PREFACE

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

Gandhi was a man of religion and also he laid great emphasis on morality. It was the firm view of Gandhi that if life is separated from religion, it decends, whereas if it is pursued in identification with or inclose correlation to religion, it ascends. Gandhi strongly believed that we cannot deny by any means claim to be religious if we are cruel, dishonest or untruthful. Religion should always fight against impurities, dogmas, superstitions and so on. For Gandhi religion was
an all pervasive influence and not an affair of temples or of sacred
days or rites. He tried to show that the chief contents of all his
important concepts have been derived from the religions like Hinduism,
Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity and Islam, Gandhiji called for mutual
respect among religious people of different persuasion without any
sense of superiority or inferiority.

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

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

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

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

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

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