Chapter - II

MAHATMA GANDHI'S CONCEPT OF SECULARISM
2.1 Mahatma Gandhi - Life - ideology and thoughts on secularism

There are at least two senses in which the word secularism is used. In one sense, Secularism cannotes a philosophy and a mental orientation which holds that no supernatural power interferes with the affairs of the world that there is nothing which can be regarded as other worldly. This postulate leads to the view that, there being no predestination, the human individual has the capacity to make his future by resource to his own reason. Secularism in this sense is indistinguishable from atheistic humanism.

The other sense of secularism is perhaps the more popular one. It has the background of a long historical development. From about the 12th century. A. D. Europe went through the renaissance movement which spanned several centuries. It was a movement against the domination of the Christian church and the priestly class. It was essentially a humanist movement which progressively secularised European Society. By encouraging a worldly view of life, it opened the way for the growth of science. By blasting the theory of the divine right of kings it laid the foundation of modern
liberal democracy. It paved the way for the reformation and a long struggle between the secular power of the state and the spiritual power of the church. There was eventually an uneasy truce between the state and the church and the result was the concept of the 'Secular State'.

Secularism in the second sense assumes a dichotomy in human life between the sacred and the secular. Religion is confined to the sacred aspect of human life while the secular aspect is taken care of by other institutions principally the state.

Secularism, as understood in The West, is alien to the Indian traditions. The main reason had been that Hinduism and Islam were considered as ways of life. Moreover, Indian history presents no conflict of Church and state. Therefore the Western notion of secularism as such, has no relevance to India.

In The West, secularism is the logical climax of the movement of renaissance, reformation, development of science, advancement of knowledge and the emergence of liberal democracy. But in India secularism is the result of "Peculiar background of brutal and barbarous conflict that raged all over the country during the period of transition"1. The Muslim problem in the Indian politics and the presence of the various religions and
cultural minorities compelled a human constitutional arrangement having no religious basis.

Mahatma Gandhi was born at a time when India was passing through a big social and political crisis. In those dark days the country found in him a great saviour and it fell to him to provide the leadership which was to lead the country to political salvation. It was no small task to provide leadership to a country which consisted of a big population spread over a vast region and belonging to numerous religions and traditions. The magnitude of the task became even greater when we find that Gandhi chose to provide not only political leadership, but was guided by the concept of 'Sarvodaya' which aims at an all-round development of the individual and the society. To fulfil this gigantic task, Gandhi's had to evolve a new outlook in religion which was necessary for bringing a vast multitude of people under a common flag. Though primarily concerned with practical affairs, Gandhi had also to develop a philosophy to support a way of life which would generate new spirit and encourage for fighting unitedly against forces of injustice and darkness.

With his keen insight into the national ethos and the native problems of his own country, Gandhi was able to realize that in the Indian context there is no real conflict between the secular and the
religious. In the West, the terms 'Secular' and 'religious' became almost antithetical concepts because of certain historical situations which created two opposing centres of power vested in the political organisation and the ecclesiastical order respectively.

Gandhi's amazing understanding of the perennial spirit of Indian culture enabled him to discern that such a division between the secular and the religious was irrelevant in the Indian context. Gandhi was quick to see this intimate relationship between politics and religion. He declares; "I still hold the view that I cannot conceive politics as divorced from religion" ². A secular political outlook does not mean for Gandhi adoption of a non-religious political system. Politics, completely divorced of religion, degenerates. Religion, is the source of some essential values and norms in political dealings and it chastens the political behaviour of the politicians as well as the masses. Our choice is not between adhering to religion or abandoning it. Our choice is confined between erroneously practicing bad religion or turning towards the right religion. What must be abounded are narrow sectarianism, communalism or fanaticism, masquerading as religion. We must search for the true religiosity which may invigorate the diverse aspects of our life individual as well as collective.
In this context Gandhi's view of secularism and the idea of “spiritualised politics” merits consideration. It should be noted that Gandhi was the product of the Hindu revivalist cult and the “defensive” and the extremist school of Vivekanand, Tilak, Sir Aurbindo etc.

Gandhi's view of relationship of religion and ethics and the admixture of religion and politics is obviously the negation of the secular ideal “I cannot conceive politics as divorced from religion, Indeed religion should pervade everyone of our actions. Here, religion does not mean sectarianism. It means a belief in ordered moral government of the universe,” 3 he said and he also thought that “religion which takes no account of practical affairs and does not help to solve them, is no religion.” 4

The multi-religious character of the Indian society impressed upon Gandhi the need for evolving an outlook which could accommodate the diverse claims of different religions with his intense personal realization of the veracity of religious experience. Gandhi presents a new perspective in which all the religious are represented as reveling some aspects of the universal Truth and hence all the religions deserve to be understood and respected. It is not enough for religious man to keep himself confined only to the aspects of the Truth discovered in his own religion. While
remaining true to his own religion, he is also advised to broaden his vision by a reverential understanding of the perennial truth preached in others religions. The 'secular' and the 'religious' then do not stand in two separate categories but are excellently combined in the person of the man possessing true religiosity. Secularism here becomes synonymous with enlightened religiosity.

Gandhiji found an opportunity to test the efficacy of his religious ideology when the khilafat question came up. Gandhi knew that all the sections of the Indian society should be drawn into the Nationalist Movement in order to achieve swaraj. He had also realized that the Hindu Muslim problem was essentially religious. Therefore, the unity in the country could be brought about only through religion.

Gandhiji chose to support the movement which was launched by the Muslims. His support however, was not a hasty or ill considered decision although the khilafat movement was inspired by pan-Islamism, it found support even from the Hindu extremists like B.C.Pal. The liberals Hindu as well as Muslim, disapproved the khilafat movement on the ground that religion and politics were being mixed up in the khilafat question. The khilafat was essentially a religious issue and making it a political cause developed the illusions of spiritualisation of Politics. It
encouraged the forces of communalism. It rehabilitated the non-secular leadership both among the Hindu and the Muslims. The unfortunate scheme of migration of Muslims to Afghanistan and the breaking up of the communal riots marked the beginning of the end of the short-lived and temporary glorious period of Hindu Muslim unity.

After 1930 Gandhiji came to realize that the communal problem was not religious but political and economical. This approach of Gandhiji was certainly secular. He attempted to analyse the problem on non-religious basis. He did speak of 'Ram Raj’ but it never was a scheme of establishing a Hindu Raj in the country. This fact should be emphasised because this led his critics to describe him as crypto-secular.

Gandhi never dreamt of establishing Hindu Raj in India. In 1924 he said that it was unpatriotic even to nurse the dream of Hindu Raj. Swaraj government, according to him, would be one established by the free joint will of the Hindus, Musalmans and others. Gandhi was no protagonist of religious nationalism. He never thought in terms of religious state. He believed that after Independence, India and not Hindu Raj, would come into being. He asserted that religion is a personal matter which should have no place in politics. It is in the unnatural condition that we have unnatural division according to religion.
He stuck to the principle that there should not be any state religion, “even if the whole community had one religion.” The state interference would probably always be unwelcome. His view was that the state should be secular, “everyone living in it should be entitled to profess his religion without let or hindrance; so long as the citizen obeyed, the law of the land. There should be no interference with missionary effort but no mission could enjoy the Patronage of the state.”

He once said that “If I were a dictator, religion and state would be separate.” He was clear on this point that the sphere of the state activity would be “secular welfare, health, communications, foreign relations, currency and so on, but not your or my religion. That is everybody’s personal affair.” He also wished that if we succeed in confining religion to the personal plane, all would be well in our political life.

In independent India, Gandhiji held that there would not arise any question of religious minority and majority. Besides, the Hindus are not a homogenous people. Hinduism is not an organized religion. It is, in fact, a federation of faiths. Therefore, in Indian politics, there can only be political parties and no majority or minority communities.
Gandhiji thought that in Independent India, there would be political minority and political majority. The interests of the minorities will be well protected. "No charter of freedom will be worth looking which does not ensure the same measure of freedom for the minorities as for the majority." He said, that any party which captures power will consist of people belonging to different communities. There will always be a 'mixed majority'. On this ground he opposed separate electorates and the scheme of Pakistan. What he visualized was the spirit of common nationality which meant authority not based on the coercion of minorities. To ensure psychological security to the minorities, he preached that the state should not do anything which created misgivings in their minds. He allowed all freedom to the minorities in religions and cultural matters.

"I do not believe that state can concern itself or cope with religious instruction. I believe that religious education must be the sole concern of religious associations. Do not mix up religion and ethics. I believe that fundamental ethics is common to all religions. Teaching of fundamental ethics is undoubtedly a function of the state. We have suffered enough from state aided religion and a state Church. A society or a group which depends partly or wholly on state aid for the existence of its religion, does not deserve or, better still, does not have any religion worth the name", he said.
To sum up, Gandhiji's activities in his earlier political life in India cannot be described as secular. His association with and participation in the khilafat movement is an example in point. Gradually his ideas underwent a change. He later adopted a thoroughly secular approach.

Gandhi is certainly not among the Indian leaders who paid court to secularism. (of course, he did not espouse socialism or democracy either - but let that pass.) Unlike his contemporaries, he knew where secular humanism was leading the west and was excusably unenthusiastic about flogging India to take to the same road. He had other ideas- ideas of his own- and had little need to lean on important prescriptions.

Here, we see Gandhi using secular as the opposite of theocratic. But it is worth remarking that nowhere does he use the word as the opposite of religious. The conclusion is inescapable that for Gandhi the secular state is one in which religion (both its practice and teaching) has the fullest play, but without the state interfering at any point, except when such practice and teaching become subversive of law and order or morals. Here concluding this section of study by summarizing Gandhi’s thinking as it is revealed in the above that
1) No state religion, even if the entire nation practiced one single religion.

2) Religion is purely a personal matter as many minds, so many religions.

3) Fundamental ethics common to all religions, state to take a hand in the teaching of such ethics.

4) Teaching of denominational religion is a private concern. State to remain neutral in this.

5) State interference in all religious matters undesirable, except to maintain law and order and uphold public morality.

6) No discrimination whatsoever on the basis of a man's religion.

7) Protection of religious minorities not enough. State to assure liberty of religious profession to every individual.

8) State to be secular and democratic not theocratic.

There are ingredients of Gandhiji's secularism, namely:

I) Religion should be the personal affair of the individual.

II) The state should have no religion;

III) All religions should enjoy equal status in the society.

Mention should be made here that it is this view of secularism which finds expression in our constitution. It's ethos is neither irreligious nor anti-religious. It is by and large religious in character. It is no it an instrument of freeing man from the clutches of religion, on the contrary it respects all religions viewing
that all religions teach love and tolerance. It is however, the only pragmatic and expedient secularism which can operate in a non-secular society.

2.2 Gandhi and Religion:

The modern Age is an age dominated by science technology and the modern man is predominantly a scientific man. During the last few centuries, and particularly during the last few decades, science has made rapid strides and consequently the world has also changed radically. It is this revolutionary change and the emergence of a new scientific culture which has been posing some serious questions. It has raised some serious issues for scholars and philosophers who are engaged in discussing religious issues. Let us, to begin with, try to explain the nature of the change that has occurred with the emergence of the new scientific culture. And then we shall try to understand what issues have been raised in the new situation and how Gandhi has tackled these issues. Gandhi's concept of religion is very much in consonance with the concept of Truth or God. By 'Truth', we have seen, he meant, amongst other things, the law, the Moral order, the Dharma or the Rta. It is in this sense that he very much liked the Buddhist idea of God in which the law and the law-maker were one or the law or the Dharma itself was a God. Religion, according to Gandhi, is
nothing but belief in this moral order. To quote his own words, religion is “belief in the ordered moral government of the world.”

But then religion is not merely a belief according to him, it is a way of life also. He said “you must watch my life, how I live, eat, sit, talk, behave in general. The sum total of all those is me is my religion.” Thus, religion is a specific way of life which can be visible in each and every dealing or behaviour of a man. It is neither a mere belief or faith nor is it a mere repetition of certain ritual on certain specific occasions. It gives a specific twist, a specific direction to one’s entire life-pattern such that its impact is visible in every action, " Indeed religion should pervade every one of our actions," said Gandhi. It is not merely an adherence to a particular sect. It is a pervasive pattern of life. Gandhi claimed himself to be a religious man out and out and his apparently political life was just an expression of his more pervasive religious life. That is, Gandhi’s life was a truly religious life, because he had adopted a specific way of life and that way could be visible in every act that he performed or in every word that he spoke. In taking religion as a pervasive way of life, Gandhi can be seen to be very near in his approach to some of the recent western thinkers on philosophical theology. According to Gandhi this forms the essence of religion. True religion changes our nature and purifies our character. Whitehead also took religion, at least on its
practical side, to be 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.”

Similarly Gandhi held religion to be that “which changes one’s over nature, which binds one indissolubly to the truth within and which ever purifies.” Of all the moral virtues, however, which constituted the essence of religion. Gandhi quite naturally took truth to be the highest. He sometimes even identified religion with truth and righteousness. As he clearly said, “There is no religion higher than Truth and Righteousness.” And here Gandhi was in a way echoing the old Vedic faith that truth constituted the essence of the all pervasive moral principle of Rta. We have seen that religion in a very general sense meant for Gandhi to all-pervasive. Dharma or Rta and because truth was taken to constitute the essence of Dharma or Rta, naturally truth constituted the highest religion for him.

But, in spite of the fact that Gandhi like many western thinkers took religion as a way of life, as a moral way of life rather and all, a life of truth and righteousness- he also very significantly differed from them in his own concept of religion. He did not take religion as a way of life in a cut-and-dry sense. The way of life
which constituted religion must be rooted according to him in a faith or conviction in God or Truth.

According to Gandhi, a way of life directed and regulated by a faith in God in this sense. Thus, religion was not simply a way of life, rather it was 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. It is really this conviction which supplied Gandhi with a firm foundation for the way of life that he practically led. Religion for Gandhi, thus, was a way of life based on some specific spiritual conviction with regards to the universe as a whole.

According to him, religion was not something which concerned a man in his isolation from his fellow beings. True religion consisted in helping the helpless and the poor and working for the welfare of humanity, or rather of the entire creation. God was 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. He used to say, "I am endeavoring to see God through the service of humanity, for I know that God is neither in heaven nor down below, but in every one."

When he was a child, the religious life of his mother impressed him much. While studying at school he was enraptured
by the reading of the Ramayana. And later on, he valued the
Ramayana of Tulasidas as the greatest book in all devotional
Hindu literature. His stay in England also helped much in his
study of religions. Here he lead the Gita for the first time, and later
came into contact with Christianity. Then in South Africa he spent
a good deal of time in the search for God and thus in the study of
different religions. This study stimulated his self introspection and
fostered in him the habit of putting into practice whatever
appealed to him in his studies.

According to him, religious concept was a way of life based
on some sort of spiritualistic conviction with regards to the
universe as a whole may be seen to be equally applicable to all the
prevalent religions of the world. Religion, whether it be Hindu,
Buddhist, Jain, Christian or any other, consists of certain
specified principles of living as well as of certain beliefs or
convictions which govern, guide or direct such principles of living.
Gandhi, therefore, regarded all the different religions as different
roads leading to the same goal. This goal is the goal of Truth
which the different religions conceive or apprehended in their own
relative ways.
What is Religion according to Gandhi

After examining Gandhi's religious background, now we will see what he thought about religion. For him, religion meant to accept God for life, so he said: “You must watch my life how I live, eat sit, talk, behave in general. The sum total of all those in me is my religion.”17 Again, “religion should pervade every one of our actions.”18

But for Gandhi religion does not mean any particular historical religion, “By religion I do mean formal religion or customary religion but that religion which underlies all religions, which brings us face to face with our Maker.”19 In the following words he explains his idea of religion more clearly: “Let me explain what I mean by religion. It is not the Hindu religion which I certainly prize above all other religions, but the religion which transcends Hinduism, which changes one's very nature, which binds one indissolubly to the truth within and which ever purifies. It is the permanent element in human nature which counts no cost too great in order to find full expression and which leaves the soul utterly restless until it has found itself, known its Maker and appreciated the true correspondence between the Maker and itself.”20 So, this religion while it transcends Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc, does not supersede them. According to him, this
religion harmonizes them and gives them reality. 21 Because of this, Gandhi repeatedly says: “Though religions are many, Religion is one.” 22

This does not mean that he neglects Hinduism in which he was born and brought up. Once answering Dr. Radhakrishnana, Gandhi said: “My religion is Hinduism, which for me is the Religion of humanity and includes the best of all religions known to me.” 23

By religion Gandhi means a belief in God and in ordered moral government of the universe and in living according to this moral order.

As Gandhi himself said in this connection “Religions are different roads converging to the same point. What does it matter that we take different roads, so long as we reach the same goal? In reality, there are as many religions as there are individuals. 24

He was adverse to calling any particular religion as superior or inferior to any other religion. According to Gandhi all the 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. His view will be clear from his own statements that follow,” if we are imperfect ourselves religion as conceived by us must also be imperfect. We have not realized religion in its perfection, even as we have not realized God.
Religion of our conception, being thus imperfect, is always subject to a process of evolution and reinterpretation. And if all faiths outlined by men are imperfect, the question of comparative merit does not arise. All faiths constitute a revelation of Truth, but all are imperfect and liable to error. Again, "God has created different faiths, just as He has the votaries there of. How can I even secretly harbour the thought that my neighbor's faith is inferior to mine? In God's house there are many mansions and they are equally holy. For himself Gandhi possessed a true respect for all the religions of the world and enjoined upon others to keep a similar attitude towards the faiths of others, because all of them contained an element of truth. Gandhi, in short, preached an attitude of what he called tolerance towards other religions.

Since all religions have the same essential moral principles. For Gandhi, all religions are more or less true. None of them is perfect, because imperfect men put these moral principles in to such language as they can command and again their words are interpreted by other men equally imperfect. Since everybody is right from his own standpoint, he concludes that all religions are more or less true "My Hindu instinct tells me that all religions are more or less true. All proceed from the same God, but all are imperfect because they have come down to us through imperfect human instrumentality."

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Hence, he compares them to different roads leading to the same God. "Religions are different roads converging to the same point. What does it matter that we take different roads so long as we reach the same goal?" Thus, Gandhi concludes that all religions are true, though all are imperfect.

While all religions are equally true, no one can claim superiority over others. And if any religion claims superiority, which can be proved only from its outward distinctive symbol, it is to be discarded. So, Gandhi ask: "How can I even secretly harbour the thought that my neighbor's faith is inferior to mine and wish that he should give up his faith and embrace mine?" Thus, he is against all kinds of conversion. As true and loyal friends, what we can do for others is to pray for them. And "Our prayer for other must be Not 'God' give him the light that though has given me, but 'Give him all the light and truth he needs for his highest development', Pray merely that your friends may become better men, whatever their form of religion" But, if a person wants to believe in any Scripture of another religion, he is free to do so. This does not mean he should discard his own religion in which he is born and brought up. Moreover, according to him, it becomes the duty of every cultured man to read the Scriptures of the world, because this helps him not only to respect other religions but also
to understand more clearly many an obscure passage in his own Scripture. This is what Gandhi actually did. He assimilated much from the Bible, the Quran, etc. Therefore, he could say: “If I could call myself, say a Christian, or a Mussalman, with my own interpretation of the Bible or Quran, I should not hesitate to call myself either. For then Hindu, Christian and Mussalman would be synonymous terms.”

As no religion can claim superiority over others, what is needed is toleration and mutual respect. Mere tolerance is not enough because it “may simply be a gratuitous assumption of the inferiority of other faiths to one’s own. So, what is needed is mutual respect. Once while talking to Mr. C.F. Andrews, Gandhi made it clear saying: “My position is that all the great religions are fundamentally equal. We must have innate respect for other religions as we have for our own. Mind you, not mutual toleration, but equal respect.” This attitude towards other religions, will help us to assimilate what is good in them. “Looking at all religions with an equal eye, we would not only not hesitate, but would think it our duty, to blend into our faith every acceptable feature of our faiths.” This equal respect for other religions is our duty because our own religion is imperfect to others. The peculiar religious situation of India, where Hindus, Mussalmans, Christians
etc. live together, also demand it. So, in Gandhi's opinion “the need of the moment is not one religion, but mutual respect and tolerance of the devotees of the different religions.”

**Religion and Politics**

One thing that deserves special mention, while we are on the subject of Gandhi's idea of religion, is the intimate connection between religion and politics. Before Gandhi politicians were not generally reputed to take religion seriously, because they thought that political values were inconsistent with the values of religion. Thus, God-fearing, truthful and selfless religious men have generally kept away from politics. Consequently, politics in general was unclean. Gandhi understood it well and he wanted to prove with his life that “politics divorced from religion was a corpse, fit only to be buried.” Or “Politics bereft of religion are also absolute dirt, even to be shunned” In this he succeeded and, as C.F. Andrews says, he became “a saint in politics, a rare combination.”

Thus, Gandhi looked upon politics as a branch of ethics and religion. For him “human life being an undivided whole, no one can ever be drawn between its different compartments, nor between ethics and politics. One's everyday life is never capable of being separated from one's spiritual being. Both act and react
Time and again Gandhi has insisted that we cannot divide human activities into watertight compartments called social, political and religious. Therefore he came to the conclusion that "those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means." 

Explaining how he came to politics, Gandhi says: "I felt compelled to come into the political field because I found I could not do even social work without touching politics." He also realized that to lead a religious life, in that particular situation of India, one has to enter into politics. "I could not be leading a religious life unless I identified myself with the whole of mankind, and that I could not do unless I look part in politics." Then, explaining his daily life as a politician he says: "The politician in me has never dominated a single decision of mine, and if I seem to take part in politics it is only because politics encircle us today like the coil of a snake from which one cannot get out no matter how much one tries." Again "My politics and all other activities of mine are derived from my religion." Thus, in Gandhi's opinion, one cannot lead a religious life without entering into politics, because religion and politics are intimately connected with each other. Of course, this intimate connection between politics and
religion, is to be understood in the particular situation of India rather than in any universal human situation.

So far, things have been rather very plain in Gandhi's concept of religion and his attitude towards other religions. But there may be seen in his views at certain places attempts to mystify or hypostasize religion. It seems, at places, that by religion he meant that essence, that common denominator, which underlined all the different prevalent religions. So far as he says that there is one basic absolute Truth which is revealed in relative ways through the different religions and that the different religions are all ways towards the same truth things are understandable. But, according to him, there is not only the Absolute Truth but also the Absolute Religion so to say, which is only partly expressed through the different religions. Different religions are but the incomplete, partial manifestations of the one basic Religion which is beyond all speech. As may be seen through his own statement, "By religion I do not mean formal religion or customary religion, but that Religion which underlies all religions."42 His other statement, we have already quoted above in another reference, but a portion of that we are quoting again to testify the point at hand, "Even as a tree has a single trunk, but many branches and leaves, so there is one true and perfect Religion, but it becomes many, as it passes through the human medium. The one Religion is beyond
all speech." Now it is not precisely clear what Gandhi meant by this one basic true and perfect religion, which according to him underlied all particular religions. Did he believe that something like a primordial essence underlined all the different particular religions which could be taken as the true religion? If yes, than in this sense true religion must become a primordial entity of which different religions became partial manifestations. Gandhi sometimes seems talking in that vein and therefore one has every reason to doubt whether he was hypostasizing religion while he was designating it with a capital 'R'. We have seen Gandhi saying that no particular religion could embody the basic religion in its absoluteness and therefore each one of them was incomplete and erroneous. Again, we have found him saying that each particular religion contained some element of the true religion and that the true primordial religion found concrete expression only in and through those particular religions.

In our opinion, there is little likelihood that Gandhi was hypostasizing religion when he used the word 'religion' with a capital 'R' to denote the true and fundamental religion. He may, however, be taken our mystifying religion to some extent because he sometimes seems giving religion an identical status with mysterious reality God or Truth. It may be said that in a fit of emotion Gandhi sometimes used the word 'Religion' for 'Truth'
itself. When he said that behind and beneath the particular religions, there underlined the one true Religion, he actually meant the Truth or God. Himself which underlied all the religions as the basic Truth. This may be a correct interpretation, but we have from our side a deeper meaning to suggest in this connection.

We feel that Gandhi's use of word 'Religion' with a capital 'R' was not merely emotive or accidental, rather it had some viable sense to carry and that sense fets in with his general conception of religion that we have outlined in the early pages of this chapter. By 'Religion' he did not mean Truth, rather he meant by it the vision of the Truth. And by Truth we know he meant the underlying basis of all things, the permanent substratum behind the passing flux of phenomena. Perhaps he was echoing here the following words of white head: "Religion is the vision of something which stands beyond behind and beneath the passing flux of immediate things, something which is the ultimate ideal, and the hopeless quest."44 This vision really works as an ideal which regulates our behaviour and activities in the world in a specific way. The fundamental Religion is this fundamental vision which different religions take in different ways. According to Gandhi, we have seen, religion is a way of life based on some conviction or vision with regard to the universe as a whole. The vision interpreted differently in different religions gives vent to different
ways of life. The vision, as we have said, serves as an ideal which regulates the life of the religious man. The fundamental vision or the fundamental ideal which is something of its own unique nature, finds partial expressions in the form of various religions and the consequently various ways of life. Religion in Gandhian sense is fundamentally this vision, which, due to its unique nature, is really speeches. Human beings give language to it in accordance with their own capacities. As Gandhi has said, "The one Religion is beyond all speech. Imperfect men put it into such language as they can command."45

Thus, it seems to us that Gandhi had a deeply significant sense to convey about the fundamental nature of religion when he spoke of Religion with a capital 'R'. We have said above that religion according to Gandhi was not a matter of private affair. It consisted rather in one's discharging the essential moral responsibilities towards one's fellow beings. But this is only the practical side of the religion of Gandhi's conception. It has, besides, a more fundamental side too in respect of which it could be taken as individualistic and private. The fundamental vision which is the mother of all prevalent religions occurs to an individual, only when he is in a state of meditative solitariness. Religion is fundamentally a vision and it is in the nature of that fundamental or primordial vision that religion is one. It is this
fundamental religion which Gandhi designated as the Religion with a capital ‘R’. On the practical side, there are many religions giving vent to the different ways of life, but fundamentally Religion is one.

Gandhi advised people to read other’s religion’s sympathetically through the writings of such persons who were ardent votaries of those religions. That would increase one’s understanding of other religions as well as of the inner unity of all religions depicting the same truth. Now what consist, according to Gandhi, is the acts of religion or the true practice of religion. Since religion means moral life for Gandhi, man’s good moral acts constitute the acts of religion. And among these acts, Gandhi gives special importance to the acts of love.

2.3 Gandhian religion: Aims and Objectives:

Gandhi was not an inspired political philosopher destined to propound a new political philosophy and contemplate the world in the light of his creative vision. He was a common man whom the accident of circumstances has brought into the political field. But once he drifted to the field of politics, he made his mission sublime through his truthful nature, his sincerity his tenacity, his industry, and his shrewd practical ability. Through his force of will and vital energy he grew by an evolutionary process to be a superman and was universally acclaimed: the knower, the does, and the sayer.
He practiced old philosophies and adhering to certain fundamental principles based upon truth, he led men to the realization of a better order of society than the destructive and cruel chaos in which mankind had hitherto existed. His mission was to purify politics, to rekindle love in the human breast, to rehabilitate the freedom of man, and to restore and teach the dignity of human labour.

**Background of Gandhian outlook towards Religion**

The Gita ranks foremost in moulding Gandhi's outlook. Since 1889, when he first read it in Sir Edwin Arnold's translation, the Gita had always been his spiritual reference book, in fact, his daily and never-failing guide: when doubts haunt me, when disappointments stare me in the face, declared Gandhi, "and I see not one ray of light on the horizon, I turn to the Bhagavad Gita, and find a verse to comfort me; and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming sorrow! My life has been full of external tragedies and if they have not left any visible effect on me, I owe it to the teachings of Bhagavad Gita," Gandhi was pre-eminent a man of action. The Gita made him one. He remained for twenty years fighting the battle of Indian rights in South Africa. He won it. The rest of his life is a continuous struggle against inequity and injustice, social, economic and political. He won for India political
independence and brought about a new outlook in the country in the solution of her social and economic problems. He was a karma yogi, a practical man of action who struggled without the desire for results. His war selflessness in action consisted with the teachings of the Gita and he held to them steadfastly. The message of the Gita is: “Act thou, O Dhananjaya (Arjuna), without attachment, steadfast in yoga, with even mindedness in success and failure, even mindedness in yoga.”

Even-mindedness or a balanced state of mind can be obtained only by killing all passions and by renouncing desires than objects. Renunciation gives one the inner peace, the spiritual poise, to achieve results. Gandhi did not agree that warfare could be consistent with renunciation. “Let it be granted,” he wrote in 1929, in an introduction to the Gujarati translation of the Gita, “that according to the letter of the Gita it is possible to say that warfare is consisted with renunciation of fruit. But after forty year’s unremitting endeavour fully to enforce the teaching of Gita in my own life, I have in all humility, felt that perfect renunciation is impossible without perfect observance of Ahimsa in every shape and form.” Then, comes the revolutionary Gandhi who declared that his loyalty to the Gita entitled him to amend such a notion.
He very often referred to be bound by uncongenial texts, concepts and situations.

Gandhi's religion made him political and his politics was religious. This is an essence of the Gandhian outlook, "There are no politics," said Gandhi, "devoid of religion, Politics bereft of religion are a death trap because they kill the soul,"48 To him, religion and politics were not apart from each other than body and soul. Religion was the very breath of Gandhi's being. He says, "At the back and soul Religion was the very breath of Gandhi's being. He says, "At the back of every word that I have uttered since I have known what public life is, and of every act that I have done, there has been a religious consciousness and a down right religious motive."49

By religion, Gandhi did not mean any particular creed. He believed in an all pervading God. His God was Truth. His Truth was knowledge and where there was true knowledge there was bliss. He did not merely say that "God" is truth", but also said that "Truth is God", Gandhi was, accordingly, a seeker after truth and his God manifested Himself in Truth and love. Love and Ahimsa were synonymous for him without Ahimsa he said, it was not possible to seek and find truth. Both are the obverse and reverse of the same coin—one is the means, the other is the end.
Whoever acts on these principles was for him a religious and spiritual person whether he believed in god or not, whether he was a jew or a gentile, a heathen or a Christian, a Muslim or a Kafir. Gandhi's God and religion was, thus, a thing of the heart. It resided in every human heart and it must be evolved by each out of himself as it is always within us. "The ultimate definition of religion," he concluded, "May be said to be obedience to the law of God. God and His law are synonymous terms. Therefore, God signifies an unchanging and living being. No one has ever really found him. But Avtars and prophets have, by means of their tapasya given to mankind a faint glimpse of the eternal law and assigned to each one amongst us the work of the moral scavanger-so as to clean and purify our hearts and get them ready," ready for action and service of mankind in removing iniquity and injustice.

When Gandhi speaks of religion in any context whatsoever, the central point of interest is always man. The well being of man is the touchstone of effectiveness of religion. If religion is an awakening, it must embrace humanity. If religion is a positive force of inner awakening it must be divine and must embrace truth. Beauty and Goodness are the eternal components of human excellence. How does Gandhi, then represent society in the context of religion: In what ways is religion an integral part of the society? How far is a man social in the sense that he represents
the true spirit of religion; How can the society best represent the inmost core of religious sensibilities of mankind: Gandhi negotiates all these questions from the practical experiences of man and society. He expands the horizon of religion with an endless vision of all serene and advises to nurse the living spirit of God present within each one of us in the society. As he significantly remarks.

True religion is not a narrow dogma. It is not external observance. It is faith in God and living in the presence of God.50

Gandhi emphasizes on the education of religion which embodies the unifying personality of an individual. Such an education that caters to self-understanding, self-dependence, self-control and self-purification contains within itself the inner strength of religious devotion that makes man a true representative of a serene. For such an education, Gandhi never poses himself as an exponent of religious education but simply advises on the importance of highlighting one's own self by following through creative and critical analysis, the path of the master he chooses himself.

The aims and objectives of religion, in terms of higher education, as Gandhi spells out are based on the exercise and dissemination of the greater values and the finer sensibilities of life. These incorporate a toleration of mind and outlook,
cultivation of unity and genuine love for mankind and an abiding faith in oneness of spirit. The education that opens a new vista of religion should, as Gandhi believes, incorporate duty service towards mankind and God unendingly.

What should be the strategies of religion in life and work? What principles should one adopt to identify oneself with the All true. All Good, All Beautiful? Gandhi encapsulates the aims and objectives of religion in aesthetics. A Study, even though casual, in broad perspectives of aesthetics in terms of religion as Gandhi strongly believes, proves the fact that true religion always endears whatever is true, good and beautiful. So, every, religion should aim at unfolding truth, goodness and beauty in thought and action endeavour and contemplation. Gandhi, of course, is more interested in the practical form of aesthetics in religion. This means that he makes a fusion between religion and aesthetics from psychological and humanistic points of view. This has two-fold advantage. One the apparent points of ambiguities and abstractions can be safely and satisfactorily eliminated. Second, there is a greater and more convenient avenue of involvement on the part of every individual striving for having a real concept of religion.
Admittedly, it is for the first time in the history of the aesthetics of religion that Gandhi preaches the doctrine of the equality of man from religious standpoint. His theory of non-violence is the theory of goodness to all mankind. His Gita is the Gita of embracing humanity for the poignance of excellence in religion. Therefore, it is he alone who can frankly voice forth as follows:

I regard myself as a friend of the 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 hurts me just as much as that done by a Hindu. We may not at gloat over the errors of the least of our fellow.51

Gandhi highlights aesthetics in religion from elimination of passion in thought, word and deed. Such is the essence of true religion. Such religion in conquering passions to bring forth purity in thought, word and deed, in the science aesthetic efflorescence makes life meaningful and challenging. As Gandhi poignantly observes:

The path of self-purification is hard and steep (one) has to become absolutely passion-free in thought, speech and action, to rise above the opposing currents of love and hatred, attachment and repulsion. I know that I have not in me as yet that triple purity.
in spite of constant ceaseless striving for it. That is why the world’s praise fails to move me, indeed it very much often stings me. To conquer the subtle passions seems to me to be harder far than the physical conquest of the world by the force of arms.\textsuperscript{52}

The objective of religion in terms of nationalism ushers forth a new dimension of religion. In the first place, nationalism as Gandhi believes and translates into reality. Gandhi emphasizes on the religious foundation of nationalism. When Gandhi highlights nationalism for national independence he adores this divine religious component as a harmonious force of Truth-a component which eliminates all distinction between the oppressor and the oppressed, the ruler and the ruled. At the same time, he also encourages the erring humanity to re-evaluate in terms of religious excellence so that nationalism becomes an armour to safeguard the supreme Being in everyone irrespective of caste, creed, colour or culture.

When Gandhi synchronizes nationalism with religion, he firmly maintains a sound mind with a sound inward vision of conscience. It is that inward vision of conscience that welcomes defeat as a great challenge for the assured victory.

Gandhi also formulates a sounder platform of nationalism on religion. He delivers nationalism from sentimentalism and bare
exposure of valour or chivalry. He heightens the inward truth of nationalism through the perfume of perfection of mankind from all points of view—moral, intellectual, aesthetic, economic, social, religious and spiritual. This has actually given a newer dimension to nationalism throughout the world.

Even when Gandhi defines socialism, he explains it in terms of an ideal manifestation of religion. How does that manifestation take place? What are the different strategies of socialism to heighten it to the level of religion? He gives specific answers to all such questions with a primary axiom that socialism is never an isolated factor. Rather, is it involved in the whole man, the complete and perfect man, the really religious man, the man who looks upon each and every member of the society an inseparable part of himself, his very own and therefore, his God who manifests in the living man in the society.

Gandhi also advocates unity in plurality of design’s in the society and cultivation of purity through humility which are finer practical aspects of religion normally averted or ignored in our so-called socialism.
2.4 Gandhian leadership: A Study in Gandhian Secularism

India's political culture emanates from her religion philosophy and culture. It revolves around faith in God or Unknown, soul and its transmigration law of Karma and fate, discretionary grace of God power of devotion(bhakti), realization or attainment of God as ultimate value etc. Other secondary and supplementary values stand in between their primary beliefs and the means and methods to realize them. However, Indians, in general are not very specific about the nature and contents to their values and sometimes differ very radically from each other, people having similar sets of values, may appear totally different in their tastes mode of living and pattern of behaviour. As such, the elite are usually known by their higher education, superior status, money power, social resources, better psychological make-up and skills. They live in isolation and away from the masses. Their attitude and motivation towards masses more or less is that of extraction, manipulation and domination. But their perspective is generally wider, liberal, modern and dynamic. The masses, on the other side think in parochial, feministic and traditional terms. Most of them are illiterate or semi-literate submissive fatalistic and lack resources. They suffer a lot on many counts away owing to the lack of minimum basic requirements of human subsistence.
They readily accept any man as their God or saviour if he promises to provide some relief to them.

As most of Indians repose their faith in other worldly set of values, they do not take difference among themselves and this worldly matters very seriously. In consequences they are very much tolerant towards each and every type of activity right or wrong. They try to live off defensively and habitually are not aggressive or constructive by nature. Rajni Kothari has rightly observed that Indian culture has certain universalistic secular and resilient characteristics. It contains elements of continuity as well as change. The world-view of an average Indian is highly permissive accommodation, and self-consciously pluralistic. His concept of ultimate values is transcendental timeless and a historical obviously, it has led him to uncertain and unspecific relationship between the values and problems and their solutions. Their faith in metaphysical realities leaves little room for social organisation, comradeship collective effort etc. They tend to move only when there appears some godly or charismatic personality proclaiming as divine mission for them.

Apparently, the value patterns of elite and masses are antagonistic, antipolar, and contradictory But in a systematic interreactional sense, they tend to supplement each other. When
some acute discontentment or widespread social problem begins to disturb the societal equilibrium, a kind of dynamic human force is generated. It tends to lead the system towards new directions and goals. This leading force may emerge from any strata or segment of society. It has been observed that it often comes from the middle class which is usually the worst hit sufferer. But the dynamic human force designated as political leadership has to seek its sustenance from both elite and masses. India's peculiar political culture or prevalent values provide a constant opportunity to the political leadership to culturize both of them. However there might be a situation which remains unable to instil any section of the society. A society or its parts can be activated only when the new leadership, either takers up the immediate problems and issues of the society and promises to solve them or identifies itself, with the basic values and deeply ingrained norms of the society. A more successful leadership includes both and tries to organize the people accordingly. A creative type of political leadership uses its power and influence in solving the problems constructively and initiates the people with its basic values pattern and goals. It aims at a balanced combination of problems and values.

**Ambit of Gandhian Political Leadership**

In comparison with former political leadership of early moderates and later extremists. Gandhi's political leadership, unlike them, operated at all the three levels. These levels,
mentioned below, are very important from the point of view of evolving theoretical aspect of Gandhian political leadership.

i. Universal level

ii. Means level and

iii. Achievement level

i. At the universal level Gandhi was deeply concerned with the realization of the ultimate values like the Absolute. Truth, God, Brahma, Ram, Allah or Reality. It was the omnipresent spiritual reality- "an all embracing living light". It was to be realized by the individual through the Means level or service to human society. Particularly "daridranarayana (the poor people visualised as God). He said "I recognised no God except the God that is to be focussed in the hearts of the dumb millions." This was the basis of his action or service theory. The secret of his leadership was that he consistently related the second and third levels to the first one from this level be moved down towards the means or major problematic level.

ii. The next level relates to means, policies and actions. They were adopted to face different problems, issues and challenges. They were collectively known as non-violence or ahimsa, satyagraha was its agitational or action form. Gandhi laid too much emphasis on purity of means. "Take care of the means
which will take care of the ends themselves." he said for him ends and means were convertible terms. He identified ethical ends with practical means and called it non-violence. Ahimsa was a creed to him and the breath of his life. It was an all-pervasive principle, a path of salvation or permanent relief from the cycle of birth and death. He regarded it as a fact of life as well as an act of faith. It presupposed law of karma, rebirth and existence of soul with God overhead. In this thinking, freedom struggle, social service, prayer, fasting, etc. were a part of his thinking plan to realize salvation (moksha) even while living (jeevanmukti) in this world. All problems and issues taken up by him like attainment of swaraj Hindu-Muslim unity basic education, Harijan uplift, Charkha decentralization trusteeship, etc. were merely means to realize his supreme end or God. Politics for him was to observe the highest spiritual values by which it must always be guarded. He declared "Loyalty to the country is always subordinate to loyalty to God." Thus, his perspective of means was congenial to the character of the Indian people grown during the course of several centuries.

iii. Because of his supernatural ends and spiritual means, he was less concerned with the achievement level. He firmly believed in the detached action theory of the Gita which he called mother. According to him we have control over the Karma or means, but
not over the end or the result of action. "A satyagraha is always unattached to the attainment of the object of satyagraha."56 He was for heroism in society and look motives and quality into consideration and not the consequences. However, his constructive programme and the resolution of the problems arrived at the means level had responded to the needs and wants of the masses at the achievement level.

Man fears unknown and is often forced to undergo various forms of wants and sufferings. Everytime he has to face fresh challenges and respond to new callings. In the moment of utter helplessness, he is in the habit of seeking shelter either of God Himself or of some godly person claiming to know him. It was natural for Indians and others, as they do even today, that they gathered around the personality of Gandhi for the solution of their political, social, economical, and spiritual problems. They devotedly called him their 'Bapu', 'Mahatma'and 'Father of the Nation'. He has been classified with the Buddha and Christ, socrates and the Bhakti saints of mediaeval India.57 Einstein exclaimed that generations to come "will scarcely believe that such a man, as this, ever in flesh and blood, walked upon this earth;58 Will Durant described him as a "saint among men", Louis Fischer wrote, "I have met Lenin, Churchill, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Wilkie, Stalin, Litevinov, Attlee, Einstein, Lloyd George, Eleanor Roosevelt,
and many other famous people. I have never met a more remarkable person than Gandhi."59 Martin Luther Kind, the American Negro leader, compared Gandhi to Christ, and said: "From my background, I gained my resulting Christian ideals. From Gandhi, I learned my operational technique. By eminent men like the Dalailama, E.M. Forster and Lord Samuel, Gandhi has been celebrated as perhaps the greatest man of our century. Few great men have, in their lives, achieved such worldwide attention. He has been linked to several gods and heroes of the world.60

As such, there are immense difficulties in understanding Gandhi as a political leader. Almost all scales of measuring leadership or frameworks of analysis fall too short for him. The pattern of leadership which he evolved was not comprehensible even to his close colleagues like Nehru and Patel who invariably had to submit to his irresistible grip over the prevailing situations. If sometimes he was at the Himalayan heights of his public life, at other times he was groping in dark. There were many paradoxical elements in his life and leadership. Some of them have not been resolved so far.

Most of them relate to the nature of his ideas as well as dissimilar background factors, and varying motivations and objectives of political actors in the then existing situations.
According to Paul Power, “divergent and sometimes conflicting positions can be traced throughout most of his public life,” Gandhi himself wrote that, “I am not at all concerned with appearing to be consistent.”\textsuperscript{61} The opinion which he held at one time, he could have changed it at the very next moment. He has made his position very clear that “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 given question, but to be consistent with truth as it may present itself to me at a given moment.”\textsuperscript{62} As a result of this perplexity, Bondurant has found the study of Gandhi as ‘unrewarding’. Raghavan Iyer has written that Gandhism is “a particular ethical standpoint rather than fixed formula or definite system. There can be no claims to Gandhian infallibility, no authoritative body of apostolic interpreters, no set ritual involving khadi and the charkha.”\textsuperscript{63}

Gandhi himself was a man of action and not of erudition. He was not a moral philosopher interested in an abstract theoretical speculation. His own followers found his personality enigmatic and behaviour un-predictable. Throughout his life he played multiple roles, but two of them have been predominant - the saint and the politician. He is said to be a saint among politicians and a politician among sainsts. However, he was more a saint and less a
politician. Rather, it may be said that he was never a politician in the traditional sense of the term. It is a futile exercise to regard him a Politician among the saints. Neither there were saints around him nor there was any need to play politics with them. He was primarily a 'Mahatma' and a saint-politician. Gandhi himself wrote that the politician in him had never dominated a single decision of his life. He did not sacrifice his principle to gain a political advantage. His political leadership was not of his own seeking but "a fruit of faithful service." He was at heart a religious man. He cannot be understood without descending into the depths of what Romain Rolland called the vast religious crypt below the edifice of his moral and political leadership has to be studied in the context of his total personality and writings and the prevailing milieu of contemporary India.

Gandhi, in-fact, had crossed over the topmost level of Political leadership in India and has attained the status of immortality or a prophet of universal values. The role and importance of his leadership was not confined to national boundaries, even in his lifetime. He has attained the status of immoral leadership. Factors contributing to this type of leadership are: the character of his universal values largely following Charisma. Sacrifices and the status of godfather of the Indian state. Gandhi was reversed more than any other great man new
hero or god in India. His saintly and hermit-like living had virtually endeared him to the millions of uneducated but religious-minded masses of India. His ‘Mahatmaship has been more than anything else, responsible for popularising him among the Indian people. Whatever he said or uttered was listened to like an oracle. His followers frequently are his name and act ex-cathedra. He is their inspiring teacher and prophet. Gandhi’s ideals of Truth and ‘Ahimsa’ are invariably the top values of every religion. It is natural that his teachings get highest regard in India. If their relevance is shown to the contemporary problems, most probably the ideas and solutions advanced by Gandhi would be readily accepted by the people of India. Gandhi claimed more than once “I never act, I only react according to the guidance given to me by God. When Tagore addressed him as ‘Mahatma’ the whole nation accepted. Rev. John Haynes wrote “... when I think of Gandhi I think of Jesus Christ. He lives his life, be speaks his words, he suffers, strives and will some day nobly die for his kingdom upon earth.” Actually he died a martyr’s death, and attained the status of an immortal leader.

2.5 Secularism and National Integration - A Gandhian Perspective:

India is a country of many communities and unless we can live in harmony with each other, respecting each other’s beliefs and habits, we cannot build a great and united nation.
Ever since the distant past, it has been Indian's proud privilege to live in harmony with each other. That has been the basis of India's culture. Long ago, the Buddha taught us this lesson. From the days of Ashoka, 2300 years ago, this aspect of our thought has been repeatedly declared and practised. In our own day life, Mahatma Gandhi laid great stress on it and indeed, lost his life because he laid great stress on communal good will and harmony. We have therefore, a precious heritage to keep up, and we cannot allow ourselves to act contrary to it.

Secularism can be both positive and negative in its operation in the field of social justice and peace. Every individual at his birth will inherit the citizenship of a nation, a mother tongue and a religious tradition because of the place and the household that surrounds him. This basic fact influences the individuals thought, speech and action through life and throughout life. But it is also important to realise that as the individual grows each one of these inheritances has to be examined carefully and must have to be so schooled so as not to become a fanaticism that harms mutual relationships within the family, the society and the world at large.

In India this process of adopting secularism had to contend with a very different religious environment and fossilised traditions. Millions of common people derive the power of sustained ethics and morality from adherence to their inherited
religious conduct. The value system that pervaded the feudal political state that flourished for centuries in this country gave a supremacy to that religion to which the ruler on the monarch belonged. The other religious traditions were looked down as inferior to this. Hundreds of years of Hindu and Muslim rules and later the Christian rulers from the west, constantly stirred up wrong sentiments amongst those who were strongly entrenched in orthodox customs and habits in our or the other religion to which they belonged.

This served every well to the "divide and rule" policy of the imperialist rulers of the British empire. The contact with the democratic traditions of Europe also contributed to the growth of democratic values amongst Indian political thinkers and progressive Indian rulers of some princely states. But the imperial power refused to accept the demand for treating all religious sects equally and not set them to a competition for privileges in terms of political power. The all pervasive struggle for freedom that rose and a crescendo in the first half of this century all over India brought together all sections of Indians together and a sense of belonging to one political entity emerged. Yet, the Muslim's leadership played into the hands of the British rulers and the struggle for supremacy was accentuated. It unfortunately resulted in the formation of a theocratic state called Pakistan which
adopted Islam as its state religion contrary to the norms of a true democracy. Independent India, on the other hand, stood solidly for democratic values under the leadership of Gandhiji and adopted a constitution which separated the state from the monopoly of any single religious sect. The framers of our constitution accepted the principle that the state power finds its justification according to the measure to which it pursues and protects the efforts of every citizen for full development including his spiritual aspirations according to his or her own beliefs and convictions.

The constitution of India lays down that the state shall adopt secularism as an unalterable attribute to its policy of governance. Gandhiji was very specific in his views when he wrote in the 'Harijan' on 31-8-1947.

"The state is bound to be wholly secular. All subjects will thus be equal in the eyes of the laws of the land. But every single individual will be free to pursue a religion without let on hindrances so long as it does not transgress the common law". As far back as 1922 writing in "Young India" Gandhiji had said "Nationalism is greater than sectarianism and in that sense we are Indians first and Hindu, Muslims, Parsi or Christians after."

A secular outlook is not a denial of true religion. The state shall not discriminate between one religious sect and the other but
treat with equal respect the diverse religions and protect their right to peruse the spiritual rituals as long as they do not go against any legislation for socio-economic reforms in society. No religion should be forced on the individual by compulsion of any kind by the state or by any other corporate body. Religious sects should not also be allowed to forcibly convert any other citizen either by oppression or by material allurements. The state power is essentially temporal. It cannot take any initiative on its own for the religious evolution of the individual citizen. Religion will fail to exercise its moral power over society if it is dependent on enforcement by political authority or by forced conversions. The society itself shall have to generate movements of reforms and regeneration in religious rituals from time to time so as to help socio-economic development in all its facets. While all religions and the teachings of their prophets lay stress on principles of human values, obsolete orthodox dogmas and practices often become causes of self destroying conflicts between religion and religion.

In the Indian context, therefore, the concept of secularism has come to mean accepting to keep the state responsive to the moral and ethical principles that religion bestows on the individual citizens but strictly keep out of identification with any exclusive religious sect even if an over whelming majority of people of the
state belong to it. Respect for the rights of religious minorities is as fundamental to democracy as any other value. It is necessary for a true democratic to examine every religion from the point of view of a true follower of that faith. A multi religious country like India which has absorbed the true principles of many religious traditions, can afford to be wholly tolerant and preserve peace and love amongst its citizens. Let us recall what the father of nation said.

"I do not expect the India of my dreams to develop one religion, that is wholly Hindu, or wholly Christian or wholly Musalman, but I want it to be wholly tolerant with its numerous sects working side by side with one another like cultured human beings."

As the problem of racial discrimination transformed the young lawyer into Gandhi, the resolve to fight communal disharmony became an article of faith in his life long quest for social conciliation and consolidation. He was unflinching in this conviction and did not waver in his commitment to the cause.

Conflict and violence emerge when interests, rights, opportunities and justice are threatened or eroded spanning over political, religious, social, economic, national, international and financial spheres communal disharmony poses challenges,
identifiable with one or more determining factors such as these. Born of divergent catalytic factors, communalism is a state of mind, an index of distrust and a manifestation of suspicion and inferiority complex.

One comes across such frivolous instances as slaughter of cow or pig, playing music in front of a mosque, and defiling of a holy book. One or several of which have resulted in communal flare up and confrontation. However, all such instances are basically alibis and pretexts and the real cause for malady lies elsewhere, namely in the psyche of the people irrespective of religious denomination. The self styled crusaders and guardians of one faith or the other conveniently forget that emancipation of one community or the other depends not on confrontation but on conciliation and comprehensive good will. Denominational claims to the exclusive rights of a particular community could neither be nationalistic nor conciliatory in the integral sense communalism, therefore, is synonymous with fanatic sub nationlism. It was this that Gandhi sought to encounter.

Whereas Gandhi wanted to use the cementing force of nationalism to make India united, Jinnah wanted to use the dynamite of religion to divide India.' The plea that he was serving the larger cause of the Muslims was indeed futile and
counterproductive. The means employed by Gandhi and those by Jinnah, were fundamentally different. Hinduism and Islam, as religions, had nothing to do with the objectives and ideals of both, Gandhi and Jinnah. If Gandhi’s alternative was recourse to human values. Jinnah took to retribution and coercion.

For Gandhi, the issue of communal harmony and national integration was greater than that of swaraj. Neither political leaders nor religious priests were as devotedly concerned about this important issue as Gandhi was in the annals of modern India. Gandhi was amongst the greatest champions of Hindu-Muslim unity. He not only stood firm for establishment of communal harmony throughout his life but also sacrificed his life in its pursuits. During his early political life in South Africa, he emphasised on Hindu-Muslim unity and pursued his mission through non-violence, love and faith. In South Africa he spread the message of hope for Hindus and Muslim to be together to strive for integral outlook. He was committed to communal harmony as an imperative for freedom. His main concern was not only to free the country from British rule but also to establish communal harmony. Gandhi placed communal peace and harmony at the highest level of his priority.
Gandhi cautioned that even as the British would leave India, the Indians ought to ensure that society would not relapse into communal carnage. No weapon except that of mutual love and understanding would help eradicate the historical folly. He had accepted that Hindu-Muslim unity must be the cardinal creed for all times and under all circumstances. Gandhi stressed upon the imperative of non-violence and communal harmony.

Gandhi believed that the causes of discord between Hindus and Muslims if understood, peace would prevail. Gandhi's concern of harmony and conciliation among communities was not idealistic. For it was motivated, inspired and fashioned by genuine urge for unity and integration.

Gandhi enunciated the truism that all communities must always trust each other but in the last resort we must trust ourselves and our God. He realised the importance of sentiments of all the religions. In this regard, he cautioned both Hindus and Muslims against hurting the susceptibilities of each other. In the context of cow protection he emphasised that cow slaughter could be voluntarily abjured through the goodwill of Muslim only. Just as Hindus cannot compel Muslims to refrain from killing cows. Muslims should not compel Hindus to stop music or 'Arti' at the point of sword. Muslims must have trust in the good sense of the
Hindus. He advised that for countering the antagonistic tendencies by either communities intensive goodwill among communities is imperative. Both the communities have to transform their ethos and perspectives in order to fulfil social objectives of conciliation and integration.

Gandhi stated that one could except unity only if mutual large heartedness is fostered. This alone could bring about the dawn of a new India. Gandhi was convinced that in the absence of pervasive goodwill, Non-violence and tolerance communal problem in India could not be resolved.

Gandhi's faith was that if the followers of different religions imbibed the truth about fundamental unity of all religions and acted accordingly, there would be a healthy change at the global level in general and India in particular. The futility of rivalries among religion has been obvious. India's heritage has always been one of integrative and compassionate primacies, of conciliation and peace of universal humanism.

Gandhi emphasis was on unity of heart among the communities. He wanted to eradicate hatred and suspicion from the minds of Hindus and Muslims. He called upon nationalists to promote harmony and renounce passion and prejudice. There could be no alternative other than that of creative harmony among
the communities. Gandhi emphasised the responsibility of women in this regard. He asked them to resort to satyagraha if the men folk were averse to effects of communal harmony and national integration.

Gandhi's understanding of the communal problem was superficial and shallow in 1920. Since most of the riots were about religious issues Gandhi believed irreligion to be the cause of communalism. He wanted both Hindus and Muslims to be tolerant of one another and cultivate the true spirit of religion. However, as early as 1921 Gandhi realized that the communal harmony was still very weak and advocated common action. Propagation of Khadi in particular, as a means to strengthen this harmony and national integration.

As a result of his faulty and shallow understanding of the communal problem, Gandhi seems to have conceded the logic of communalism that different religious communities had their own interests. During the Khilafat period Gandhi often spoke of muslim interest and 'Muslim community'.

We can perceive a gradual progress in Gandhi's understanding of communalism. Apparent inconsistencies in Gandhi's approach to the problem are to be seen as a part of this process of growth in understanding the true nature of communalism.
The spate of communal riots in the early 1920 was proof of Gandhi's failure to achieve Hindu-Muslim unity on a religious basis. This failure led Gandhi to analyse the problem deeply and he discovered that the root of the problem lay in the struggle for he crumbs of power that the colonial government offered. Gandhi also realised that it was through the councils etc. that the government acquired a pre-eminent position. There was also-deep-rooted suspicion and mistrust among the leaders. Gandhi's solution to the problem was voluntary boycott of elected bodies by the majority community.

However, Gandhi could not persuade the communal leaders. Particularly the Hindu communal leaders, to accept his solution. At he sometime, he could not ignore the objection of these leaders since he depended on them to achieve Hindu-Muslim unity. Even though he did not agree with their communal position he defended them. This soft approach towards the communal leaders hindered Gandhi's effort to bring about communal unity.
REFERENCE:


4. Ibid: P.17

5. Ibid: P.17.


7. Ibid: P.18


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31. Young India, September to ., 1926, P.308.
47. Ibid: P.752.
49. Ibid: P.754.
56. Ibid: Sept, 1926.


64. Verma V.P. Modern Indian Political Thought, Laxmi Naraian Agarwal, Agra, 1974, (5th Edn). P.274.


