CHAPTER III

GANDHIJI ON RELIGION AND MORALS

In this Chapter, an attempt is made to spell out Gandhiji's approach to Hindu religion in terms of what he practised and in terms of what he thought needed to be changed. On the one hand, Gandhiji seemed to have accepted the basic ideas of Hindu religion which have ethical orientation and which seem to be fundamental to Hindu religion. On the other hand, he discarded outright some of the practices which seemed to him were against what he considered of value in the human context. He almost accepted the ideas adumbrated in Hindu religion such as 'dharma', 'varnashrama', 'Moksha' etc. But these ideas came to have new meaning and interpretation. His beliefs and practices ran counter to the orthodox version of Hindu religion. He found that religious ideas were more preached but seldom practised. He persevered to practise what he found to be convincing. He exhorted his countrymen to live up to the best teachings of their religion, and called on all to pursue truth, morality and love and service of fellow-beings. He condemned uncompromisingly the evils that had crept into Hindu religion and sought to remove them. Like Buddha, he found Indian society in need of reform within. In this, he was much inspired by the western Christian spirit of service, equality, voluntary acceptance of poverty and this-worldliness.
Gandhiji's outlook on religion had its origin in the 'Sanskar' (Socialization) he got within the local ethos or culture. His orientation later on with the western liberal ethic made him to perceive Hindu religion in its true perspective and reject some of its rituals and practices which went against reasoning and humanity.

Gandhiji's study and acquaintance with the various religions such as Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc., enabled him to synthesize the best in the two worlds i.e., the East and the West and as a result emerged his deeper beliefs and practices. He saw religion as a part of social framework. He used religion to re-educate masses. In and through him religion became a vehicle of change in the Indian society. His belief that every religion has something good in it made him see the futility of proselytization. He exhorted all alike—Hindus, Muslims and Christians to be true to their faiths.

Gandhiji was a devout but rational Hindu. He strongly believed that religion has to do much for what happens in society. His outlook on religion influenced him to perceive the problems of Indian society in an integrated manner. That is how he brought politics into the arena of religion. Since he came on the Indian horizon, he persevered to spiritualise politics. Such a process of spiritualization of politics enabled him to involve the masses of the country in the struggles for freedom and
social reform. "If one wants to understand Gandhiji's life and work, one must try to understand his spiritual ideas and ideals in the light of which he conducted struggles against group injustice and tyranny and carried out his reform programmes. Gandhiji's ideas grew and developed as he had to face practical situations and find solutions to problems, which confronted him throughout his life..."¹

Sources of Gandhiji's religion

Gandhiji from his childhood days was brought up in a religious atmosphere. In this his mother's religious outlook had great bearing on him. "The outstanding impression my mother has left on my memory is that of saintliness."² Nineteenth century Kathiawar was a meeting ground of diverse religious faiths like Christianity, Islam and Jainism. He hailed from a Vaishnava family that had greater influence on his later religious leanings. "...The Vaishnava mode of thinking made a permanent impression on Gandhiji's mind in his early childhood. And his philosophy is more or less the Vaishnava philosophy....Gandhiji does not worry much about the final form of salvation. Like Buddha, he is most concerned with the leading of a good life. In other words, not philosophy but ethics is the

¹. Kripalani, J.B. Gandhiji: His Life and Thought, p.336
². Gandhi, M.K. My Experiments with Truth
pivot of his teachings. He aspires after an ethical excellence. Satyagraha aims at lifting men to the highest ethical plane.... Religious mysticism or philosophical spiritualism are not his ways. He is content with a good life where he meets evil by good and creates good. This does not mean that he has no religious convictions. Indeed religion is his starting point but that is only an ethical religion. He needs religion in so far as it is necessary for ethical pursuits."

Jainism had its own impact on Gandhiji in spite of his insistence that it is part and parcel of Hinduism. Gandhiji has pointed out (in his autobiography) that he was not much benefitted by his visits to the Haveli, the temple of Vaishnavas. This shows that in his childhood days itself he had formed aversion to formalism and meaningless rituals. Later on when he launched the anti-untouchability movement, he insisted on not entering any temple which was not opened to Harijans. (Gandhiji called untouchables as Harijans or men of God Hari). He had recognised the effect of Ramanama instilled by the nurse in his younger days. "But what I failed to get there (Haveli) I obtained from my nurse, an old servant of the family, whose affection for me I still recall. She (Rambha) suggested as a remedy for this fear (the fear of

ghosts and spirits) the repetition of Ramanama.... the
good seed sown by that good woman Rambha that today Ramanama
is an infallible remedy for me."\(^4\)

Ramayana and Bhagavat impressed him. In addition
to these, at young age, he got grounding in toleration.
The visits of his family members to different temples and
the conversations his father used to have with Jain
monks, Musslaman and Parsi friends, made him perceive
religious matters in a wider perspective. "In Rajkot,
however, I got an early grounding in toleration of all
branches of Hinduism and sister religions. For my father
and mother would visit the Haveli as also Shiva's and
Rama's temples, and would take or send us youngsters there.
Jain monks also would pay frequent visits to my father and
would even go out of their way to accept food from us, non-
Jains. They would have talks with my father on subjects
religious and mundane.

He had, besides, Musslaman and Parsi friends, who
would talk to him about their own faiths, and he would
listen to them always with respect, and often with interest.
Being his nurse, I often had a chance to be present at these
talks. These many things combined to inculcate in me a
toleraton for all faiths.

\(^4\) Gandhi, M.K. *My Experiments with Truth,*
Only Christianity was at the time an exception. I developed a sort of dislike for it. And for a reason. In those days Christian missionaries used to stand in a corner near the High School and hold forth, pouring abuse on Hindus and their gods. I could not endure this ...."5

But later on Gandhiji came under the influence of the New Testament especially the Sermon on the Mount. He compared it to the teaching of Gita.

Gandhiji came in touch with Bhagavadgita very late, that too through an English translation. Later on it became his sustenance. The philosophy of renunciation enunciated in Gita found new meaning in Gandhiji. He found Anasakti-yoga as the essence of Gita. "It became an infallible guide of conduct. It became my dictionary of daily reference.... Words like aparigraha (non-possession) and samabhava (equability) gripped me.... I understood the Gita teaching of non-possession and equability presupposed a change of heart, a change of attitude...."6

In addition to the early influences on his religious susceptibilities, three persons impressed Gandhiji much. They were Raychandbhai, a Jain merchant of Bombay who was noted for his strict adherence to his religious convictions, Tolstoy by his 'Unto the Last'. "It is in the condemnation

6. Ibid, pp. 322-24
expressed by Gandhi against western civilization that the influence of Tolstoy over Gandhi becomes most real."  

Gandhiji's conception of religion

Gandhiji pursued an integrated approach towards the problems of society. He did not bifurcate religion from morals or politics or economics. He treated life as one whole. "To him politics and religion are no more apart from each other, than body and soul. Either without the other becomes lopsided. They are the obverse and the reverse of the coin of life. They really constitute the full life."  

Gandhiji always reiterated that religion should pervade all spheres of life. "The whole gamut of man's activities today constitutes an indivisible whole. You cannot divide social, economic, political and purely religious work into watertight compartments. I do not know any religion apart from human activity. It provides a moral basis to all other activities which they would otherwise lack, reducing life to a maze of 'sound and fury signifying nothing'. "  

7. Romain Rolland, Mahatma Gandhi: A Study in Indian Nationalism.
9. Harijan: 24-12-1938
Gandhiji's conception of religion was not narrow. He did not accept formal religion. He was against all dogmas and rituals either of Hinduism or any other religion. "By religion, I do not mean formal religion, or customary religion, but that religion which underlies all religions, which brings us face to face with our Maker."\(^{10}\) Gandhiji practised a religion which was sustained by spiritual consciousness. "...His Hinduism had little to do with its forms or ceremonials and the institutions that it had created within itself. He rejected everything that was against reason and against humanity. Though he loved to call himself an orthodox Hindu, he did not subscribe to the pernicious and cruel system of untouchability."\(^{11}\)

It is religion that forced Gandhiji to enter into politics. He stepped into the field of politics with religious motivations and this fact is supported by his own remarks, "I could not be leading a religious life unless I identified myself with whole of mankind and that I could not do unless I took part in politics."

**Truth is God, God is Truth**

Gandhiji practised a religion of Truth. All his experiments for fifty years (as he himself writes in his autobiography) made him realize that there is no God other than Truth. "For me, Truth is the sovereign principle,

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11. Kripalani, J.B. op. cit, p.337
which includes numerous other principles. This truth is not only truthfulness in word, but truthfulness in thought also, and not only the relative truth of our conception, but the Absolute Truth, the Eternal Principle, that is God....God has many manifestations but I worship God as Truth only.

I have not yet found Him, but I am seeking after Him. I am prepared to sacrifice the things dearest to me (even my very life) in pursuit of this quest....But as long as I have not realized this Absolute Truth, so long must I hold by the relative truth as I have conceived it. That relative truth must, meanwhile, be my beacon, my shield and buckler.¹²

Since his childhood Gandhiji committed himself to the practice of truth. He has narrated in his autobiography that how he was influenced by the book 'Shravana pitribhakti Nataka' and how seeing a play- Harischandra touched his heart. "The play haunted me and I must have acted Harischandra to myself times without number. Why should not all be truthful like Harischandra? was the question I asked myself day and night. To follow truth and to go through all the ordeals Harischandra went through was the one ideal it inspired in me."

Religion and Morality

Gandhiji considered morality as the backbone of religion. If religion does not make man moral, what use is there of such religion. "I reject any religious doctrine

¹². Gandhi, M.K. From Introduction to autobiography
that does not appeal to reason and is in conflict with morality. I tolerate unreasonable religious sentiment when it is not immoral."¹³ Thus for Gandhiji religion and morality were inseparable. "This was natural for a karmayogi, who has to act in every sphere of life. Gandhiji did not believe that religious activity was separate from other activities of life, which kept society together. For him the basic principles of this morality were truth and non-violence..."¹⁴

Gandhiji recognised ethics or morals as fundamental to all religions. He emphasized on the need for religious education in the form of instruction in the fundamental ethics that is common to all religions. "It was one of the major aims of Gandhi to defend real religion against the popular religion of mere rituals and ceremonies. This he did by transferring the weight of the defence of the religion to the sphere of morals. He thus tried to make room for moral faith."¹⁵

Practical religion

Gandhiji was a saint but with a difference— a saint concerned with this-worldly affairs. He never isolated himself from the problems of this world. He identified himself with the problems of vast masses of Indians and

¹³. Young India, 21-7-1920.
¹⁴. Kripalani, J.B., op. cit p.338
¹⁵. Surendravarma, Metaphysical Foundations of Mahatma Gandhi's Thought, p.45
endeavoured to highlight the brotherhood of man through religion. He insisted on a practical religion that could help man solve his day-to-day problems of life. He was not enamoured of other world. Heaven may be there, but he wished to realize it here and now. "Gandhi, living in a different age, finds sin not so much in suffering or inaction or ignorance as in injustice and wrong which is but a form of violence. According to him therefore salvation of the individual means his freedom from 'the deadly coils of himsa'. (Autobiography). It is only when an individual is able to get his salvation from violence that he shall be able to realize Truth."\(^{16}\) Gandhiji wanted that religion should bring succour to the needy and helpless. "Religion which take no account of practical affairs and does not help to solve them is no religion."\(^{17}\) Thus he differed from the prophets of old who guided individuals in their pursuit of the supreme good viz., their salvation. It was not their concern to reform society through politics. But Gandhiji as a religious man took part in politics and tried to bring about change through religion. "... Gandhiji's Satyagraha attempts to do both i.e., to guide the individual towards the goal of higher life and also to solve political and international problems. This is his special contribution as a social reformer. Once when somebody said of him that he was a saint, his reply was: "I am a politician trying to be a saint."\(^{18}\)

\(^{16}\) Ibid... p.52
\(^{17}\) Young India, 7-5-1925.
\(^{18}\) Kripalani, J.B. op.cit p.351.
Gandhiji practised religion of love. He maintained that where love is, there God is also. His religion may rightly be called as the religion of non-violence. For him non-violence signified love. The best way that the law of love can express itself is through self-sacrificing service. To a young American who asked Gandhi what religion he professed and what shape future religion of India was likely to assume, Gandhiji replied pointing to the two sick persons in the room. "To serve is my religion. I do not worry about the future."20

In Gandhiji the traditional values of Truth and Non-violence find new dimensions and they ceased to be merely principles for individuals to uphold and practise. He upheld their significance for collective actions, and transformed them to suit the needs of modern Indian society. "Gandhi's commitment to non-violence and Truth (Satyagraha or Truth-force), too suggests how traditional ideals can be transformed for modern purposes. He self-consciously rejected the fatalistic other-worldly and ritualistic orientation that some Jain and Hindu practitioners had lent them....If his commitments to non-violence and Satyagraha had instrumental dimensions, fitting the requirements of an unarmed nation confronting an imperial conscience capable of responding to moral appeals, he infused their practice with meanings

20. Prabhu, R.K. This Was Bapu, p.4
that transcend utility and national boundaries.\textsuperscript{21}

Gandhiji did not identify himself with religion that was sectarian nor with meaningless dogmas and rituals that have petrified the Indian society. His religion is universalistic encompassing the good things of all religions. He considered that the principles of Truth and Non-violence will have to find place in all religions if the world has to cease to be a battle-ground of conflicting forces. He was confident that India with its claim to non-violence, could set the lead to the whole world. "...If India takes up the doctrine of the sword, she may gain momentary victory. Then India will cease to be the pride of my heart. I am wedded to India because I owe my all to her. I believe absolutely that she has a mission for the world. She is not to copy Europe blindly. India's acceptance of the sword will be the hour of my trial. I hope I shall not be found wanting. My religion has no geographical limits. If I have a living faith in it, it will transcend my love for India herself. My life is dedicated to the service of India through the religion of non-violence which I believe to be the root of Hinduism."\textsuperscript{22}

\textbf{Equality of Religions}

Gandhiji believed in the equality of all religions. He maintained that all religions lead to the same goal viz.,

\textsuperscript{21} Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne H. Rudolph, The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India, p.158.
\textsuperscript{22} Young India, 11-8-1920.
God-realization though their paths may be different. He respected all religions. No religion is perfect and each has to evolve and in the process it may be re-interpreted. He abhorred to speak of one religion, one denomination that would satisfy all. He even went to the extent of exhorting each individual to practise his own religion. "I do not share the belief that there can or will be on earth one religion. I am striving, therefore, to find a common factor and to induce mutual tolerance."  

23. 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 re-interpretation. Progress towards Truth, towards God, is possible only because of such evolution.... All faiths constitute a revelation of Truth, but all are imperfect and liable to error. Reverence for other faiths need not blind us to their faults. We must be keenly alive to the defects of our own faith also, yet not leave it on that account, but try to overcome these defects. 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 other faiths...." 24

Gandhiji maintained that study of scriptures of other religions is a prelude to understand them and develop respect towards those religions. "I hold that it is the

23. Young India, 31-7-1924
duty of every cultured man or woman to read sympathetically
the scriptures of the world. If we are to respect others' 
religions as we would, have them to respect our own, a
friendly study of the world's religions is a sacred duty.
My respectful study of other religions has not abated my
reverence for, or my faith in, the Hindu scriptures. They
have indeed left their deep mark upon my understanding of
the Hindu scriptures. They have broadened my view of life.
They have enabled me to understand more clearly many an
obscure passage in the Hindu scriptures..."25

Aids to practice of religion

Gandhiji considered fasting and prayer as essential aids to practice of religion. "Prayer is the very soul
and essence of religion, and therefore, prayer must be
the very core of the life of man, for no man can live
without religion."26 He considered that if one were to
take to fasting and prayer in right spirit, they are most
powerful processes of purification of individuals and
groups. On the functional aspect of prayer he maintained
that".... There is an eternal struggle raging in man's
breast between the powers of darkness and of light, and he
who has not the sheet anchor of prayer to rely upon will be
a victim to the powers of darkness. The man of prayer will
be at peace with himself and with the whole world. The man

25. Young India, 23-9-1926
who goes about the affairs of the world without a prayerful heart will be miserable and will make the world also miserable. Apart therefore from its bearing on man's condition after death, prayer has incalculable value for man in this world of the living. Prayer is the only means of bringing about orderliness and peace and repose in our daily acts..."27

Was Gandhiji a Sanatanist?

In Gandhiji Hinduism found a new interpreter. Among the line of social reformers, Gandhiji revolutionised the thinking of Indians on pressing social problems of the day. Gandhiji was not a believer in Hinduism in its traditional ritualistic form. His ethical principles superseded traditionalism. He accepted all the scriptures of Hinduism but refused to abide by them whenever they went against his conscience or his reasoning. He himself has stated that a thing need not be accepted just because it is ancient if it goes against one's reasoning. "I do not hold that everything ancient is good because it is ancient. I do not advocate surrender of God-given reasoning faculty in the face of ancient tradition. Any tradition however ancient, if inconsistent with morality, is fit to be banished from the land...."28 In the same tone he has exhorted his countrymen not to multiply the errors committed in the past by blindly following the tradition. "We should

27. Young India, 23-1-1920.
cease to grow the moment we cease to discriminate between virtue and vice, and slavishly copy the past which we do not fully know. We are proud heirs to all that was noblest and best in the bygone age. We must not dishonour our heritage by multiplying past errors." \(^{29}\) "Gandhi has been a puzzle to the religious men of the world... He is proud of calling himself a sanatanist but does not fear to proclaim that he does not believe in the exclusive divinity of the Vedas or the matter of that, of the Bible, the Quoran or the Zend Avesta. He would give equal place to all. Ahimsa, Satya, Brahmacharya and Aparigraha are to him the four cardinal pillars on which the edifice of sanatanism has been reared. Mere knowledge counts for nothing with him for his aim is the combination of perfect purity with perfect learning." \(^{30}\)

Gandhiji considered himself a sanatanist so far he adhered to the essential truths of Hinduism such as\(^ {31}\)

1. Belief in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas and all that goes by the name of Hindu Scriptures, and therefore in Avatars and re-births.

2. Belief in Varnashramadharma as given by the Vedas but not in the present popular and crude sense.

3. Belief in the protection of the cow, in its much larger sense than the popular.

4. Belief in idol worship.

\(^{29}\) Young India, 15-9-1921
\(^{30}\) Pattabhi Sitaramayya, op.cit p.235.
\(^{31}\) Romain Rolland, op.cit p.20
But as a Sanatanist Gandhiji should have accepted everything laid down in Hinduism. He did not do so. He accepted the fundamental tenets of Hindu religion but persevered to reinterpret the same to the changing requirements of Indian society. Thus he was neither fully traditional nor fully modern. He tried to synthesize the best of the two worlds, the ancient and the modern. His orientation with Hinduism was so intense, he could not refuse its fundamentals. His orientation with the western culture at the same time helped him to see the pitfalls of Hindu religion and the result was his constant exhortations for purification. On one side he approved the varnashrama and on the other he fought against untouchability. These things only show that Gandhiji tried to show that there need be no conflict between tradition and modernity and both can go together.

Impact of Gandhiji's religious ideas

Gandhiji's religious ideas and practices were greatly responsible for certain changes in the Indian society of pre-independence. His exhortations for social justice have brought about great change in the rigidly stratified Indian social framework. The grip of untouchability has softened though the evil has not completely disappeared. The traditional society was noted for its strict adherence to rituals. Gandhiji's crusade against rituals especially against rituals which were superstitious have lost their significance. Rituals at the time of marriage or elsewhere
have come to be abbreviated. His advocacy of simple life has had its impact. Gandhiji was against lavish spending for marriages etc. He was against conspicuous consumption. Up till 1948 Gandhiji's influence was there. But after 1948 the Indian society reflects a state where Gandhian influence appears to be minimal. Conspicuous consumption has been on the increase. Simplicity is at a discount. In spite of trends that vindicate against Gandhian influences, it is to the credit of Gandhiji that a change from ritualism to rationality was brought about in the Indian society.

The trend of Gandhian thought was not anti-radical or reactionary. On the contrary Gandhiji tried to relate his view of social change with what was possible within the limited conditions of his time. These limitations were political and economic and what he tried to do was to use socio-cultural forces which included religion also to change political and economic framework. His ideas are more contextual than textual for he tried to interconnect the needs of individuals with the social forces that emerged from the practices and beliefs of Hindu religion. His whole thought is centered around the possibilities of realizing equality and social justice within the context of limited economic resources. He never wanted that every one should become rich but he only wished that whatever wealth was there, it was to be given for all.

Views of different thinkers and writers on Hindu religion

What other thinkers and writers opine about Hindu
religion vindicate Gandhiji's ideas. Gandhiji strongly believed that change could be brought about through religion. He believed that indigenous solutions were more effective than imitations from outside. It would be proper to refer to Emile Durkheim's conception of religion to show how near Gandhiji was to the sociological interpretation of religion. Both perceived in religion a social force. Durkheim was the first to study religion as a social force and relate the same to the needs of society. Durkheim in his 'The Elementary Forms of Religious Life' (after a study of Australian totemism) considered religion as concerned with the sacred in distinction with the profane. "Sacred things are things set apart by a peculiar attitude of respect which is expressed in various ways.... They are not treated in a utilitarian manner, not used as means to certain ends. The profane activity par excellence is economic activity. The attitude of calculation of utility is the antithesis of the respect for sacred objects... Religion has to do with sacred things." 32 "Anything is sacred so long as people believe it is; it is their belief which makes it sacred." 33

32. Parsons, Talcott: The Structure of Social Action, pp. 411-12
33. Ibid, p. 415
Religion is symbolic. It represents the collective emotional reactions of men towards sacred things. In symbolic form, religion shapes human experience. In moments of despair and when things are uncertain, man's religious beliefs and practices provide emotional solace and activise him to face the problems of life squarely.

Durkheim considered "Religion as something eminently social. Religious representations are collective representations which express collective realities; the rites are a manner of acting which take rise in the midst of the assembled groups and which are destined to excite, maintain or recreate certain mental states in these groups..." 34

Religion as faith in sacred things or in the existence of supernatural Being or Beings has given rise to myriad beliefs and practices everywhere. These beliefs and practices have been greatly responsible for regulating man's relations towards himself and others. Durkheim defined religion as "an integrated (solidaire) system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is separate and taboo, which unite in one moral community called a Church all those who adhere to it." 35 Belief is a form of thought. Rite is a form of action. But the two are inseparable and central to every religion. Without knowing its beliefs the ritual of a religion is incompre-

35. Parsons, Talcott, op.cit p.412
hensible. "Religious beliefs are beliefs concerning sacred things, their origin, behaviour and significance for man. Rites are actions performed in relation to sacred things..." 36

Durkheim considered that God or any other sacred object is a symbolic representation of society. As such, according to him, society becomes the empirical reality which is of a moral nature. He held the view that beliefs and rituals are not mere symbolic representations but they are functional or have functions. "... It is through the agency of ritual that the ultimate value attitudes, the sentiments on which the social structure and solidarity depend, are kept 'tuned up' to ordering of social relationships possible...." 37

Karl Marx in his approach to social change considered economics as primary. He never gave cognizance to religious factors. He considered religion as the opium of mankind and accordingly it was considered dysfunctional than functional. Max Weber in his 'Sociology of Religion' provided a critique of Asian religions. He maintained that Asian religions were major obstacles to modernization. He held that religion in India was the bulwark of traditionalism and was against the ideology of progress.

Today sociologists maintain that Indian religion in spite of its emphasis on supra-mundane, did not come

36. Ibid
37. Ibid, p.436
in the way of change. Indian religious traditions have been flexible giving room for re-interpretation and adjustment with the changing times and conditions. Today the most underlying characteristic feature of Indian society is the 'modernization of religious beliefs' (an expression used by Milton Singer). Prof. M.N. Srinivas and Milton Singer have disproved the Weberian conception of Indian religion being anti-modern or anti-change. Weber who considered Christianity especially Protestantism as a source of the dynamics of social change, could not foresee the inherent strengths of Indian religion. Prof. M.N. Srinivas sees in Indian religion a source of the dynamics of social change through his concept 'sanskritization'. Sanskritization is a process by which the so-called low-castes take over from those of the upper class, the beliefs, ritual, styles of life and certain other cultural items. The higher castes on the other hand take to modern ways. Srinivas considers sanskritization and westernization as linked processes, one leading to the other.

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century a process of reinterpretation of Hinduism has been going on. This has identified areas of liabilities and assets in the traditional cultural system. The modernization process has strengthened the process of secularisation and conflicts between tradition and modernity are becoming fewer. The hold of the ritual is under decline though its practice has not disappeared.
Milton Singer has exposed the Weberian myth in his studies on Indian religion that "the most superficial observation of Asian religions today indicates that they are far from being static, massive monoliths blocking the road to progress...." In a study of leading industrialists in Madras, Milton Singer pinpoints to the simultaneous occurrence of the two processes, Sanskritization and westernization. Tradition and modernity are not poles apart, they coexist side by side. Singer has particularly made reference to the process of adaptation that is taking place in spite of influx of western influences. This process of adaptation Singer has described as "an active, dynamic continuity that consists of people reacting to new conditions and trying to adapt to them. For example, most of these industrialists have tried to interpret such basic Hindu doctrines as the belief in rebirth, the belief in Dharma or moral duty, the belief in personal fate or Karma, in such a way, that it applies to their industrial careers. To cite one or two examples, one of them said that when he is going to be reborn he would prefer to be an industrialist again, except that instead of taking a B.S. in Geology he would prefer to have a B.A. in Economics."

It is worth noting the observations made by Milton Singer at the end of a Panel discussion on the religious situations in India in the context of modernisation. The

38. 'The Modernization of Religious Beliefs' in 'Modernization: The Dynamics of Growth', Voice of America Forum Lectures, p.63
39. Ibid.
six propositions he outlined are:

(1) Continuous exposure to European ideas and criticism from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries stimulated a number of reform movements within Hinduism, such as Arya Samaj and the Ramakrishna Missions.

(2) Partly in reaction to these European influences and partly deriving from indigenous sources, particular individuals and groups increased their conformity to Hindu beliefs and ritual practices, that is, 'Sanskritized' their styles of life. In some cases, this sanskritization was a prelude to westernization and modernization; in others, it followed upon entry into modern occupations and the acquisition of wealth, political power, and social status as an effort to close the gap between ritual and secular status.

(3) European and modern models and influences have not been immediately used with traditional models. They have rather been incorporated into Indian life and thought in separate spheres— for example, office and factory— where they have been permitted to develop as 'foreign' innovations. Traditional Hinduism, on the other hand, has been maintained in the sphere of the home and social relations. This compartmentalization has minimized direct conflict between tradition and modernity.

Ibid.
(4) The conflicts that have emerged from the co-existence of traditional and modern life styles tend to be resolved by abbreviating the time given to ritual observances, by delegating more of the responsibility for ritual observations to those who have the time (for example, women and professional priests), and by reinterpreting traditional religious beliefs such as the doctrines of Karma, dharma, ahimsa and moksha to apply to the problems and conditions of modern life. Gandhi's use of these doctrines in the struggle for political independence, the abolition of untouchability and the amelioration of poverty is a familiar recent example of this process of re-interpretation of Hindu beliefs. Less dramatic examples can be found among many Hindus engaged in modern occupations and professions.

(5) The net result of these processes of re-interpretations, vicarious ritualization, sanskritization, and compartmentalization is not yet a secularization of Hinduism, although the secular ideologies of socialism, communism and rationalism are also found in India. The net result of these processes of interaction and adaptation is more accurately described as an ecumenical sort of Hinduism that is blurring sect and caste lines.

(6) While these conclusions do not add up to a proof that Hinduism has caused modernization, they do
reveal a capacity of Hinduism to adapt to changing conditions that casts serious doubt on the widespread belief that Hindu beliefs and practices are a major obstacle to modernization.

India has a long tradition of religious life. Indians conceive the world in essence to be spiritual. As such they have taken excessive interest in matters spiritual which makes them seemingly more other-worldly. But a closer scrutiny of Hinduism reveals an element of positivism towards social life on earth. The pursuit of the Purusharthas—dharma, artha and kama are the basis of Hindu view of life. Moksha is considered to be the summum bonum of a Hindu (paramapurushartha). But in the process of the attainment of the final end, dharma, artha and kama act as stepping ladders and won't negate this worldly existence. Dharma has an evaluational aspect. As such it keeps the individuals orientations to artha and kama in equilibrium. Thus, the Indian social structure is based on certain value orientations. But these value orientations are not considered static. Dharma itself is a dynamic concept keeping abreast of the changing needs and situations.

The relevance of Gandhian ideas has to be perceived in the light of glaring religious and moral vacuum in modern societies. Gandhiji was conscious of this trend. "Gandhiji deeply deplores that India is becoming irreligious. He is not thinking of any particular religion, but of that religion which underlies all religions. 'We are turning
away from God'. That is his feeling and fear.\textsuperscript{41} Gandhiji's integrated approach towards the problems of society enabled him to see the futility of separating religion from other aspects of social life such as political, economic etc. He strongly believed that religion should pervade all our activities, without which there will be no end for conflicts either at inter-personal level or inter-group level. Gandhiji has thus tried to bring about synthesis between the sacred and the secular. His conception of secularism was not anti-religious. He recognised the role of religion in society. But that religion will not be denominational or sectarian, it will be broad-based adumbrating all the essential aspects of all religions. He was secular so far he advocated non-interference of State in matters religious, for he considered religion as purely a personal matter.

After Gandhiji there has been conflict of values. Everywhere religion has lost its foothold. With this, we have discarded after 1948 the indigenous solutions advocated by Gandhiji for various ills of the country.

While recognizing the functional aspects of religion, Gandhiji did pinpoint on the dysfunctional aspects of Hindu religion. In this the influence of early social reform movements as well as those of western ideas had their impact on Gandhiji's thinking. Gandhiji believed that the

\textsuperscript{41} R.Pattabhi Sitaramayya, op.cit, p.235
conception of the superempirical affects the empirical. He emphasized in his autobiography that all his experiments were directed towards achievement of Moksha or self-realization. "I live and move and have my being in pursuit of this goal. All that I do by way of speaking and writing, and all my ventures in the political field, are directed to this same end."\(^4\)\(^2\)

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42. From Introduction to 'An Autobiography or the Story of My Experiments With Truth'. M.K. Gandhi.