief and understanding of reality. Gandhi believed that there is an indefinable mysterious power that pervades everything. This invisible power defies the demand for evidence and it transcends human sensibility. Gandhi believed that God cannot be understood by mere intellect because sensory perceptions are subjective and sometimes unreal for illusions may be construed as real. When one realizes God beyond the sensory perceptions, the realization becomes infallible and the conduct and character of the person who has realized

God within transforms to be Godly. Gandhi sought to locate God within human beings. One can locate God within oneself by following Brahmacharya or celibacy. Invoking Rama or Ramanama was the key according to Gandhi to find God within oneself.

### **Brotherhood**

Gandhi stood for universal brotherhood and for a life of peace and harmony among the nations of the world. According to Gandhi All men are brothers and no human being should be a stranger to another. The welfare of all, Sarvodaya, should be our aim. God is the common bond that unites all human beings. To break this bond even with our greatest enemy is to tear God Himself to pieces. His motto was “thou shall love thy neighbor as thy self

### **Love**

Mahatma Gandhi was a champion of the Love Revolution. For Gandhi love had no borders and no boundaries, no limits and no conditions. He said, “where there is love, there is life and where there is love there is light.” Mahatma Gandhi wrote occasionally about love for all human beings. He did not believe in discrimination on grounds of caste, color, creed or religion. To him all humans under the sky are children of God and thus have right to be loved and cared equally. Gandhism love is the basis of peace. It is the pathway to peace through love. There is a broad concept in its root and without a doubt it could be connected to Gandhi's commitment to Ahimsa. According to Gandhi, ahimsa is not just refraining from injuring others, but positively enhancing their well-being, or rather, loving them. Genuine love is rooted in egolessness, which is the highest personal virtue.

### **CONCLUSION**

Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam had a profound influence on the life and thought of Mahatma Gandhi. Jaina influence was clearly visible in his conception of satyagraha and practice of non-violence. Similarly his respect for other religions could be attributed to the teachings of AnekantaVada. Like Buddha, Gandhi also recognized the futility of caste distinctions, rites, rituals

and dogmas. Gandhi was moved by the emphasis on morality by Buddhism. He was also deeply impressed by the teachings of Buddhist philosophy which preached universal love, non-injury to living beings, sacrifice and renunciation for the sake of promoting the welfare of all. Gandhi had great respect for the teachings of Jesus Christ also. According to him, the cross is the symbol of sacrifice and satyagraha stands for supreme sacrifice. It infuses the spirit to suffer and to overcome any dangerous situation. Thus satyagraha can be taken to be the practical application of the teachings of the Christ. Like Christ, Gandhi was also concerned with the individual's inner purity and perfection. Gandhi was also influenced by the Islamic teachings to a great extent. He learnt the message of universal brotherhood from it. He accepted the Quran's faith in a Supreme God. God is infinite Power and Truth. According to Gandhi, Mohammed taught the religious principle of toleration, the brotherhood of man and absolute self surrender to God. Thus, we see that Gandhi was greatly influenced by the religious heritage of India and he borrowed considerably from Hinduism, Jainism Buddhism, Christianity and Islam.

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