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

It is well known fact that everything in this world has some cause behind it. Human personality is a complex of environment and heredity. Human psychology tells us that much of an individual's personality is built when he is a child. Gandhiji inherited his religious forum from his parents. His family background shaped his religious thoughts to a certain extent. Hence the family environment of Gandhi was also responsible for his religious favour. Gandhiji's parents were religious-minded persons. His father was Sjt. Karamchand Gandhi, who was also known as Kaba Gandhi. Kaba Gandhi was a believer in God and used to visit temples and saints. Kaba Gandhi's father (Mahatma Gandhi's grand father) Ota Bapa preferred to devote his old age to the spiritual...
matters. Ota Bapa was a follower of Vallabha Charya's Puṣtimārga, which believes solely in the efficacy of devotion for realising the supreme. Ota Bapa was very much attracted to one Khaki's Baba, a follower of the order of Ramananda. Ramananda was a preacher of the cult of pure devotion that knows no distinction between man and man. He was a person who inspired the mystic poet Kabira. He also inspired Tulsidas the well-known author of the Ram-Charita-Manasa. Ota Bapa became fond of Tulsi's Ram-Charita-Manasa. His son Kaba Gandhi was also fond of it. Kaba Gandhi used to recite some portions of the Gita daily. He had a deep rooted aptitude for religion and devotion. Gandhi's mother Putalibai was more devoted to God. Putalibai's parents were the followers of pranami or sat or pranami sect. This sect aims at combining the best elements of Hinduism and Islam. Gandhiji pointed out that at one time they (The follower of this sect) were considered to be even crypto Muslims. At Porbandar a pranami temple was situated in a close vicinity of Gandhi's house. He said about this temple in the following words, "There were no idols or images in it and on the walls there was writing that looked very much like texts from the Koran. The dress that the priests wore was unlike that Hindu priests in temples generally wear and their way of praying also resembled somewhat that of the Muslims". Prāṇnāṭh was the founder of this sect. He was a member of Kshatriya community of Kathia war. After him this sect is sometimes called sect of Prāṇnāṭhīs.

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

Gandhiji stated in his autobiography that he was very much influenced by chance reading of 'Sharavana pitribhakti Nataka' which he found among his father's book. He was also very much influenced by the play of Harishchandra. He said, "I literally believed in the story of Harishchandra. The thought of it all often made me weep. My commonsense tells me today that Harishchandra could not have been a historical character. Still both Harishchandra and Shravana are living realities for me and I am sure that I should be moved as before if I were to read those plays again today".

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

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

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

Gandhiji had deep devotion to Christianity and he studied
Christianity. The sermon on the mount especially created an indelible
impression on his mind. He said that Jesus occupies in his heart the
place of one of the great teachers who have had a considerable influence
on his life. Though Mahatma Gandhi was an admirer of the Christia
religion he rejected many conceptions of Christianity. He did not accept
that sin is inherent in all mankind. For him man is composed of the
and blood and suffers from the native defects of these elements an
therefore he commits sin. He did not accept the belief that Jesus Chri
was only the incarnation of God. For him, Krshna, Rama, Mohammed
and Zoraster were equally incarnated divine persons. Jesus can not be
the only son of God and God can not be his exclusive. Further Gandh
says that it was impossible for him to regard Christianity as a perfect religion or the greatest of all religions. According to Gandhi those who today call themselves Christians do not know the true message of Jesus. Amongst religions other than Hinduism perhaps no other religion inspired, impressed and influenced Gandhi so much as did Christianity. Gandhi learnt the concept of Satyagraha, mostly from the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament of the Bible. Gandhi loved Christianity, because of its absolute emphasis on love as the most important ethical virtue. Jesus taught and practiced true ahimsa and true love. His whole life is an example of love and sacrifice for others.

Gandhi was thoroughly influenced by Tolstoy's book, 'The kingdom of God is within you', in which Tolstoy dismissed the role of the church in Christianity and laid more stress on the principle of love, sacrifice and honesty in realising God head than on the ritual. Leo Tolstoy was the first teacher and guide of Mahatma Gandhi. He was indebted to Tolstoy for his Philosophy on bread labour. The philosophy of non-violence preached and practised by Mahatma Gandhi has been derived from Tolstoy's teaching. Both Tolstoy and Gandhi tried to decentralise the powers of the state and encourage the method of informal co-operation. Tolstoy and Gandhi were firm vedantist. Both conceived that communion with God is possible to man. Tolstoy and Gandhi were seekers of truth. They denounced modern civilisation based on force and exploitation. Both opposed the violent methods of fighting evil. Both concerned themselves with the purity of means, ascetic
morality, simplicity, bread labour and celibacy for the moral growth of the individual. Gandhi's concept of non-violence is slightly different from that of Tolstoy. To Tolstoy non-violence means avoidance of force in all its form and in all circumstances. But for Gandhi in certain circumstances even killing may be called ahimsa, as life involves some amount of violence. He follows the Gita's ideal of action and resists evil with detachment of spirit.

Gandhi regards Islam to be a religion of peace in the sense as Christian, Buddhism and Hinduism are. Gandhi said, "I feel about the honour of Islam as much as I feel about my own religion". Gandhi observed that there is nothing in the Koran to warrant the use of force for conversion. The Holy Koran says in the clearest language that there is no compulsion in religion. According to Gandhi, Islam would cease to be a world religion if it relies upon force for its propagation. Gandhi was also impressed by the social and personal codes of behaviour as Islam prescribed. The five pillars of Islam prescribe rules for personal behaviours. Prayer, fasting, alms giving and hospitality are duties that every Muslim has to perform. Moreover there are regulations for marriage, divorce, dowry, inheritance, funeral ceremonies etc. All these influenced Mahatma Gandhi's thought and that is why he liked Islam very much. Again Islam is unflinching monotheism i.e. faith in only the God and no other, is one important and attractive principle of Islam which influenced Gandhi very much. According to Islam, there is no God but Allah-'La'illaha ila' illahu'.
Gandhiji’s thoughts and ideas were very much influenced and moulded by the teaching of the Koran. He also found in the history of Islam the blending of the political with the religious and this perhaps reassured him in his faith that politics could not be separated from religion and that the political struggle required long and patient suffering.

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

Mahatma Gandhi derived his philosophy and religion from Bhagavad gita. Gandhi said "As for myself, I run to my mother, Gita, whenever I find myself in difficulties and up to now she has never failed to comfort me. It is possible that those who are getting comfort from the Gita may get greater help and see something altogether new, if they came to know the way in which I understand it from day to day". Again Gandhiji said that the Gita was not only his Bible or his Koran for him, Gita was his mother. He lost his earthly mother who gave him birth long ago. But this eternal mother had completely filled his
place by his side ever since. She (Gita) has never changed. Gita has never failed him when he was in difficulty or distress, he sought refuge in her bosom. Gandhi learnt from the Gita that religion is not opposed to material good. He learnt from the Gita's teaching that what cannot be followed out in day-to-day practice cannot be called religion. For Mahatma Gandhi, the Gita is a book of spiritual reference. He learnt from the Gita that God realisation is possible only through righteous action or non-violence. Mere telling of beads would not achieve anything for us. If the devotee refrains from action and does not wage war for establishing a righteous and spiritual universe, there can be no salvation for him.

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

III.2 Religion and morality

For Gandhi, morality is the very foundation of life. Morality helps us to check the passions and impulses that lead to discord, strife and ruin. It promotes these feelings which create harmony, peace and
happiness. For him, morality has greatest value because morality is man's inner guide.

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

There is a moral vacuum in the affairs of man today. Lack of morality leads man's life to miserable and painful existence.
Hence in this case Gandhiji's principal of religion and morality cannot be avoided. For Gandhi, morality was the means. He took resort to non violence the criterion of the moral nature of means. Regarding means he agreed with the Indian law of Karma and Gita's view of Niskāma karma. "As you sow, so you will reap". This is the essence of the law of karma which all Indian systems except Carvaka materialist accepted. Gandhiji also adhered to this moral belief and found in it a great source of encouragement for a good moral life and for doing his duty for the sake of duty without expecting any results for his actions. This moral attitude has an essential similarity to that of the great western Philosopher Immanuel Kant. For Kant, rightness or wrongness are the characteristics of every action. Kant's theory is sometimes termed as 'duty for duty's sake'. According to him duty or right action means obedience to the moral law. Moral law is called by Kant 'The categorical Imperative'. The categorical Imperative is a command. It is to use Kant's word an unconditional imperative. It is independent of desire and has abiding force upon our will. We cannot know the right without knowing that it is absolutely or unconditionally obligatory. According to Kant, consequences whether foreseen or unforeseen does not determine the morality of our action. For him rightness depends on good intention or what Kant calls a good will. Someone who acts in order to obey the moral law acts from good will which is a duty. Action from good will is always good and is therefore described by Kant as good without qualification. According to Kant, goodness can be the quality of will only. There can be nothing which can be called good without qualification.
except a good will or good nature. Similarly for Gandhi only pure means could result in good end and impure means could not result in a good end. Again Gandhi believed in the Gita's famous sloka which we find in second chapter 47 number sloka of Bhagavad Gita. The sloka is :-

"Karmanye Vadhikārāste
Ma phalesu kadasana
Ma karmaphala heturbha
Ma te sangohasta Karmani"

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

III.3 **Gandhi and Kant on morality**

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

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

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

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

For Kant churches and conventions must assist people in their moral development. Fasts, pilgrimages and penance have no moral basis. But for Gandhi, fasting is potent weapon of purification. He observes that fasting and prayer are the two non-violence means or ways by which we can become better and attain a good life.
For Kant, dogmas should not be given importance in religion. He said that respecting other religion was a human discipline and therefore man should not mock at other religions, but man should respect them. Here Gandhiji also agreed with Kant. Gandhiji held that man should respect other religions as he respects his own.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Kant rejected all feelings as false except the feeling of respect
for the moral law. On the other hand Gandhi didnot remove the
importance of all feelings, but he insisted on the eradication of lower
or selfish feelings.
Kantian moral imperative is rigorous, formal and individualistic. On the other hand, Gandhian moral imperative is centred round God and is not rigorous. For both of them lack of moral feeling leads humanity to animality.

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

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

Gandhiji emphasized on the importance of will. For him, there is no power on earth which can make a man do a thing contrary to his will. Kant also stressed on the will which envisages the freedom of man as a moral being. A will which craves for sensuous desires is animal will. So Kant held that our will should be free from such desires and reason should be the guiding aspect. On the other hand, Gandhiji stressed that only those are free are dearer to God. But Kant...
didnot agree with him, because this indicates barrenness of the moral law. For him, freedom is the realization of the moral law which is devoid of any content. Kant stressed on individual reason and for Gandhi to attain freedom universal Reason is required.

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

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

In politics, Gandhi wanted to bring down the kingdom of heaven. His politics sought after moral and religious ends and he relied on the principles of moral law. On the other hand Kant was not
politically famous like Gandhi. Kant insisted that the aim of politics based on ethics should be the establishment of peace. He was aware that only through the moral ideal that he professed he could establish permanent peace.

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

III.4 Gandhi and Marx on morality

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

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

Gandhi was an idealist where as Marx was a materialist. Gandhi believed that the social changes orginate from within the individual. Further he believed that a trasformed individual can change the society by the example of love and sacrifice. That is why he propounded the theory of 'satyagrah'. The theory of 'satyagrah' and other important Gandhian theories like trusteeship and sarvodaya are based on Gandhi's peculiar concept of human nature. Gandhi's man represent essential goodness. For Gandhi, the essence of human nature was goodness inherent in each individual. Gandhi stood for equality, justice and freedom. He was opposed to exploitation or oppression of any segment
of the society and that is why he strived continuously for the uplift of the harijans and the downtrodden section of society and for advancing the status of women to a position of absolute equality. He passionately advocated the cause of decentralisation of power both political and economic and favoured equal distribution of wealth and termed as 'theft' anything beyond and in excess of man's immediate requirements.

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

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

Gandhi was a votary of non-violence. The ideal society is only another name for a state of non-violence. To him means are as important
as the end and anything achieved by violence even swaraj is not worth having.

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

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

From the foregoing discussions we can conclude here that both Gandhi and Marx have a common goal—an exploitation— in society. But the path paved by them are different. Gandhi being born in India has the impress of the heritage of this country. Marx became mature in the climate of the capitalism and industrialism of the west. Both were the forerunner of hope to mankind. Gandhi’s technique w
full of non-violent attitudes where as in the Marxist techniques, violence is prominent. India achieved independence under the inspiring leadership of Gandhi. Russia shook of the shackles of czarism under the inspiration of the Marxian ideology through by means of different techniques.

III.5 Truth and non-violence

Gandhiji was one to preach and practice truth and non-violence to the greatest extent. Truth and non-violence were the cardinal points on which Gandhiji had based the whole structure. For him the aim of life was the realisation of God. Gandhiji always said that he had nothing new to teach the world and truth and non-violence were as old as the hills. Truth and non-violence are so inextricably bound up together that it is very difficult to disintangle them. Means and ends were convertible terms for him, because he took the two as practically inseparable. He was of the firm faith that good end could be achieved only through a good means and an end, however good, it could not be desirable unless it was attained through good means. To practice ahimsa according to Gandhi would be to realise truth and to realise truth would be to practice ahimsa. In this connection he said, "Ahimsa is my God, and Truth is my God. When I look for Ahimsa, Truth says 'Find it through me', when I look for Truth, Ahimsa says 'Find it through me'". This shows that according to Gandhi truth and ahimsa are to be realised through each other. Both are inextricably bound up. Again non possession and absolute lack of self interest are essential conditions for the realisation of truth and for the practice of ahimsa.
according to Gandhi. So long as one is attached to worldly things and works for own selfish interest one can neither practice truthfulness and ahimsa nor can be able to realise truth.

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

III.6 Eleven vows

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

i) Truth (Satya) : is first and most important vow because in deserving it other vows are required. Gandhi himself took the concept of truth to be more fundamental and more important than that of ahimsa. That is why he said, "As a Jain muni once rightly said, I was not so much votary of ahimsa as I was of truth, and I put the later in the first
place and former in the second. For, as he puts it, I was capable of sacrificing non-violence for the sake of Truth. In fact, it was in the course of my pursuit of truth that I discovered non-violence". Let us discuss what actually Gandhi meant by truth.

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

In fact it can be expressed by the world law, the law which control and rules the whole of being and becoming. In this sense, it may also be expressed by the word Reality. For Gandhi, truth was not only practical but was absolutely necessary for progress in our living. He said that truth was not to be found in books and it was in every human heart. He commanded that all should devote themselves wholly to truth in all hours whether working, eating, drinking or playing till dissolution of the body made us one with truth. He pointed out that truth was not a concept but it was a reality an ideal to be sought and realised and that was mere by the sovereign principle of life and conduct. Gandhi has identified satya with that basic reality which holds together or sustains the entire universe. This is really the primary and the most important sense in which Gaudhi has used the term 'Satya' and in that he has been very much influenced by the traditional Hindu concept of sat, Dharma or Rta. For Gandhi truth in itself is one and absolute but our glimpses of it are relative and many. Here Gandhi
was influenced by the anekāntavāda and syadvāda of Jainism. All different religions are different attempts at apprehending the absolute truth in partial and relative ways. All religions therefore are bound to be imperfect because all of them interpret truth only partially in their own ways. Again for Gandhi all religions were equally valuable and holy because all were the creations of the same God.

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

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

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

Gandhiji's non-violence was synonymous with love in the pure and widest sense of term. For him, if love was not the law of life, life would not have persisted in the midst of death. According to Gandhi (a) love never claims, it ever gives (b) Love ever suffers, never resents, never revenges itself. He said that where love was, there God was also. He pointed out that love was basic force or principle in the universe. He said, "It is my faith .......... that we can conquer the whole world by truth and love." In this case, Gandhiji was very much influenced by the Christian Sermon, 'Love your neighbour as yourself. It is Christianity which identifies God with love and it is Christiani
which teaches service of the poor and the needy. Hence Gandhi took
religion primarily as consisting of love, kindness and sympathy towards
others. He said that he was practicing non-violence for an unbroken
period of over 50 years and he had applied it in every walk of life,
domestic, institutional, economic and political. Again Gandhiji pointed
out that cowardice and ahimsa did not go together. For him non-
violeace is not the non-violence of the coward or the weak, but that
of the brave and the strong. Gandhiji preferred violence than cowardice
on occasions of duties such as defending the honour of women or
of ones nation etc. But here a problem arises. Gandhiji's intention of
making ahimsa as absolute moral principle posed real problems for him.
But Gandhiji tried to solve them beautifully. He has cited the example
of a men who in a fit of madness goes about with a sword swaying
in his hand and killing people indiscriminately. Nobody dares capturing
this demon alive. So in such a situation it is necessary to kill such
a man for avoiding further himsa and for protecting other members
of the society. Similarly there might be other situations in which killing
would be necessary as a moral duty. Again here one question arises
— if killing sometimes may be a necessary duty, as in the case of
lunatic then why not kill all those who oppress mankind? But Gandhi
believed in the inherent goodness of man and according to him no
man was such who could not be reformed by proper education. Gandhiji
distinguished between himsa and ahimsa by indicating that himsa meant
killing from a sense of ill will or a motive of selfishness, anger etc
and ahimsa meant refraining from so doing. Gandhi's principle of ahimsa is absolute in the sense that, it was carried out in the true sense of non-attachment, love and charity towards all beings. It informs the spirit within about the circumstance in which violence becomes necessary. Perfect non-violence is not possible in human body. A man therefore, is to do what is morally possible for him to do in the particular circumstances. From the foregoing discussions it is shown that Gandhiji concerned ahimsa as a great moral virtue and at the same time he realised the practical difficulties of the ordinary people in observing the vow in true letter and spirit without any exception. That is why he only talked of such virtues and vows which could be practically observed. But Gandhi himself did never make those spiritual and moral virtues very cheap on the ground of practical difficulties. He stood firm to his faith in ahimsa more or less in an absolute manner and in that lies his greatness.

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

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

iy) Brahmacharya (Chastity) : Generally brahmacharya means control over the sex-desire. Etymologically brahmacharya means the discipline
which leads to the realisation of Brahman. For Gandhiji brahmacharya did not mean mere control of sexual passion, it meant control of all the organs of sense. He said "If we practice simultaneous self control in all directions the attempt will be scientific and possible of success". Chastity like all other observances must be practised in thought, word and deed. So brahmacharya means self control in all directions.

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

v) Asangraha (Non-possession) : For Gandhi, if someone has more than what is needed, he should act as its trustee and make room for the have-nots. He said that a follower of truth could not hold anything
for tomorrow. For him limitation of wants could only promote real happiness and contentment.

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

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

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

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

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

ix) *Sarva-dharma sambhāva* (Equality of all religions) : This expression implies looking on all religions with an equal eye. In Sanskrit sambhāva means equal outlook. But in Gujrati sambhāva means "Sympathy". Gandhiji used the word in the later sense though the former is not excluded from it. It encouraged harmony and co-operation for common ends between different religions. It is also a necessary social virtue. It implies unreserved freedom of thought and worship and most of all it expresses a will to live in friendship with the whole world of humanity. Gandhiji felt that everyone should remain firm in his own faith and try to reform it from within. He did not overlook the lapses in his own religious tradition. He thought that by remaining a Hindu he could reform Hinduism better. He had realised that external criticism of the practices and popular beliefs of other religions would not help. His own mind in early life had revolted against Christianity because the Christian missionaries poured abuses on Hinduism. It had done more harm, than good. It is only after he came into contact with good and
Godly Christians and studied the New Testament that he could overcome the effect of the earlier distaste given by the missionaries. Again there were some unfavourable injunctions and corruptions present in Islam. A Muslim friend questioned Gandhi why he did not denounce them. Gandhiji answered, "I have nowhere said that I believe literally every word of the Koran, or for the matter of that of any scripture in the world, but it is no business of mine to criticize the scripture of other faiths or to point out their defects. It is and should be, however, my privilege to proclaim and practice the truths that may be in them. I may not therefore, criticize or condemn things in the Koran or the life of the prophet that I cannot understand. But I welcome every opportunity to express my admiration for such aspects of his life as I have been able to appreciate and understand. As to things that present difficulties, I am content to see them through the eyes of devout Muslim friends, while I try to understand them with the help of writings of eminent Muslim expounders of Islam. It is only through such a reverential approach to faiths other than mine that I can realise the principle of equality of religions. But it is both my right and duty to point out the defects in Hinduism in order to purify it and keep it pure. But where non-Hindu critics set about criticizing Hinduism and cataloguing its faults, they blazon their own ignorance of Hinduism and their incapacity to regard it from the Hindu point of view. It distorts their vision and vitiates their judgement. Thus my own experience of the non-Hindu critics of Hinduism brings home to me my limitations and teaches me to be wary of launching on a
criticism of Islam or Christianity and their founders''.

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


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

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

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

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

So from the above discussions we find that all organised religion
are aids and guides for the development and enrichment of the inner
life of man. Religion is not an end-in-itself but a means of attaining
the highest moral and spiritual development. Again equality of all
religions does not include irreligion. Gandhiji pointed out that we should
not cultivate toleration for irreligion and if anybody does not observe
the law of love, he may be violent to us. Moreover Gandhiji gave
a deeper and wider meaning of the word tolerance. He drew it out
of his ahimsa (non-violence). For him tolerance should give a positive
recognition of all the great religions of the world.

x) Swadeshi: Swadeshi means belonging to or made in one's own
country. Gandhiji defined Swadeshi as 'the spirit in us which restricts
us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion
of the more remote. He was of the view that it should be the duty
of every individual to wear clothes and use one's country made goods.
Gandhiji's first concern was to refuse to buy anything outside of our
country, however nice or beautiful. He however advised people a) to
buy useful healthy literature from every part of the world, b) to buy
surgical instruments from England, c) Pins and pencils from Austria
and d) Watches from Switzerland. But people should not buy an inch
of the finest cotton fabric from England or Japan or any other part
of the world because it would injure the millions of the inhabitants
of India. Gandhi's Swadeshi therefore chiefly centred round the
hand-spun Khaddar and extends to everything that could be and was
produced in India. For Gandhi Swadeshism was not a cult of hatred
but it was the doctrine of selfless service that had its roots in the
purest ahimsa i.e love. Gandhiji had often been criticised by many
intellectuals in India for his effort to revive cottage and village industries
in modern times. It was said that he was putting back the clock of
progress. It has been argued that Gandhiji was against the development of science and technology. Throughout his life Gandhiji had been making experiments in the social field. Hence he has called his autobiography as experiments with truth. For him, the supreme consideration is man. He did not want science and machinery to produce goods and starve men. He said that the only condition was that such mechanical power must be available to every village who wanted to use it. He wanted the power made available though science and technology to be applied for purposes that would bring about greater production carried on in peace and harmony. From the foregoing discussion, it appears that swadeshi has for Gandhi a wide application to all spheres of life - religious, political, social and economical. According to him, the aim of swadeshi was to enable the individual to realise his spiritual unity with all life. Swadeshi of Gandhi's conception broadly involved the idea that one had a natural moral obligation towards one's neighbour to the exclusion of those remotely situated. Gandhiji is generally regarded as a votary of universal love and service and so his doctrine of Swadeshi in the above sense according to some thinkers goes against that spirit of universal service. But it is not so. Gandhiji took swadeshi as the acme of universal service. Gandhiji himself explained that our capacity for service was limited because we were all finite human beings. So for him, we must first dedicate ourselves to the service of the nearest, our immediate neighbour. He said that if the law of swadeshi is followed by everyone in strict dedication and sincerity each one's service towards one's neighbour will naturally extend to become
the service of all. Hence Gandhi's swadeshi when properly understood does not go against the spirit of sarvodaya. Swadeshi and sarvodaya are not mutually exclusive concepts. They can rather both be regarded as the two different means to realise one's unity with all being.

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

xi) Sparsha bhavana (Discarding of untouchability) : The removal of untouchability was one of the most important missions of Gandhiji's life. Removal of untouchability means love for, and sacrifice of the whole world and thus merging into ahimsa. Untouchability means pollution by the touch of certain persons by reasons of their birth in a particular state or family. Gandhiji pointed out that it was wrong to treat certain human being as untouchables from birth. Removal of untouchability spells the breaking down of barriers between man and man and between the various order of beings. Untouchability is a cruel and inhuman institution. It violates human dignity. Untouchability also raises economic problems. The untouchables were the poorest section of Indian society. To understand Gandhi's task of removing it, it is necessary to examine the traditional attitude to caste in India. Though it is difficult to explain
about the origin of the caste system it can be said that the Aryans who invaded India distinguished themselves from the original inhabitants of India, as twice born as distinct from the once born. Twice born consists of three classes i.e. (i) the Brahmin, (ii) Ksatriyas and the (iii) Vaisyas. The Brahmin upheld the cultural order and fulfilled sacred functions. The Ksatriyas maintained the political order and performed military function and the vaisyas supported the economic order performed the necessary function in agriculture. The once born are the non-aryans and were classified as Sudras. They were not allowed to hear the Vedas. But they were the servant of other three classes. Outside this fourfold divisions of society fell the out castes. They performed menial tasks such as scavenging. Out castes would always remain socially excluded.

Gandhi named the untouchables as harijans. For him harijan service was a religious obligation. He refused to enter temples to which harijans were not allowed to enter. According to Gandhi "In the eyes of God, who is the creator of all his creatures are all equal. Had he made any distinctions of high and low between man and man, they would have been visible as are the distinctions between say an elephant and an ant. But he has endowed all human beings impartially with same shape and the same natural wants. If you consider the harijans as untouchables because they perform sanitary service, which mother has not performed such service for her children? It is the height of injustice to consider the harijans who are the most useful servants of society as untouchables and outcasts. It can never be an act of merit
to look down upon any human being as inferior to us. We are all worshippers of one God whom we worship under different names. We must, therefore realise our essential unity and give up untouchability as well as the spirit of superiority and inferiority between human beings". Again he said "On God's earth nobody is low. It is wrong. it is sinful to consider some people lower than ourselves. On God's earth, nobody is low and nobody is high. We are all his creatures and just as in the eyes of parents all their children are absolutely equal, so also in Gods eyes all his creatures must be equal. Therefore I ask you to believe me when I tell you that there is no sanction in religion for untouchability". Gandhi pointed out that our duty to harijans did not end with giving them good houses or giving them separate wells, schools and so on. He said that if we gave them all these and still kept them untouchables, it would only mean replacing iron chains by golden ones, but the slave would still be slaves.

For Gandhi, birth and observance of form cannot determine one's superiority and inferiority; character is the only determining factor. Gandhiji said that if untouchability were to be considered an integral part of the Hindu way of life, he would have to stop calling himself a Hindu. Gandhiji compared untouchability with arsenic in milk and to a poison that destroys the life of Hindu society. He said that untouchability is grounded in ancient prejudices and is the greatest blot on Hinduism. For him untouchability cannot claim the sanction of religion because it is contrary to truth.
Gandhi's opposition to caste indicates also his attempt to abolish the caste levels that Hindus applied to themselves. He wished that all members of society would regard themselves as Sudras which would mean that there would be no restriction on marriage or any other issues of caste which lead to weaken Hindu society. He set up an organisation - the 'Harijan sevak sangha', which was to work for the removal of all their disabilities. This organisation functioned even after independence. Gandhiji brought a harijan family to live in the Ashram. He adopted their daugther as his own. He also blessed all the marriages that were celebrated between harijans and caste Hindus. Some of those marriages took place in his own Ashram.

The campaigning against untouchability may be said to have begun with the Buddha. Hindu reformers from time to time have denounced inhuman custom and have allowed, the untouchables to be members of their sects. Gurunanak and his nine successors accepted the untouchables in the Sikh religion. Kabir and other religious sects of Santmat, throughout the middle ages, freely allowed the untouchables to join their brotherhood. It is a tragedy that though the present age is known as the age of science and technology yet Indian people were not totally free from superstitious thinking. The problem of untouchability is not totally solved. Of course we cannot deny the fact that before independence India was more conservative about that than the present India. Hence it is clear that this blot on Hindu society will soon disappear if the government is cautious and prepared to enforce the law.
Again Gandhi's concept of religion taught everyone that whenever there was distress which one could not remove, one must fast and pray. Let us discuss about Gandhi's concept of fasting and prayer briefly.

### 7. Fasting and prayer

**Fasting**: Gandhiji pointed out that fasting helped in the concentration of mind and fasting had a purificatory effect. Fasting is an institution as old as Adam. Fasting is an old practice in Hinduism. It is generally associated with religious festivals. Gandhiji had the experience of priceless peace and unending joy during all the fasts. He said that genuine fast cleanses the body, mind and soul. For Gandhi, fasting is a model exercise not only in human compassion and faith but in patience and fullness of surrender. Through fasting, Gandhi wanted to attain self-relisation.

He for the first time has used fasting for the correction of social evils and political wrongs. Not only individual but also collective fasting have been introduced into the society at the instance of Gandhi. For Gandhi fasting in the true sense of term means abstinence from food but it also consists in starving other sense and organs.

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

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

Prayer: Gandhiji said that prayer was the only means of bringing about orderliness and peace and repose in our daily acts. For him, prayer is the very soul and essence of religion and therefore, prayer must be the very core of the life of man. He pointed out that prayer should not be a compulsion and prayer is not to be performed with the lips, but with heart. That is why he said that he who would pray to God, must cleanse his heart. In his prayer no image or symbol was kept. He did not believe in image worship for himself but he had no objection to it for those who needed such symbols. His prayers were not petitions but they were in praise of God and they were the yearnings of the soul and also they were meant to strengthen man and keep him away from early temptations. In fact he said that beginning the day with prayer made it so useful that it may remain with us till the evening and closing the day with prayer may have a peaceful night.
free from dreams and night mares. For him, prayer is a necessary spiritual discipline. Gandhiji said that when an individual or a nation suffers because of a greater calamity, the true awareness of that suffering is prayer. He commanded that prayer is a form of meditation which has as its aim self purification and knowledge of the truth. For him prayer helps in the concentration of mind on higher things and thereby helps us to attune ourselves to the spirit that illumines and elevates the world and sincere prayer purify our hearts and make us better man. That is why he said that by a long course of prayerful discipline he had closed (for over 40 years) to hate anybody. Again he said that just as food is necessary for the body, prayer is also necessary for the soul and a man may be able to do without food, for a number of days, but believing in God, man cannot live a moment without prayer. From the foregoing discussions it is found that for Gandhi fasting and prayer are the two non-violent means or ways by which we can overcome from any distress, hatred, hurt etc. He advised every people to follow these ways.

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

\[ \text{Sarvodaya} \]

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

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

It is already mentioned that by Sarvoday Gandhi meant all round
development or upliftment of all. By 'all' he meant not only the human class but also the sub-human sphere of existence including animals, plants etc. as well as the inanimate nature. He had a genuine feeling of love not only for the animal life but also for the inanimate nature. Hence he expressed his disapproval of the excessive exploitation of nature by modern industrial and technological society. The ideal of sarvodaya may in certain respects be compared to the ideal envisaged by socialism and communism. The former has for its necessary basis the spiritual unity of all beings which Gandhi so fervently behaved in and the latter have no such basis because they stand only on certain material and social considerations. Unless one realizes within his heart the inner affinity and unity of all beings he cannot work from within for the equality and upliftment of all. Further more sarvodaya is essentially to be achieved through the path of ahimsa while the ideal of socialism or communism do not necessarily admit the path of ahimsa. The communist rather have openly preached the necessity of the path of himsa for bringing about social equality. Gandhi said that Sarvodaya was the highest end of man's life. He also said that the self-realisation, or the realization, of God was our highest end. Self-realisation for Gandhi did not mean finding out some unique reality within ourself which is separate from all else in the universe. For him the self is one with God and God is one with the entire universe and so self realisation means realisation of God and that in its turn means realisation of all within one's over being. Hence atma-bodha according to Gandhi
as according to Tagore and Vivekanand also, means seeing or finding oneself into others and others into one self. And this is the ideal of Sarvodaya also. Therefore working for Sarvodaya and working for self-realization are one and the same thing. Both can be attained according to Gandhi through the path of ahimsa, universal love, brotherhood and selfless social service. One point can be mentioned here i.e. Sarvodaya is a social ethical ideal whereas self-realisation is a spiritual and religious ideal and so they cannot be the same thing. But Gandhi has shown that essentially the spiritual ideal of self-realisation or moksa is nothing different from the social ideal of Sarvodaya. Though Gandhi declared Sarvodaya and self-realization both as ends at the same time, he had committed no mistake or error. For Gandhi there can be no religion without morality and any spiritual ideal can be realised through the social and moral service. So the distinction between social and ethical ideal on the one hand and spiritual and religious ideal on the other does not hold good in the content of Gandhian thought.

III.9 Temples and Idolatry

Gandhi's concept of religion was not confined to temples, churches, books, rituals and other outer forms. In this sense he agreed with Rabindranath Tagore and Swami Vivekanand. "To quote Swami Vivekanand, "Temples and churches, books and forms are simply kindergarten of religion, to make the spiritual child strong enough to higher steps. Religion is not in doctrines in dogmas, nor in intellectual argumentation, it is being and becoming and it is realisation." Again Tagore said
"leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads. Whom dost thou
worship in this lonely dark corner of a Temple with doors all shut?
Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee". Nehru also
said that Gandhiji's concept of religion had nothing to do with any
dogma or custom or ritual. Regarding temples or mosques or churches,
Gandhiji said that he made no distinction between these different abodes
of God and they were what faith had made them and they were an
answer to man's craving to reach the unseen. He did not regard the
existence of temples as a superstition rather these were some forms
of common worship and a common place of worship appeared to be
a human necessity. Gandhiji said that he is both an idolator and
iconoclast. He is an idolator in the sense that he valued the spirit behind
the idol worship and this idol worship played a most important part
of the uplift of the human race. Again he is an iconoclast in the sense
that he does not have any fixed norms or a rigid set of rules in the
field of religion. He is against any sort of fanaticism that is against
any other form of worshipping deity except one's own.

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

Gandhi was opposed to religion which was not supported by
reason. He would reject all authority if it was in conflict with reason
or the dictates of the heart. He had regard for scriptures no doubt but
for him scriptures cannot transcend reason and truth. Hence Gandhi
never became slave to superstition protected by some ancient tradition.
He argued that the faculty of reason is God given, so any tradition, however ancient if inconsistent with morality is to be banished. Mahatma Gandhi the greatest social reformer was opposed to untouchability, child marriage, child widowhood, inferiority by birth, animal slaughter through reason.

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

### The soul and its liberation

For Hinduism, the most important goal for each individual is to achieve freedom from past limitations and from the bondage of the wheel of birth and death by the realization of God within himself. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi - "Man's ultimate aim is the realization of God, and all his activities - social, religious, economic etc. have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate
service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavour simply because the only way to God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. Gandhi as a Karmayogi, gave his own interpretation to the doctrine of individual salvation. He distinguished between those who renounce the world to secure spiritual advancement and those who live in the world and fight the ills of humanity in a spirit of detachment. Gandhiji preferred the later one for salvation. He conducted social experiments on a vast scale for the realisation of truth through love and service of humanity.

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

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

Mahatma Gandhi conceived that the individual salvation cannot
be realised so long as the entire humanity does not realise it. He said, "I do not believe that an individual may gain spiritually and those that surround him suffer. I believe in the essential unity of man and for that matter of all that lives. Therefore I believe that if one man gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him and if one man falls the whole world falls to that extent."

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

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

The desireless service for anāsakti or Niskāmakarma was considered by Gandhiji as the best worship. It can be performed only when man's soul is fully purified. This is also the teaching of Bhagavad Gita. In the Gita, Krisna advises Arjuna, "Arjuna, perform your duties..."
dwelling in Yoga, relinquishing attachment and indifferent to success and failure". Gandhiji was greatly attracted by Gita's concept of Yajña. For Gandhi Yajña means an act directed to the welfare of others done without desiring any return for it, whether of a temporal or spiritual nature.

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

From the foregoing discussions we find that Gandhi's concept of man is based on advaitic faith. For him, all men are basically one because the same Brahman resides in all of them. In other words he emphasised that mankind constitute a single unit. Yet Gandhiji was a great believer in the liberty of the individual person. Whenever Gandhiji spoke of the greatness and divinity of man he always meant each individual man and not the collective man. While reflecting on the
problems of life, he generally started with the individual and he always proceeded from the particular to general. He also inherited the religious individualism of the Indian philosophical traditions centering round the concept of moksa. Individualism and universalism thus have equal importance in Gandhi's thought.

III.12 Conclusion

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

Gandhi felt that religion is more relevant today than before. Science has made tremendous progress in modern times. But mere science of matter cannot give us real knowledge or real happiness. Science and spirituallity must meet. Gandhi has made the greatest
experiment with the spirit in man. So for him, if science does not join with religion it will wipe out the human civilization. There is an inner vacuum in our life and only faith in religions and spiritual value can save us from an all-round catastrophe. Hence we may conclude here that Gandhi discussed the concept of religion from a new standpoint and he introduced religion which consisted of science and reason on the one hand and to guide us the new dimension of spirit on the other.

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