CHAPTER VI

A SUMMARY OF THE MAIN CONCLUSIONS
In this concluding part, we propose to put forward some considerations in of our preference for sarvadharma samabhava as the basic Gandhian philosophy of life which can contribute to establish social harmony, integration and peace. Today we live in an age marked by the fights among people due to religious fanatics and narrow religious interests. Thus the study of comparative religion has got the utmost interest and significance.

Non-violence, which the country is exhibiting at the present day on a scale unprecedented in history. But for it, there might have been a blaze, for provocation of the gravest kind has not been wanting on the side of the Government. There is no doubt a school in the country that believes in violence, but it is a mere excrescence on the surface and its ideals are not likely to find a congenial soil in the country.

Our apathy and hardness of heart, if he may use that Biblical phrase, as typified in the attitude towards the masses and their poverty. Our youth are full of noble feelings and impulses but these have not yet taken any definite practical shape. If our youth had a living and active faith in truth and non-violence, for instance, we should have made much greater headway by now. All our young men, however, are not apathetic. In fact without the closest cooperation of some of our educated young men and women, he should not have been able to establish contact with
the masses and to serve them on a nationwide scale; and he was sustained by the hope that they will act as the leaven and in time transform the entire mass.

The most distinctive and the largest contribution of Hinduism to India’s culture is the doctrine of *ahimsa*. It has given a definite bias to the history of the country for the last three thousand years and over and it has not ceased to be a living force in the lives of India’s millions even today. It is a growing doctrine; its message is still being delivered. Its teaching has so far permeated our people that an armed revolution has almost become an impossibility in India, not because, as some would have it, we as a race are physically weak, for it does not require much physical strength as much as devilish will to press a trigger to shoot a person, but because the tradition of *ahimsa* has struck deep roots among the people.

Islam’s distinctive contribution to India’s national culture is its unadulterated belief in the oneness of God and a practical application of the truth of the brotherhood of man for those who are nominally within its fold. He calls these two distinctive contributions. For in Hinduism the spirit of brotherhood has become too much philosophized. Similarly though philosophical Hinduism has no other god but God, it cannot be denied that practical Hinduism is not as emphatically uncompromising as Islam.
Aye, there is the rub. It is not possible to consider the teaching of a religious teacher apart from the lives of his followers. Unfortunately, Christianity in India has been inextricably mixed up for the last one hundred and fifty years with the British rule. It appears to us as synonymous with materialistic civilization and imperialistic exploitation by the stronger white races of the weaker races of the world. Its contribution to India has been therefore largely of a negative character. It has done some good in spite of its professors. It has shocked us into setting our own house in order. Christian missionary literature has drawn pointed attention to some of our abuses and set us thinking.

It is the reaction that is taking place in orthodox Hinduism and the swiftness with which it has come about. As a most illustrious example Gandhiji will mention Pandit Malaviyaji. Ten years back he was as punctilious in the observance of the rules with regard to untouchability as perhaps the most orthodox Hindu of that day. Today he takes pride in administering the mantra of purification to the untouchables by the bank of the Ganges, sometimes even incurring the wrath of unreasoning orthodoxy. He was all but assaulted by the diehard section in Calcutta in December last for doing this very thing. In Wardha a wealthy merchant Sheth Jamnalal Bajaj recently threw open his magnificent temple to the untouchables and that without arousing any serious opposition. The most remarkable thing about it is that from the record kept in the temple of the daily visitors it was found that the attendance had gone up instead
of declining since the admission of the untouchables to it. Gandhiji may
sum up the outlook by saying that he expect the tide against
untouchability to rise still more swiftly in the near future, astonishingly
swift as it has already been.

The Mussalmans and the Christians can from the very nature of
the case render little help in this matter. The removal of untouchability
is purely a question of the purification of Hinduism. This can only be
effected from within.

He distrusts mass movements of this nature. They have as their
object not the upliftment of the untouchables but their ultimate
conversion. This motive of mass proselytization lurking at the back in
my opinion vitiates missionary effort.

He was sorry that he has been unable to discover any tangible
evidence to confirm this view. He was once taken to a Christian village.
Instead of meeting among the converts with that frankness which one
associates with a spiritual transformation, he found an air of evasiveness
about them. They were afraid to talk. This struck me as a change not
for the better but for the worse.

He disbelieve in the conversion of one person by another. His
effort should never to be undermine another's faith but to make him a
better follower of his own faith. This implies belief in the truth of all
religions and therefore respect for them. It again implies true humility,
recognition of the fact that the divine light having been vouchsafed to all
religions through an imperfect medium of flesh, they must share in more or less degree the imperfection of the vehicle.

He was sorry that he must again differ from us, for the simple reason that the deepest spiritual truths are always unutterable. That light to which you refer transcends speech. It can be felt only through the inner experience. And then the highest truth needs no communicating, for it is by its very nature self-propelling. It radiates its influence silently as the rose its fragrance without the intervention of a medium. He was glad to hear us say this. That is what Hinduism certainly inculcates. Simply prayer. One must humble oneself utterly and look beyond oneself for strength. To want an answer to one’s prayer is to tempt God. If prayer fails to bring relief it is only lip prayer. If prayer does not help nothing else will. One must go on ceaselessly. This then is my message to the youth. In spite of themselves the youth must believe in the all-conquering power of love and truth. That is due to the fact that with them faith is an effort of the intellect, not an experience of the soul. Intellect takes us along in the battle of life to a certain limit but at the crucial moment it fails us. Faith transcends reason. It is when the horizon is the darkest and human reason is beaten down to the ground that faith shines brightest and comes to our rescue. It is such faith that our youth require and this comes when one has shed all pride of intellect and surrendered oneself entirely to His will.
Let me explain what he means by religion. It is not the Hindu
religion which he certainly prize above all other religions, but the religion
which transcends Hinduism, which changes one's very nature, which
binds one indissolubly to the Truth within and which ever purifies. It is
the permanent element in human nature which counts no cost too great
in order to find full expression and which leaves the soul utterly restless
until it has found itself, known its maker and appreciated the true
 correspondence between the Maker and itself. The root of religion is
'that which hinds'. The root meaning of its Sanskrit equivalent Dharma
is that which holds'. It sustains a person as nothing else does. It is rock-
bottom fundamental morality. When morality incarnates itself in a living
man it becomes religion, because it binds, it holds, it sustains him in the
hour of trial. Religion binds man to God and man to man. Religion
which takes no count of practical affair and does not help to solve them
is no religion. He rejects any religious doctrine that does not appeal to
reason and is in conflict with morality tolerate unreasonable religious
sentiment when is not immoral. True religion and true morality are
inseparable bound up with each other. Religion is to morality what
water is to the seed that is sown in the soil. True morality consists, not

1 Young india, 12.05. '20, P.2.
2 Harjian, 26.06.'34, P.7.
3 Harjian, 04.05.'40, P.117.
4 Young india, 07.05.'25, P.164
5 Young india, 21.07.'20, P.4.
6 Selections from Gandhi, 1957, P.255
in following the beaten track, but in finding out the true path for ourselves and in fearlessly following it.\textsuperscript{7}

He believes in the fundamental truth of all great religions of the world. He believes that they are all God given, and he believes that they were necessary for the people to whom these religions were revealed. And he believes that, if only we could all of us read the scriptures of different faiths from the standpoint of the followers of those faiths we should find that they were at bottom all one and were all helpful to one another\textsuperscript{8}.

He believes in the truth of all religions of the world. And since my youth upward, it has been a humble but persistent effort on my part to understand the truth of all the religions of the world, and adopt and assimilate in my own thought, word, and deed all that he has found to be best in those religions. The faith that he profess not only permits me to do so but renders it obligatory for him to take the best form whatsoever source it may come.\textsuperscript{9}

For him the different religions are beautiful flowers from the same garden, or they are branches of the same majestic tree. Therefore they are equally true, though being received and interpreted through human instruments equally imperfect.\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., p. 254.
\textsuperscript{8} Harijan, 16.02.34, pp. 5-6.
\textsuperscript{9} Harijan, 16.02.34, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{10} Harijan, 30.01.37, p. 407.
Each religion has its own contribution to make to human evolution. He regards the great faiths of the world as so many branches of a tree, each distinct from the other through having the same source.\textsuperscript{11}

All prayer, in whatever language or from whatever religion it was, was prayer addressed to one and the same God and taught mankind that all belonged to one family and should bear love to one another.

All religions enjoined worship of the one God who was all pervasive. He was present even in a droplet of water or in a tiny speck of dust.

Various religions were like the leaves on a tree. No two leaves were alike, yet there was no antagonism between them or between the branches on which they grew. Even so, there is an underlying unity in the variety which we see in God's creation.\textsuperscript{12}

"Would we say then that our religion is a synthesis of all religions?"

Yes, if we will. But he would call that synthesis Hinduism, and for us the synthesis will be Christianity. If he did not do so, we would always be patronizing me, as many Christians do now, saying, "How nice it would be if Gandhi accepted Christianity," and Musalima would be doing the same, saying, "How nice it would be if Gandhi accepted Islam" that immediately puts a barrier between us and him. Do we see that?\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{11} Harijan, 28.01.39, P.448.
\textsuperscript{12} Harijan, 26.05.46, P.154.
\textsuperscript{13} Harijan, 06.03.37, P.27.
It is the duty of everyone to study the scriptures of religions other than his own. This enables people to keep their religion pure and rid it of blemishes. Moreover, we have Christians, Muslims, Parsis and followers of other religions amongst us. It behoves the Hindus to study their religious books if they regard them as their brothers.\(^{14}\)

For him all the principal religions are equal in the sense that they are all true. They are supplying a felt want in the spiritual progress of humanity. Hence he have had no difficulty in bringing up Muslim, Parse and Christian children under his care in their own faith. Indeed, he had to study some literature for their sake when their parents wanted him to teach them particular forms of worship according to special books.\(^{15}\)

He holds that it is the duty of every cultured man or woman to read sympathetically the scriptures of the world. If we are to respect others' religions as we would have them to respect our own, a friendly study of the world's religions is a sacred duty.\(^{16}\)

All men are born free and equal, but one is much stronger or weaker than another physically and mentally. Therefore superficially there is no equality between the two. But there is an essential equality. In our nakedness God is not going to think of me as Gandhi and you as Keihan. And what are we in this mighty universe? We are less than atoms, and as between atoms there is no use asking which is smaller.

\(^{14}\) Harjjan, 25.05.'47, P.166.
\(^{15}\) Harjjan, 06.04.'34 P.59.
\(^{16}\) Young India, 02.09.'26, P.308.
and which is bigger. Inherently we are equal. The differences of race
and skin and of mind and body and of climate and nation are transitory.
In the same way essentially all religions are equal. 17

They are equally true and equally imperfect. The finer the line you
draw, the nearer it approaches Euclid's true straight line, but it never is
the true straight line. The tree of religion is the same; there is not that
physical equality between the branches. They are all growing, and the
person who belongs to the growing branch must not gloat over it and
say, 'Mine is the superior one'. None is superior, none is inferior, to the
other. 18

Just as a tree had a million leaves, similar though God was one,
there were as many religions there were men and women though they
were rooted in one God. 19

He was a believer in the truth of all the great religions of the world.
There will be no lasting peace on earth unless we learn not merely to
tolerate but even to respect the other faiths as our own. A reveal study of
the sayings of different teachers of mankind is a step in the direction of
such mutual respect. 20

Belief in one god is the corner-stone of all religions. But he does
not foresee a time when there would be only one religion on earth in
practice. In theory since there is one God, there can be only one religion.

17 Harjjan, 13.03.37, P.38.
18 Harjjan, 13.03.37, P.38.
19 Harjjan, 16.03.47, P.63.
But in practice, no two persons he has known had the same and identical conception of God. Therefore, there will, perhaps, always be different religions answering to different temperaments and climatic conditions. But he can clearly see the time coming when people belonging to different faiths will have the same regard for other faiths that they have for their own. He thinks that we have to find unity in diversity.... We are all children of one and the same God and, therefore, absolutely equal.\textsuperscript{21}

How can there be room for distinctions of high and low where there is this all-embracing fundamental unity underlying the outward diversity? For that is a fact meeting you at every step in daily life. The final goal of all religions is to realize this essential oneness.

The essence of all religions is one; only their approaches are different.\textsuperscript{22}

The propagation of truth and non-violence can be done less by books than by actually living those principles. Life truly lived is more than books\textsuperscript{23}.

After long study and experience he has come to the conclusion that

(1) all religions are true; (2) all religions have some error in them; (3) all religions are almost as dear to me as my own Hinduism, in as much as all human beings should be as dear to one as one's own close relatives.

\textsuperscript{21} Harjjan, 02.02.'34, P.8.
\textsuperscript{22} Gandhiji's view of Life, 1954, P.158.
\textsuperscript{23} Harjjan, 13.05.'39, P.122.
My own veneration for other faiths is the same as that for my own faith; therefore no thought of conversion is possible. The aim of the Fellowship should be to help a Hindu to become a better Hindu, a Musalman to become a better Musalman, and a Christian a better Christian. The attitude of patronizing toleration is false to the spirit of International Fellowship. If he has a suspicion in his mind that his religion is more or less true, and that others' are more or less false, instead of being more or less true, then though he may have some sort of fellowship with them, it is of an entirely different kind from the one we need in the International Fellowship. Our prayer for other must be not "God give him the light that though hast given me", But "Give all the light and truth he needs for his highest development." Pray merely that your friends may become better men, whatever their form of religion.  

He does not believe in people telling others of their faith, especially with a view to conversion. Faith does not admit of telling, it has to be lived and then it becomes self-propagating.  

Preaching jars on me and makes no appeal to me, and he gets suspicious of missionaries who preach. But he loves those who never preach but live the life according to their lights. Their lives are silent, yet most effective testimonies. Therefore, he will not say what to preach, but he will say that a life of service and uttermost simplicity is the best preaching. If, therefore, we go on serving people and ask them also to

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24 Selection from Gandhi, 1957, PP.258-59.
25 Young India, 20.10.27, P.352.
serve, they would understand. But we quote instead John 3, 16 and ask them to believe it. That has no appeal to me, and he was sure people will not understand it. Where there has been acceptance of the gospel through preaching, his complaint is that there has been some motive.

A rose does not need to preach. It simply spreads its fragrance. The fragrance is its own sermon. If it had human understanding and if it could engage a number of preachers, the preachers would not be able to sell more roses than the fragrance itself could do. The fragrance of religious and spiritual life is much finer and subtler than that of the rose 26.

We bid good-bye to humility the moment we say that life is not adequate and that we must supplement it by speech. Human species need not go to animals and shout to them: "We are humans." The animals know them as humans. The language of the soul never lends itself to expression. It raises superior to the body. Language is a limitation of the truth which can be only represented by life 27.

There is no occasion for articulate expression. Life is its own expression. He takes the simile of the rose he used years ago. The rose does not need to write a book or deliver a sermon on the scent it sheds all round, nor on the beauty which everyone who has eyes can see. Well, spiritual life is infinitely superior to the beautiful and fragrant rose, and he makes bold to say that the moment there is a spiritual expression in

26 Harrihan, 29.03.35, P.50.
27 Harrihan, 12.12.36 P.351.
life, the surroundings will readily respond. There are passages in the Bible, the Gita, the Bhagavata, the Koran, which eloquently show this. "Wherever", we read, "Krishna appeared, people acted like those possessed." The same thing about Jesus. But to come nearer home, why are people touched as if by magic wherever Jawaharlal goes? They sometimes do not even know he has come, and yet they take sudden fire from the very thought that he is coming. Now there it may not be described as a spiritual influences, but there is a subtle influence and it is unquestioned there, call it by what name you like. They do not were to hear him, they simply want to see him. And that is natural. We cannot deal with millions in any other way. Spiritual life has greater potency that Marconi waves. When there is no medium between Gandhiji and his Lord and he simply becomes a willing vessel for his influences to flow into it, then he overflows as the water of the Ganges at its source. There is no desire to speak when one lives the truth. Truth is most economical of words. There is thus no truer or other evangelism than life.28

The time has now passed when the followers of one religion can stand and say, ours is the only true religion and all others are false. The growing spirit of toleration towards all religions is a happy augury of the future.29. India, with its ancient religions, has much to give, and the bond of unity between us can best be fostered by a wholehearted sympathy and appreciation of each other's form of religion. A greater toleration on

28 Harijan, 12.12.36, P.353.
this important question would mean a wider charity in our everyday relations, and the existing misunderstandings would be swept away.30

"How could you reconcile yourself to believing all religions to be true?"

That has been Gandhiji's fundamental position for years. Underlying it is the idea that we don't become the judges of the world. Differences in the world there have been, and will be. God is all-powerful. He appears in many shapes and forms. If we search, we may find as many religions as there are men. Hundreds of men are merely striving to know the Truth. They will put the Truth in their own way. No two men will put it in identical terms. Though he knows that God, the all-powerful, resides in every one of us, we are imperfect media. We are all different. No two bodies are identically the same. No two leaves of the tree are identically the same; there is bound to be some difference. Each one prays to God according to his own light. We cannot judge and pray better in the same way as others do. He does not judge the Muslims, Parsis, Christians, and Jews. If he was a seeker of Truth, it is quite sufficient for him. He cannot say that because he has seen God in this way, the whole world must see Him in that way. All religions are true and equal. Thus, however, is not to say that they are equally true in religious terms or are absolutely true. And other man's religion is true for him as

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his own. He will not be a judge of his religion. That is his fundamental position.\(^{31}\)

The need of the moment is not one religion, but mutual respect and tolerance of the devotees of the different religions. We want to reach not the dead level, but unity in diversity. Any attempt to root out traditions, effects of heredity, climate and other surroundings is not only bound to fail, but is a lege.

The soul of religions is one, but is encased or multitude of forms. The latter will persist to the end time. Wise men will ignore the outward crust to see the same soul living under a variety of crusts.\(^{32}\)

\(^{31}\) Conversation of Gandhiji, 1949, P.85.
\(^{32}\) Young India, 25.09.24, PP.317-18.