CHAPTER-IV

GANDHI ON THE HARMONY OF RELIGIONS

The most remarkable aspect of Gandhi’s life is his dedication to search for Truth and Harmony. Undoubtedly his purpose in Harmony and religious dialogue was not the elimination of religious differences, but the appreciation of the other’s faith and practice, leading to cooperation in different spheres of life. He sought to understand both the similarities and differences. He was impressed by the fact that moral and spiritual values are embraced by all religious traditions. Gandhi was aware on the other hand of the characteristic differences between the great religions arising from historical and cultural backgrounds. They do not prescribe the same rituals and customs or subscribe to the same myths and doctrines. He discouraged all attempts to root out these differences. He wanted all people to maintain their symbols of identity. He emphasized the need for respectful dialogue among the adherents of different religions. He pleaded and prayed and fasted for religious Harmony. In fact during the last decades of his life his major preoccupation was harmony between Hindus and Muslims. He went from place to place, meeting Hindus and Muslims and proclaiming the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. He said to the people: “God is one Allah and Rama are his names”. The problem of interreligious relations has become an urgent world problem today. Gandhi wanted harmony and friendship to be established not merely between the Hindus and Muslims but among the adherents of all the great religions. Gandhi believed that all the world religions are God given and that they serve the people to whom they are revealed.155

The appearance of Harmony of Religion’s theory on Gandhi’s thought and its repetition on his speeches and writings and his indefatigable attempt on the direction of its fulfillment, can be known as a caused of some mental and identical backgrounds about these background we must point to:

4.1. Gandhi and Hinduism

4.1.1. Growing up in India and his parent’s influence

On October 2, 1869 in the town of Porbandar, India, Putlibai Gandhi gave birth to a son. This was Putlibai’s fourth and last child. She and her husband, Karmchand (called Kaba), named their son Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, or “Mohan” for short, Kaba and Putlibai no had four children together; one daughter. Raliatbehn (the oldest of their children, born in 1862) and their sons- Laxmidas, born in 1863; Karsandas born in 1866; and Mohandas born in 1869. Coastal town of Parbandar, was one of scores of tiny princely states and now part of the Indian state of Gujarat. Although the Gandhis, meaning grocers, were merchants by caste, they had raised it important political positions. Mohandas’s father was the chief administrator and members of the court of Porbandar and his grandfather that of the adjacent tiny state of Junagadh.

Gandhi grew up in an electric religious environment. His parents were followers of the largely devotional Hindu cult of Vishnu (or Vaishnavites).

He says: my father was a lover of his clan truthful brave and generous, but short- tempered. To a certain extent he might have been given to carnal pleasures. For he married for the fourth time when he was over forty. But he was incorruptible and had earned a name of strict impartiality in his family as well as outside of religious training he had very little, but he had that kind of religious culture which frequent visits to temples and listening to religious discourses make available to many Hindus. In his last days he began reading the Gita at the instance of a learned Brahman friend of the family and he used to repeat aloud some verse every day at the time of worship.
But his mother belonged to the Pranami sect, who combined Hindu and Muslim religious belief gave equal honour to the sacred books of the vaishnavites and the Koran and preached religious, harmony. Her religious fasts and vows, observed without exception an her life, left an abiding impression on her son.\textsuperscript{159} Putlibai Gandhi was a loving mother. In fact she treated all of the children living in the Gandhi house as if they were her own. She had a close relationship with her youngest child, Mohan. She held high expectations for him seeing something in Mohan that she did not see in her other children. She said extra prayers for Mohan and gave him special attention. In return Mohan looked up to her and respected her. Putlibai was deeply religious. Each day, she took Mohan and rest of her children to the Vaishnava Hindu temple, located conveniently next door to the Gandhi house, to pray and honor the Hindu gods, Putlibai also took her children along with her when she tended to the lower castes and helped nurse the sick. From her actions, Mohan learned to show respect, kindness and love to all people.\textsuperscript{160} Gandhiji describes his image of his mother to this effect that: The outstanding impression my mother has left on my memory is that of saintliness. She was deeply religious. She would not think of taking her means without her daily prayers. Going to Haveli- the vaishnava temple- was one of her daily duties. As far as my memory can go back, I do not remember her having ever missed the chaturmas. She would take the hardest vows and keep them without flinching. Illness was no excusing for relenting them. I can recall her once falling in when she was observing the Chandrayana vow, but the illness was not allowed to interrupt the observance. To keep two or three consecutive fast was noting to her. Living on one meal a day during Chaturmas was a habit with her not content with that she fasted every alternate day during one Chaturmas. During another Chaturmas she vowed not to have food without seeking the sun we children on those days would stand starting at the sky waiting to announce the appearance of the sun to our mother. Everyone knows that at the height of the

\textsuperscript{159} Parekh B (1997) Gandhi, A very short introduction.
rainy season the sun often does not condescend to show his face and I remember days when, at his sudden appearance, we would rush and announce it to her. She would run out to see with her own eyes, but by that time the fugitive sun would be gone, thus depriving her of her meal “That does not matter”, she would say cheerfully” God did not want me to eat today” and then she would return to her round of duties.\textsuperscript{161}

Gandhiji was born of these parents and grown up under the auspices of his convinced mother. Due to this deeply religious parenting born first religious buds and motives on their child’s personality

4.1.2. GANDHI AND “BHAGAVADGITA”

The Bhagavad Gita is an exquisite poem of seven hundred stanzas most stanzas consist two lines: a few run to four, six, or eight lines. The entire book is divided into eighteen discourse or chapters; each, according to an appended colophon, deals with a specific branch of the science of Yoga. The Gita is thus a book on the science and practice of Yoga. The Bhagavad Gita is part of a much bigger book the Mahabharata, the greatest Indian epic and the world’s longest poem, seven times as long as the Iliad and Odyssey combined. The Mahabharata sings of men and wars in the distant past, ten centuries before Christ. Like European classics, it describes battles in which gods mix with humans until it is possible to know who was historical, who mythological. It contains fables, philosophical dissertations, theological discussions; and it contains the Gita, its brightest gem. The Bhagavad Gita was written by one person. Scholars agree that it came into existence between the fifty and second centuries B.C. It is conversation between Krishna and Arjuna.\textsuperscript{162}

Gandhi learned about many religions, during his time in London. His college courses did not take up much of his time, so he spent a good deal of time exploring different belief system, as well as his own although he had been

\textsuperscript{162} Fischer L (2006) Mahatma Gandhi his life and times. P.36-37
raised a Hindu, he had not yet read the Bhagavad-Gita. As a child, Gandhi’s parents had read aloud excerpts from Bhagavad-Gita to their children, but Gandhi had never read the poem in its entirety. Now he had the opportunity to do so in London and he found it very inspiring.

Sir Edwin Arnold had translated the Gita from Sanskrit into English and published it under the little of the song celestial in 1885, just a few years before Gandhi met him. Gandhi first read the Gita in Sir Edwin Arnold’s translation while he was a second year law student in London. He admits it was shameful not to have read it until the age of twenty, for the Gita is as sacred to Hinduism as the Koran is to Islam, the Old Testament to Judaism, and the New Testament to Christianity.

Subsequently however Gandhi read the original Sanskrit of the Gita and many translations. In fact, he himself translated the Gita from Sanskrit, which he did not know very well, into Gujarati and annotated it with comments. His Gujarati translation was in turn translated into English by Mahadev Desai.\(^{163}\)

The first time he read it, he recalled, its world went straight to his heart. In South Africa they began to penetrate his action as well. There the Gita became what he called his “spiritual reference book” the practical guide through the dangers and challenges he encountered as he deepened his search for truth.

“What effect this reading of the Gita had on my friends, only they can say: but to me the Gita became an infalliable guide of conduct. It became my dictionary of daily reference. Just as a I turned to the English dictionary of daily reference. Just as I turned to the English dictionary of daily reference. Just as I turned to the English dictionary for the meaning of English words that I did not understand, I turned to this dictionary of conduct for a ready solution of all my troubles and trials.”\(^{164}\)

\(^{163}\) Ibid. P.35.
Gandhi wrote in the 1925, issue of young India magazine “when doubts haunt me, when disappointments stare me in the face and I see not only ray of light on the horizon, I turn to the Bhagavd Gita and find a verse to comfort me; and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming sorrow. My life has been fun of an external tragedy and if they have not left any visible or invisible effect on me, I owe it to the teaching of the Bhagavad Gita’.  

The Gita defines detachment precisely:

Freedom from pride and pretentiousness; non-violence, forgiveness, uprightness, service of the Master, purity stead fastness self-restraint aversion from sense-objects, absence of conceit, realization of the painfulness a evil of birth, death, age and disease.

Absence of attachment, refusal to be wrapped up in one children, wife, home and family, even-mindedness whether good or evil befall . . . . .

By practicing these virtues, the yogi will achieve union- with the supreme’ or Brahman, ‘disunion from all union with pain’, and an impartial eye, seeing Atman in all beings and beings in the Atman’

Gandhi summarized it in one word:  

According to Gandhi Gita is universal mother. He said, “I lost my earthly mother who gave me birth long ago; but this external mother (Gita) has completely filled her space by my side ever since”.  

To thousands id (Gita) is the real mother, for it yields the rich milk of consolation in difficulties, I have called it my spiritual dictionary, for it has never failed me in distress. It is moreover a book which is free from sectarianism and dogma. Its appeal is universal. I do not regard the Gita as an abstruse book. No doubt learned men can see abstruseness in everything they come across.

165 Gandhi M.K (1925) Young India (06 Aug 1925).
But in my opinion a man with ordinary intelligence should find no difficulty in gathering the simple message of the Gita.\textsuperscript{168}

Gandhi delineates character of pious person to Gita as follows:

The devotion required by the Gita is no soft-hearted effusiveness. It certainly is not blind faith. The devotion of the Gita had the least to do with externals. A devotee may use, if he likes, rosaries, forehead marks, make offerings, but these things are no test of devotion. He is the devotee who is jealous of none, who is a fount of mercy, who is without egotism, who is selfless, who treats alike cold and heat, happiness and misery who is ever forgiving who is always contented whose resolution are firm, who has dedicated mind and soul to God, who causes no dread, who is not afraid others, who is free from exultation, sorrow and fear, who is pure who is versed in action and yet remains unaffected by it, who renounces all fruit, good or bad, who treats friend and foe alike who is untouched by respect of disrespect who is not puffed up by praise, who does not go under when people speak ill of him, who loves silence and solitude, who has disciplined reason. Such devotion is inconsistent with the existence at the same time of strong attachments.\textsuperscript{169}

Yet Gandhiji emphasized that the Gita is not for those who no faith. According to him Gita is essentially addressed to the heart and capable of being understood by the heart. Therefore the Gita is not for those who have no faith. The author makes Krishna says:

“Do not entrust this treasure to him who is without sacrifice, without devotion, without the desire for this teaching and who denies me. On the other hand those who will give this precious treasure to my devotees will be the fact of this service assuredly reach me and those who being free from malice, will

\textsuperscript{168} Gandhi M.K (1939) Harijan Newspaper.
with faith absorb this teaching, shall having attained freedom, live where people of true merit go after death”.

4.1.3. WHY HE WAS A HINDU?

Gandhi develops his religious thought in the background of Hinduism. He is a theist who believes in one God as the creator, maintainer and destroyer of the universe. His philosophy of God as Truth expands and universalises his religious faith.

Gandhiji does not believe in people telling others of their faith, especially with a view to conversion. Accordingly he believes faith does not admit of telling. It has to be lived and then it becomes self-propagating. Thus he struggled to interpret Hinduism through his own life.

When an American friend requested him to expound his reasons for choice of Hinduism, Gandhiji truthfully responds her:

“Believing as I do in the influence of heredity, being born in a Hindu family, I have remained a Hindu. I should reject it, if I found it inconsistent with my moral sense or my spiritual growth. On examination, I have found it to be the most tolerant of all religions known to me. Its freedom from dogma makes a forcible appeal to me inasmuch as it gives the votary the largest scope for self-expression not being an exclusive religion, it enables the flowers of faith not merely to respect all other religions, but it also enables them to admire and assimilate whatever may be good in the other faiths, non-violence is common to all religions, but it has found the highest expression and application in Hinduism (I do not regard Jainism or Buddhism, as separate from Hinduism) Hinduism believes in the oneness not of merely all human life but in the oneness, of till that lives. Its worship of the cow is in my opinion, its unique contribution to the evolution of humanitarianism.

---

170 Gandhi M.K (1931) Young India (6 Aug 1931).
It is a practical application of the belief in the oneness and therefore, sacredness of all life. The great belief in transmigration is a direct consequence of that belief. Finally the discovery of the law of Varnashrama is a magnificent result of ceaseless search for truth.\textsuperscript{172}

Gandhiji said I call myself a Sanatani Hindu Because:

1. I believe in the Vedas the Upanishads the Puranas and all that goes by the name of Hindu scriptures and therefore in Avataras and rebirth.
2. I believe in the Varnashrama Dharma in a sense, in my opinion, strictly Vedic but not in its present popular and crude sense;
3. I believe in the protection of the cow in its much larger sense than the popular.
4. I do not disbelieve in idol-worship.

But he remarked that: "For I do not believe in the exclusive divinity of the Vedas. I believe the Bible, the Koran and the Zend Avesta to be as much divinely inspired as the Vedas. My belief in the Hindu scriptures does not require me to accept every word and every verse as divinely inspired. Not do I claim to have any firsthand knowledge of these wonderful books. It is clear from the foregoing that Hinduism is not an exclusive religion. In it there is room for the worship of all the prophets of the world. It is not a missionary religion in the ordinary sense of the term. It has no doubt absorbed many tribes in its fold, but this absorption has been of an evolutionary, imperceptible character. Hinduism tells everyone to worship God according to his own faith of Dharma and so it lives at peace with all the religions.\textsuperscript{173}

4.2. GANDHI AND RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

Since the end of the Second World War the religious map of the world has changed extraordinarily most likely more than in any other period of history. The heartland of Christianity has moved south. The Christian faith has

\textsuperscript{172} Gandhi M.K (2002) Hindu Dharma. P.5-6
\textsuperscript{173} Gandhi M.K (1921) Young India (6 Oct 1921).
grown in the churches of Africa and even in parts of Asia, a continent that has been notably resistant to Christian missionary activity: South Korea is one Asian country where Christianity is growing a pace. Large parts of the Islamic world have been freed from the yoke of western political imperialism. This has led, among other things, to renewed internal debate among many Muslims men and women about the meaning of Islamic law, to take account of for example, social justice perspectives and what constitutes the notion of the ideal society. Yet some Islamic countries have reacted to this domestic discussion with rejection and even violence, within and without the House of Islam. Inclusive and tolerant views in Hinduism, which have dominated that family of religions since the nineteenth century, found expression in the early years of independent India, which was declared a secular state. These broadminded views were associated with such giant figures as Swami Vivekananda, who made an enormous impression at the first world parliament of religions, held in Chicago in 1893; and Mahatma Gandhi, who was murdered by a Hindu ‘fundamentalist’ in January 1948. . . . There are only a few examples of the significant changes in the pattern of religions around the world.174

Gandhi’s religious thought played a distinguished role at this juncture.

The basic stand of Gandhi in his thought and action is religion and morality. Religion in the life of Gandhi is not a creed, but a force, which harmonizes human beings with truth and unites men with each other, towards a better life. The aim of religion is self-realization and that is the purpose of religion. Self-realization is possible, only when identifies one’s self with the whole of humanity. . . . Gandhi lived a life based upon faith n God. Faith in God is the basis of theistic systems of religion. Often he says that he can live without air and water, but no without faith in God. God in the life of Gandhi is the integrating principle and central truth of man. He believed in the equality of the principal religions of the world. Equality of religions follows from the fact

---

that truth as known to man is always relative and never absolute . . . . Gandhi’s religion is the religion of truth that is why he respected all the religions alike.\textsuperscript{175}

He says: “I believe in the fundamental truth of all great religions of the world. I believe that they are Mahatma Gandhi, who was murdered by a Hindu ‘fundamentalist’ in January 1948 . . . . There are only

All god –given and I believe that they were necessary for the people to whom these religions were revealed. And I believe that, if only we could all of us read the scriptures of the different faiths from the standpoint of the followers of those faiths, we should find that they were at the bottom all one and were all helpful to one another.\textsuperscript{176}

According to him all the great religions of the world are true more or less. “I say ‘more or less’” because I believe that everything the human hand touches, by reason of the very fact that human beings are imperfect, becomes imperfect. Perfection is the exclusive attribute of God and it is indescribable, untranslatable.\textsuperscript{177}

Gandhiji tried to bring the world’s religions together under moral categories such as justice, non-violence, tolerance and compassion. This is precisely Gandhi’s approach. According to him “true religion and true morality are inseparably bound up with each other”. He said: “I reject any religious doctrine that does not appeal to reason and is in conflict with morality. I tolerate unreasonable religious sentiment when it is immoral”.\textsuperscript{178}

He did not foresee nor favor a single religion dominating the world, and he did not want people to convert to other faiths. He sought to drink at the spring of all religions, and therefore he felt that he belonged to every religion. As he himself said, he did not seek to recapture only the spirit of Hinduism but

\textsuperscript{177} Ibid P.82.
\textsuperscript{178} Gandhi, M.K (1920) Young India, 21 July 1920.
the spirit of all religions, which according to him, is love of God expressing itself in love of fellow-beings.

4.2.1. HONOUR TO RELIGIONS

In the light of old-established record of religious exclusivism and formal support of powerful religious associations of this approach, self of talk about theories like religious pluralism, or harmony of religions indicated on one’s deep insight and awareness towards many categories. So we must pay attention that from Gandhi’s viewpoint the necessary of understanding the harmony of religions, is honour to others beliefs. Respect to other faith and religious beliefs is the first step on the direction of understanding the parallel or opposing religious thoughts, from this standpoint he addressed Moslems like other Indian people as his natural brothers who have equal rights and privileges. He believed all great religions were fundamentally equal and that there should be innate respect for them, not just mutual tolerance. Therefore he felt a person wanting to convert should try to be a good follower of his own faith rather than seek goodness in change of faith. He said: “If we are to respect other’s religion as we would have them to respect our own, a friendly study of the world’s religions is a sacred duty. My respectful study of other’s religion has not abated my reverence, for or my faith in, the Hindu scriptures. They have indeed left their deep mark upon my understanding of the Hindu scriptures. They have broadened my view of life.”

He insisted that “Religions are different roads converging to the same point, what does it matter that we take different roads, so long as we reach the same goal? In reality, there are as many religions as there are individuals.”

4.2.2. AN UNANIMOUS GLANCE OF HOLY CONTEXTS

Gandhi’s recommendation is that we must look to holy books or holy context of each religion from standpoint of its followers. Because the believers

---

179 Gandhi M.K (1926).
of each religion know their holy books as a comprehensive and perfect and consider its contents as criterion of determination the morality of instructions other religions. It is clear that if everybody considers only his own religious views as criterion of evaluation other religions, naturally all cases which are different of his own holy context are incorrect and false. One the other word, if Moslems by the Islam’s standpoints. Christians from viewpoint of Christianity or Hindus from angle of Hinduism mak analysis other’s holly book only different points will be outstanding for them. In this case Gandhiji suggested everybody considers doctrine of other religions and holy books in a unanimous approach without any comparison with his own religious beliefs. According to him: if you read Koran, you should read it with Moslem’s standpoint, Similarity about Bible, Gita and other holy contexts. On this understanding there no place for meticulously consideration of details and then judge a religion.

He said: It is no business of mince criticizes the scriptures of other faiths, or to point out their defects. It is and should be, however, my privilege to proclaim and practice the truths that there may be I them. I may not, therefore, criticize or condemn things in the Koran or the life of 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 for things that present difficulties, I am context to see them through the eyes of devout Mussalman friends, while I try to understand them with the help of the writings of eminent Muslim expounders of Islam. It is only through such a reverential approach to faiths other than mine that I can realize the principle of equality of all religious. But it is both my right and duty to point out the defects in Hinduism in order to purify it and to keep it pure. But when non Hindu critics set about criticizing Hinduism and cataloguing its faults they only blazon their own ignorance of Hinduism and their incapacity to regard it from the Hindu view point. It distorts their vision and vitiates their judgment. They my own experience of the non-Hindu critics of Hinduism brings home to me
my limitations and teaches me to be wary of touching on a criticism of Islam or Christianity and their founders.\textsuperscript{181}

Thereby according to Gandhiji lack of unanimous and correct knowledge of other religions is the main cause for schism, religious quarrels and religious harhaness which caused a lot of losses upto now. Gandhiji on the contrary of numerous followers of other religions who their outlook concerning other religions based on abolish them, does not attention to defects and differentiation in other religions.

Gandhiji said: I am not a literalist; therefore, I try to understand the spirit of the various scriptures of the world. I apply the test of Truth and Ahimsa laid down by these very scriptures for interpretation. I reject what is inconsistent with that test, and I appreciate all that is consistent with it.\textsuperscript{182}

Gandhiji declared: I hold that it is duty of every cultured man or woman to read sympathetically the scriptures of the world. If we are to respect others religion as we would have them to respect our own, a friendly study of the world’s religion is a sacred duty. . . . If I could can myself, say, a Christian or a Mussalman, with my own interpretation of the Bible or the Koran, I should not hesitate to call myself either. For the Hindu, Christian and Mussalman would be synonymous terms. Id o believe that in the other world there are neither Hindu, nor Christians nor Mussalmans. They all are judged not according to their labels or professions but according to their actions irrespective of their professions. During our earthly existence there will always be these labels. I therefore prefer to retain the label of my forefathers so long as it does not cramp my growth and does not debate me from assimilating all that is good anywhere else.\textsuperscript{183}

\textsuperscript{181} Gandhi M.K (1937) Harijan Newspaper 13 March 1937.
\textsuperscript{182} Gandhi M.K (1925) Young (28 Aug 1925)
\textsuperscript{183} Gandhi M.K (1926) Young India 2 Sep 1926.
4.3.3. EQUALITY OF RELIGIONS

Gandhiji often used from metaphor of tree or flower to explain his standpoint about equality of religions. According to him different religions are beautiful flowers of the same garden, or they are the branches of huge tree various religions are like the leaves of a tree. There are not any two leaves similar to each other; anyhow there is no enmity among them or among the branches which these leaves are grown. He said in a frequently famous quoted: After long study and experience, I have 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. My own veneration for other faiths is the same as that for my own faith; therefore no thought of conversion is possible.¹⁸⁴

Such interpretations point to that first the existence and plurality of religions are an acceptable matter, secondly religions are flowers, at that pretty flowers, not brush or weed, thereby all of them posses noble and supreme values. Thirdly they have grown in the same garden and trunk of a tree. Therefore they have a single fount and feed from same source. Finally there is no hostility among religions. In other words, root of all struggles and problem is on false interpretations and earthly proceeds. Gandhi’s reason on equality of religions based on two bases, first, God is one and second; essences of human beings are equal, Gandhiji said:

The question then arises: why should there be so many different faiths? 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. Even as a tree has a single trunk but many branches and leaves, so is there one true and perfect religion, but it becomes many, as it passes through the human medium. The one religion is beyond all speech. Imperfect men put it into such language as they

¹⁸⁴ Gandhi M.K (1948) Selection from Gandhi. P.226-227
can command and their words are interpreted by other men equally imperfect. Whose interpretation is to be held to be the right one? Everybody is right from his own standpoint, but it is not impossible that everybody is wrong. . . . When I was turning over the pages of the sacred books of different faiths for my own satisfaction, I became sufficiently familiar for my purpose with Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Hinduism. In regarding these text I can say that I was equiminded towards all these faiths although perhaps I was not then conscious of it . . . The acceptance of the doctrine of Equality of religions does not abolish the distinction between religion and irreligion. We do not propose to cultivate toleration for irreligion. That being so, some people might object that there would be no room left for equimindednes if everyone took his own decision as to what was religion and what was irreligion. If we follow the law of Love, we shall not bear only hatred towards the irreligious brother.185 He believes that Hindu, Christian, Jew or Moslem are merely different labels during our worldly life and all of them are synonyms. According to him on the next world. Is judged on the basis of these titles.

God has created different faiths just as he has the votaries thereof. How can I even secretly harbor the thought that my neighbor’s faith is inferior to mine and wish that he should give up his faith and embrace mine? As a true and loyal friend I can only wish and pray that he may live and grow perfect in his own faith. In God’s house there are many mansions and they are equally holy.186

4.2.4. UNITY OF RELIGIONS

The belief to rightness and to be perfect of oneself religion towards other religions is the most common belief among different religions. Considering equates all religions and unitary source of them, Gandhiji believed is not necessary that all human beings follow same religion. Therefore he holds firm to that all religions have one common ideal, worship of the God and all of

185 Gandhi M.K (1932) From Yeravda Mandir,
186 Gandhi M.K (1934) Harijan Newspaper - Selection from Gandhi. P.228
them proclaim worship of the God and all of them proclaim that there is but one God. This one God accepted yours devotion irrespective of the manner of your worship, whether it is according to this or that religion. So there is no need to abandon the religion of your birth and embrace another.

Belief in one God is the corner-stone of all religions. But I do 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. But in practice, no two persons I have known have had the same identical conception of God.

Therefore, there will, perhaps, always be different religions answering to different temperaments and climatic conditions.\(^{187}\)

Consequently according to Gandhiji there is no necessity that even in future religions are converted to one religion, but he hoped that in future people are enjoyed such high capacity which while they are tolerating others religious beliefs, they are trying to sympathize and mutual understanding of other opposite or opponent religious believes. Thus from Gandhiji’s standpoint, the temple, the church, the mosque, the vihara may be different from one another. The idol or the symbol in them may not also be the same and the rites performed in them may be different. But the paramatman who wants to grace the worshipper, whatever is his faith, is the same. The different religion have taken shape according to the customs peculiar to the countries in which they originated and according to the differences in the mental outlook of the people inhabiting them. The goal of all religions is to lead people to the same God according to the different attributes of the devotees concerned. So there is no need for people to change over to another faith.

Temple or mosques or churches. . . . . I make no distinction between these different abodes of God. They are what faith has made them. They are an answer to man’s craving somehow to reach the unseen.\(^{188}\)

---

187 Gandhi M.K (1934) Harijan Newspaper 02 Feb 1934.
188 Gandhi M.K (1933) Harijan Newspaper 18 March 1933.
In point of fact religions are like a bridge across a river, consisting of a number of arches, each of them built to the same design and measurement. To the man sitting next to a particular arch it would appear to be bigger than the other arches. So is the case with people belonging to a particular religion? They feel that their religion alone is great and want others to join it. There is no fact no such need for anyone to leave the religion of his birth for another.

According to Gandhi man is fundamentally good and posses the spark of divinity within him. So the different religions like Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity are meaningless and the only reality in man is his divinity. Religion is a link between man and the almighty and the essence of religions is the establishment by man of a relation between himself and the infinite being. Different religions are nothing but milk in vessels of different shapes and forms and all creeds have a common source as their origin. The real confidences between all the religions of the world teach us that all religions spring from the human heart.

Differentiations do appear in the in the external forms of the various creeds, theories and doctrine but there are no real differences among them. Since each is not contractor but supplementary to other. There is no creed, which is entirely without some truth and there is none, which contains the whole truth.\textsuperscript{189}

4.2.5. GANDIAN RELIGION- A WAY OF LIFE

The name of Gandhi, even in his lifetime, has passed beyond the meaning of an individual to the meaning of a way of living in our troubled modern world. In the midst of unrestrained and evil force, what has been greatest significance is the reaffirmation of this way of living.

Though his life had been continual unfolding of an endless drama, Gandhi himself seems the least dramatic of men. It would be difficult to imagine a man with fewer trappings of political eminence or with less of the

popular image of a heroic figure. With his loin cloth, steel-rimmed glasses, rough sandals, a toothless smile and a voice which rarely rose above a whisper, he had a disarming humility. He used a stone instead of soap for his bath, wrote his letters on little bits of paper with little stumps of pencils which he could hardly hold between his fingers, shaved with a crude country razor and are with a wooden spoon from a prisoner’s bowl.  

He was a key to the revolutions of our time, which took place in different continents. It is widely held that of all the revolutionaries who dominated the 20th century, Gandhi alone offered hope for reform both within and without, physical and spiritual without destruction. In that century of monstrous violence, it was and is our extraordinary good fortune that Gandhi lived.

As a visionary Gandhi had foreseen these situations coming though the outcome of the follies of mankind committed throughout the 19th and 20th century. Not surprising for the life and times of Mahatma Gandhi neatly spreads over three centuries. Born in the latter half of the 19th century, he develops a system in the 20th century by using his ‘self’ as a laboratory where he experiments with Truth as a pure scientist, finds solutions for major problems now confronting humanity in the 21st century.  

Ahimsa, peace and non-aggression are the hallmarks of Gandhian Doctrine. Many years have gone by but the luster of the Gandhian Religion remains undimmed. Invading forces have descended on India but Gandhi’s Ideals have remained indestructible. The Gandhian religion is not merely for Hindus, not merely for India, but for the whole world.

The Gandhian philosophy is not only essential for the rebirth of the Indian nation but also for the re-education of the human race. It is becoming clear that at this supremely dangerous moment in human history, the only hope

for mankind is Mahatma Gandhi’s principle of non-violent. The Gandhian doctrine, the ultimate realisation must involve tolerance and understanding peace and goodwill and recognition of the immense variety of paths by which the soul can fulfill its ultimate destiny.

The Gandhian religion, which is primarily concerned with spiritual development, is of special significance in our age, which is marked by the obsolescence of the materialistic civilization . . . . The virtues of self-discipline, self-restraint and self-development which are main stay of Indian Dharma and Gandhi culture are as fully relevant today as they were many years ago.

Therefore we must go all out to preserve the Gandhian religion. In fact, Gandhi was a great soul who preached the essential unity of all religions and the basic unity of all humanity. In recent times unity has been sou8ght to be undermined by forces, internal as well as external out to destabilize us . . . . Gandhi’s religious quest for truth had no geographical limits. His political activities were but an avocation to his religious mission. The centre- most point of Gandhi’s religious philosophy is the inviolable sacredness of life and the consequent sinfulness of bloodshed. “Since we have no power to create, we have no power to destroy” was his belief.

The three basic factors militating against of the ideal of human unity into action are religion, nationalistic politics and economic ideologies. Religions are different roads converging to the same destination Mahatma Gandhi said “the need of the moment is not one religion, but mutual respect and tolerance of different religions, we want to reach not the dead level but unity in diversity, the soul of all religions is one, but it is encased in a multitude of forms. The latter will persist to the end of time”. 192

Religion, for Gandhi, is so absolute that he would go to the extent of saying that he “could not live for a single second without religion. 193 It is an

indissoluble whole which cannot be separated from other spheres of life; on the contrary, one’s religion commands one’s absolute allegiance in every sphere of one’s activity. “I do not conceive religion as one of the many activities of mankind. . . . For me every (even) the tiniest, activity is governed by what I consider to be my religion”. Indeed religion should pervade every one of our actions. Thus he said “For me, politics bereft of religion are absolute dirt, ever to be shunned politics concern nations and that which concerns the welfare of nations must be one of the concerns of a man who is religiously inclined, in other words, a seeker after God and Truth.

Gandhiji according to his religious doctrines spent his whole life searching for answers to the problems associated with his world-order since Gandhi’s time, many people have been searching for a new world-order that would make peace the top priority, non-violence the path, truth the end and tolerance among religions the goal they find themselves inspired by the teachings of Gandhi and desire a closer walk with his perception of the truth. Through his teaching, the world is able to share in his abundant spirituality and dynamic philosophy. He was man who was deeply moved by the suffering of others and who dedicated his life to ending that suffering. His concern for humanity to reach a destination of perpetual peace both internal and external. In this connection it needs to be stressed that what Gandhi stood for was not simply an exercise in idealistic, impracticable thinking Gandhi preached what he practiced and said that what he practiced was capable of being practiced by everyone if only one cared to practice his precepts.

According to Gandhi’s experiments with truth, beyond doubt truth always triumphs and the only right path is the path of truth. Truth may be suppressed by adverse forces, but it can never be put down is evident in his

195 Gandhi M.K (1940) Harijan 10 Feb, 1940.
196 Gandhi M.K (1925) Young India 18 June, 1925.
belief that all people are equal, all important, regardless of class, caste, race, religion or sex.

Gandhi’s object was the happiness and welfare of people, to be achieved by ending their age old starvation, their ignorance and social disabilities, and helping them to gain a new social awareness. The wisdom of Gandhi is expressed in his search for truth, his insistence upon Ahimsa and his view of the universality of religion as he sees. The values and principles, ideals and precepts which Gandhi stood for propagated and preached, can give a right direction to by reflecting upon the principles of Gandhi, perhaps it will be possible to gain a perspective on creating new world-order that will lead to a future where wars are something that we only understand from reading our history books; where starvation is something that no human being must fear, where people are no longer oppressed regardless of race, religion, sex or any other such consideration and where the suffering of humans at the hands of other is no longer acceptable.

4.2.6. THE UNITY OF GODHEAD

“There is only ONE God of the whole universe” quotes or statements of this or similar intent may be found in almost all religious of the world. This is an irrefutable fact of which saints have had the first hand experience. God as experienced by the saints is one only and that he is without a beginning and an end.

According to traditional Hindu theology the highest expression of God is the impersonal Brahman the source of perfect awareness and perfect bliss. However, this perfect, original source has expressed ‘itself’ in numerous gods and goddesses who are often found to be much less than perfect invariably, all of these deities, have flaws; areas of weakness or vulnerability (as is the case in all polytheistic religions)

An unquestionable doctrine in Hinduism, is that of the Hindu Trinity. The Trinity is taught as one in order for us to understand the universe and how
it works Hindu Trinity is also known as Trimurti (or Three forms). Trimurti is a concept “in which the cosmic function of creation, maintenance and destruction are personified by the forms of Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the preserver) and Shiva (the destroyer).

As I mentioned already according to Gandhiji there is an indefinable mysterious power that pervades everything, he said:

I feel it, thought I do not see it. It is this unseen power which makes itself felt and yet defies all proof, because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my senses. It transcends the sense.197

He emphasized that, God is certainly one he has no second. He is everywhere. He is uncreated, has no father, mother, wife and child. He allows himself even to be worshipped as stock and stone, although he is none of this thing, he is most elusive . . . dispute the description that Hindus believe in many Gods and are idolaters. They do say that there are many gods, but they also declare unmistakably that there is one God, the God of gods. It is not therefore, proper to suggest that Hindus believe in many gods. They certainly believe in many worlds. Just as there is a world inhabited by men and another by beast, so also, is there one inhabited by superior beings called gods, whom we do not see but who nevertheless exist. The whole mischief is created by the English rendering of the word (deva or Devata) for which you have not found a better term than ‘god”. But god is Ishwara, Devadhideva, God of gods. So you see it is the word ‘God’ used to describe different divine being that has given rise to such confusion. I believe that has given rise to such confusion. I believe that I am a thorough Hindu but I never believe in many gods. Never even in my childhood did hold that belief and no one ever taught me to do so.198

4.2.7. WHAT IS GOD?

Humans have tried to find an answer to question of God since the down of their intelligence. They came with various answers only to discard them later and find new ones. Gods manifested themselves as animals, as natural phenomena as planets and stars, as supernatural beings and as natural laws.

As our intellect expanded our answers to this question changed. Yet, despite the amazing discoveries in science, we have not been able to find a satisfactory and definitive answer to this old quandary. Maybe an we can do is decide what isn’t God what God is yet unknown.

God certainly can’t be an animal. It can’t be the sun, the moon or a star God can’t be many and finally God can’t be a being. All these can be demonstrated logically what can’t be demonstrated is the existence of God.

Some important points which have mentioned from great religions of the world about this question are:

First, God alone is a self –existent being and the first cause of everything else that exists. Second God is a necessary being a necessary being is one whose nonexistence is impossible. Only God is necessary being. Other things are contingent beings, meaning they could not exist.

Third, God is a personal being. The word personal in this context does not describe personality rather, it means “having intent”.

Fourth, God is a loving being. In the same way that many things can exist but only one thing can be existence people and other living things can possess and experience love, but only one thing can be love.

Therefore, God is the only one who can say, “I bet that I be” God is pure existence, self existence, and the source of everything else that possesses existence. He is the only necessary being.
Gandhiji according to Hindu religious tradition and as a devout Hindu on various occasions expressed his ideas about question of “What is God?”

He said:

To me God is Truth and Love; God is ethics and morality: God is fearless. God is the source of light and life and yet he is above and beyond all these God is conscience, he is even the atheism of the atheist. . . . . He transcends speech and reason . . . He is a personal God to those who need his personal presence. He is embodied to those who need his touch. He is the purest essence. He simply is to those who have faith. He is all things to all men. He is in us and yet above and beyond us . . . . He is long suffering He is patient but he is also terrible. . . . With him ignorance is no excuse. And withal he is ever forgiving for he always gives us the chance to repent. He is the greatest democrat the world knows, for the he leaves us “unfettered” to make our own choice between evil and good. He is the greatest tyrant ever known, for he often dashes the cup from our lips and under the cover of free will leaves us a margin so wholly inadequate as to provide only mirth for himself. 199

According to Gandhiji, that is “A difficult question”, but he has solved it for himself by saying that it is what the voice within tells us.

He said:

God is not a power residing in the clouds, God is an unseen power residing within us and nearer to us than finger-nails to the flesh. There are many powers lying hidden within us and we discover them by constant struggle. Even so may we find this supreme power if we make diligent search with the fixed determination to find him. One such way is the way of ahimsa. It is so very necessary because God is in every one of us and therefore, we have to identify ourselves with every human being without exception. This is called

cohesion or attraction in scientific language in the popular language it is called love. It binds us to one another and to God. 200

To Gandhiji whilst everything around us is ever changing ever dying there is underlying all that change a living power that is changeless, that holds all together that creates dissolves and re-creates. That informing power or spirit is God. 201

4.2.8. WHO AND WHERE IS GOD?

Inspite of all our limitations, many individuals, have already decided the form, character and attributes of the God. However, based on the Vedic metaphysics whatever description of God is given, it can at best be a glimpse of his omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence. The universal God being without Form beyond attributes (ineffable) and unmoved mover, he makes himself felt whether as Adrasta- unseen cosmic power or Brahma the supreme reality as impersonal God. Sometimes individuals find him by manifesting himself in various divinities both real and mythological, as Christ, Krishna, Rama, Ahur Mazda and many others or even as non existence to atheists like ancient charvakas and agnostics like, Buddha, Bertran Russel etc. It is mainly because human sense and reason cannot analyze him.

All objects belong to one or more categories like quantity, quality, dimensions, colour etc. The vedic God does not belong to any such category and is beyond any comparison. It is therefore not possible to describe him completely.

Sankracharya had rightly said “even the words recoil before him” so based on a large number of hymns in the Vedas description contained in Bhagavad-Gita, Upanishads and other scriptures, one can make an effort to

201 Gandhi M.K (1928) Young India (11 October, 1928.)
describe the vedic God which at best will be only a glimpse of supreme reality.\textsuperscript{202}

God according to the Vedas is the entire universe itself and this universe extends into the infinity well beyond the physical universe which we see, feel and live in—in the form of stars, planets, galaxies and inter-galactic stuff.\textsuperscript{203}

A number of hymns in the Vedas describe God in details. A few hymns can be mentioned for proper understanding of Nirguna Brahma who is the universal God. Rigveda 6-15-13, 14 mentions that he is a pure illuminator, unifier, remover of all miseries, commands all to observe nonviolence and other rules of righteousness, which are a prior principles beyond any sense experiences. Rig-veda 6-47-18 says that for each form, he is the Model. It is his forms that are to be seen everywhere in spiritual and material things. He exists in all animate and inanimate life things but he is manifest in the human beings where he dwells in their hearts (Sama Veda 360)

A similar description that he dwells in the human hearts is also there in Bhagavad Gita, Srimad Bahgavatam and been holy bible. Rig-Veda 1-9-5,6 mentions that he is the Lords of knowledge, infinite wisdom and material wealth . . . He lives within you and you live within him as one of his tiny living cells.\textsuperscript{204}

Gandhiji as follower of Vedic tradition at question of “who and where is the God?” Said:

I have defined brahmacharya as that correct way of life which leads to Brahma i.e., God straight away the question arises: “What or who is God?” If man knew the answer, it would enable him to find the path leads to him.

\textsuperscript{202} Glimpses of Vedic Metaphysics. Chapter 8 – Supreme Reality. 10 June, 2013.
\textsuperscript{204} Glimpses of Vedic Metaphysics. Chapter 8 – Supreme Reality.
God is not a person. To affirm that he descends to earth very now and again in the form of a human being is a partial truth which merely signifies that such a person lives near to God. Inasmuch as god is omnipresent, He dwells within every human being and all may, therefore, be said to be incarnations of him. But this leads us nowhere, Rama, Krishna, etc., are called incarnations of God because we attribute divine qualities to them. In truth they are creations of man’s imagination. Whether they actually lived or not does not affect the picture of them in men’s minds’ the Rama and Krishna of history often present difficulties which have to be overcome by all manner of arguments.

The truth is that God is the force. He is the essence of life. He is pure and undefiled consciousness. He is eternal and yet, strangely enough, all are not able to derive either benefit from or shelter in the all-pervading living presence.

Electricity is a powerful force. Not all can benefit from it. It can only be produced by following certain laws. It is lifeless force Man can utilize it if he labours hard enough to acquire the knowledge of its laws.

The living force which we call God can similarly be fond if we know and follow his law leading to discovery of him in us. But it is self-evident that to find out God’s law requires far harder labour. 205

Therefore according to Gandhiji “God is an indefinable mysterious power that pervades everything”. 206

“11 of us the one voice call one God differently as paramatma, Ishwara, Shiva, Vishnu, Rama, Alah, Khuda, Dada Hormuzda, Jehova, God and an infinite variety of names. He is one and yet many he is smaller than an atom and bigger than Himalayas he is contained even in a drop of the ocean, and yet not even the seven seas can compass him.” 207

206 Gandhi M.K (1928) Young India 11 October, 1928.
207 Gandhi M.K. (1926), Young India 21 Jan, 1926
4.2.9. THE WORSHIP OF ONE GOD

According to Gandhiji belief in one God is the cornerstone of all religions. He believed in the fundamental Truth of all great religions of the world and said.

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 sacrilege the soul of religions is one, but it is encased in a multitude of forms. . . . Wise men will ignore the outward crust and see the same soul living under a variety of crusts. For Hindus to expect Islam, Christianity or Zoroastrianism to be driven out of India is as idle a dream as it would be for Musalmans to have only Islam of their imagination rule the world. But if belief in one God and the race of his prophets in a never-ending chain is sufficient for Islam, then we are all Musalmans, but we are also Hindus and Christians. Truth is the exclusive property of no single scripture.

He emphasized that:

The Alah of Islam is the same as the God of Christians and the Ishwara of Hindus. Even as there are numerous names of God in Hinduism, there are many names of God in Islam. The names do not indicate individuality but attributes, and little man has tried in his humble way to describe mighty God by giving him attributes, though he is above all attributes indescribable, Immeasurable.

Living faith in his God means acceptance of brotherhood of mankind. It also means equal respect for all religions. . . . All worship the same spirit but as all forms do not agree with all, all names do not appeal to all. Each chooses the name according to his associations and he being the indweller, Alla-Powerfull

\(^\text{208}\) Gandhi M.K (1924) The Collected works of Mahatma Gandhi. P.179-180. (Young India 25 Sept 1924)
and omniscient, knows: our innermost feelings and responds to us according to our hearts.\textsuperscript{209}

Therefore according to Gandhiji there is only one omnipotent and omnipresent God. He is named variously and we remember him by the name which is most familiar to us, so we all worship the same God but in various ways.

4.3. TOLERANCE

4.3.1. TOLERANCE WITH RELIGIONS

“What is tolerance?” you might ask. Tolerance is when you can take suffering and withstand undesirable situations. Tolerance is also a key role in and religion without tolerance, everyone would blow up everything else.\textsuperscript{210} Gandhiji the notable religion-political leader responsible for India’s independence, often spoke of tolerance in religion. Those familiar with Hinduism in general are aware that tolerating others is its greatest trademark. The level of this tolerance is carried to such areas as belief in God as universally equivalent. That is every religious system ultimately reverse the one and same God no matter what title, name, or attribute is ascribed. This is due to the idea that everything that lives owes its origin to the self same God. Gandhi makes this remark to a visiting American Professor of theology:

The chief value of Hinduism lies in holding the actual belief that all life (not only human beings but all sentient beings) is one, i.e. all life coming from the universal source, call it Allah, God or Parameshwara . . . He has a many names as you can possibly give him.

In a statement from Swami Vivekananda, quoted in Lewis Hope’s Religious of the world, he makes the following observation about Hinduism:

\textsuperscript{209} Deshpande M.S (1950) Light of India or message of Mahatmaji. (10\textsuperscript{th} June 2013).

\textsuperscript{210} Mehta N (n.d) Mahatma Gandhi’s practice of Tolerance. (14 May 2013).
I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance we believe not only in universal tolerance, but we accept a religion as true. As different streams having different sources all mingle their water in the sea, so different paths which men take through different tendencies various though they appear, crooked or straight all lead to God.

It would appear that Hinduism is a religion of all religions being the blanket for all walks of life. This may explain why a missionary field is vacant in the Hindu religion. On the other hand, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, continue to win the world over by fervently ministering to people in hopes of making future converts. This is something Hinduism finds unnecessary.

At this point it must be noted that Gandhi himself implicitly denied such a globalized ecumenicalism for all religions. It appears that although Gandhi maintained an equal status for all religions, he seemed to reject the idea that all religions possessed equal truth values. This can be illustrated in his autobiographical work where he makes the following comments;

Many infallible proofs were proofs in support of the religion of the Bible, as the author understood it. The book had no effect on me parker’s commentary was morally stimulating but it could not be of any help to one who had no faith in the prevalent Christian beliefs. . . . The arguments in proof of Jesus being the only incarnation of God and the Mediator between God and man left me unmoved.

I saw no reason for changing my belief my religion it was impossible for me to believe that I could go to heaven or attain salvation only by becoming a Christian . . . My difficulties lay deeper. It was more than I could believe that Jesus was the only incarnate son of God and that only he who believed in him would have everlasting life. . . . According to Christianity only human beings had souls, and no other living beings, for whom diamante complete extinction; while I held a contrary belief. . . . (Jesus was) not most perfect man ever born.
On the surface Gandhi apparently leans towards the Hindu notion of tolerance by accepting all religions as leading to the same diet.\textsuperscript{211} Gandhiji contended that:

Tolerance should be our aim. If all of us hold uniform views, where then is the scope for this generous virtue of tolerance? However, this search for uniformity is as futile as looking for flowers in the sky. Hence, the only possible alternative for us is to tolerate one another’s views. According to my Muslim friends, I a born idol-worshiper, a believer in incarnation and rebirth must necessary cultivate tolerance for Muslims who do not believe in idol-worship, who do not believe in incarnation and perhaps in rebirth. I a believer in incarnations do not think that alone was God, or that he alone was the son of God. Nevertheless, I should tolerate the fact that my Christian friends look upon Christ as God and similarly, Muslims and Christians should tolerate the fact that I bow in reverence to Kanyakumari and Jagannath. I can see that the age of tolerance is downing in my own lifetime, because tolerance is at the root of dharma of ahimsa. That very same tolerance is also at the root of the dharma of truth. Truth, like God, has a thousand diverse aspects I cannot therefore insist that my view about the nature of truth is the correct one, and those of others wrong.\textsuperscript{212}

Gandhiji explained his idea about necessity of tolerance as follow:

I do not like the word tolerance, but could not think of a better one. Tolerance implies a gratuitous assumption of the inferiority of other faiths to one’s own, whereas Ahimsa teaches us to entertain the same respect for the religious faiths of others as we accord to our own, thus admitting the imperfection of the latter. This admission will readily be made by a seeker of Truth who follows the law of love. If we had attained the full version of Truth, we would no longer be seekers, but become one with God, for Truth is God.

\textsuperscript{211} Guthrie S (n.d) Religious Tolerance.
\textsuperscript{212} Gandhi M.K (1925) “One Community, one religion, one God”. (speech at Advait Ashram) Vol.XXVI, P.523-524.
But being only seekers, we prosecute our quest and are conscious of our imperfection. And if we are imperfect we religion as conceived by us must also be imperfect. We have not realized religion in its perfection, even as we have not realized God. Religion of our conception, thus imperfect, is always subject to a process of evolution and re-interpretation. Progress towards Truth, towards God, is possible only because of such evolution. And if any faiths outlined by men are imperfect, the question of comparative merit does not arise. All faiths constitute a revelation of Truth, but all are imperfect and liable to error. Reverence to other faiths need not blind us to their faults. We must be keenly alive to the defects of our own faith and must not leave it on that account but try to overcome those defects. Looking at all religions with an equal eye, we would not only hesitate but would think it our duty to adopt into our faith every acceptable feature of other faiths. . . . Even as a tree has a single trunk, but many branches and leaves, there is one religion, but any number of faiths. All faiths are a gift of God. . . . Everyone is right from his own standpoint, but it is not impossible that everyone is wrong. Hence the necessity for tolerance, which does not mean indifference towards one’s own faith, but a more intelligent and purer love for it. Tolerances give us spiritual insight, which is as far from fanaticism as the North Pole is from the south. True knowledge of religion breaks down the barriers between faith and faith and gives rise to tolerance. Cultivation of tolerance for other faiths will impart to us a truer understanding of our own.

Tolerance obviously does not disturb the distinction between right and wrong, or good and evil. The reference here throughout has been to the principal faiths of the world, which are all based on identical fundamental principles, and which can all point to saintly men and women who held them in the past and hold them now. In the case of good and evil, we have to cultivate charity for the wicked no less than for the good, the sinner no less than the saint; all the while we cherish inveterate hatred towards wickedness and sin.²¹³

²¹³ Gandhi M.K (1930) Young India 02 October 1930. From “Truth is God” P.51-52.
“The golden rule of conduct, therefore, is mutual toleration, seeing that we will never all think alike and we shall 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 insufferable interference with everybody’s freedom of conscience.214

4.3.2. RELIGION AS PERSONAL MATTER

For Gandhi, religion is so absolute that he would not hesitate to assert that he ‘Could not live for a single second without religion”. It is an insoluble aspect of his life which cannot be separated from other spheres of life. Gandhi is emphatic that one’s religion commands one’s absolute allegiance in every sphere of one’s activity. . . . Although he is faced with a plurality of religions, most of his views on religion are not concerned primarily with such socio-cultural entities. For him, religion is a personal affair, entirely “a matter of the heart. Hit is between a man and his God.” Gandhi adds: “I swear by my religion. I will die for it. But it is my personal after “He would even go to the extent of saying that religions could be “as many as there are individuals.” Since religion is a personal matter.215

In the reformation of life one may draw inspiration from every available source. It is not necessary to discard one’s own religion to benefit by the teaching of other great religions. “if a person wants to believe in the Bible let him say so; but why should he discard his own religion? This proselytization will mean no peace in the world. Religion is a very personal matter. We should by living the life according to our lights share the best with one another, thus adding to the sun total of human effort to reach God.216

At the conference of Missionary societies of Great Britain and Ireland, on 8.10.1931 in London, missionary Mr. F.B. Meyer asked Gandhiji whether

214 Ibid, P.52
216 Seshagiri Rao K.L (1990) Mahatma Gandhi and Comparative religion. P.130
he had found peace without acknowledging the message of Christ. Gandhiji replied in affirmative. “Religion is a personal matter, and I am not going to ask another man to become a Hindu or a parsi. I would be doing something contrary to my belief. I am sharing with you my own experience and trying to show you as fellow-workers that probably, if you could see eye to eye with me, your work would flourish more and more. You have amazing self-sacrifice; you are great organizers; you are good men. I want to work closer with you, but I do not want to get India to change her faith”.

In an interview to Louis Fischer given in 1942, he said: “religion is personal matter which should have no place in politics”. In 1947 he again repeated: “religion is a personal affair of each individual. It must not be mixed up with politics or national affairs”.

Therefore religion for him is purely a personal matter and certainly not something which can admit of a change like one’s clothes. He simply cannot imagine that” a man will become good or attain salvation any if he embraces a particular religion- Hinduism, Christianity or Islam”. For purity of character and salvation depend, according to him entirely upon the purity of one’s heart. Gandhiji explains as and result “. . . . Hindustan belongs to all those who are born and bred here and who have no other country to look to. Therefore, it belongs to Parsis, Beni Israels, to Indian Christians, Muslims, and other non-Hindu as much as to Hindus. Free India will be no Hindu raj, it will be Indian raj based not on majority of any religious sect or community but on the representatives of the whole people without distinction of religion. I can conceive a mined majority putting the Hindus in a minority. They would be elected for their record of service and merits. Religion is a personal matter which should have no place in politics. It is in the unnatural condition of foreign domination that we have unnatural divisions according to religion.

---

218 Misra S (n.d) “Appropriating Gandhi”.

161
Foreign domination going, we shall laugh at our folly in having clung to false ideas and slogans.\textsuperscript{219}

\section*{4.3.3. LIVING IN SOUTH AFRICA}

Every branch of social science has tried to appropriate Gandhi within the narrow confines of its own discipline. As a result, the symbiotic relationship between his life, thought and work has been undermined, creating the problem of ‘broken totality’.

Gandhiji developed his basic ideas like Swarajya and Swadeshi and also his major instrumentalities like ashram living, prayer and abiding faith in God during his South African Sojourn.

Upon returning from England with a degree in law, Gandhi began a legal practice in Mumbai and Rajkot, Gujarat. He attempted unsuccessfully to practice law in both the places, then for a brief period served as lawyer for the prince of Porbandar. Later, after applying and being turned down for a part-time Job as a high school teacher, he ended up returning to Rajkot to make a modest living drafting petitions for litigations, but was forced to close down the business as well. At this point Gandhi received an offer from the firm Dada Abdulla Seth and company, to be the legal representative of the firm in South Africa. Gandhi accepted the offer and set sail for a whole new world in April 1893. “In the 1800s, racism in Africa was commonplace white Europeans had established colonies throughout Africa and they imposed their European beliefs and morals onto the Africans who lived there. The forty three thousand Indians living in Natal in 1893 slightly outnumbered the forty thousand whites there. Both of these numbers were far less than the four hundred thousand native Zulus who lived in Natal. Nonetheless, the white European, held control over Natal and treated everyone else with contempt.

The English had established the colony of Natal in 1843. Indians began entering Natal in large numbers around 1850. These Indians had signed work contracts. These contracts held them responsible for working British owned sugar or coffee plantations for a specified period of time for which they would be paid (usually a small sum).

The Indians agreeing to these terms were the untouchables after the specified time, usually about five years, the Indians could decide to return to India or stay in Natal. Many of the indentured laborers chose to stay, becoming shopkeepers or farmers, and often flourishing in their business. In addition to the untouchables, a number of higher caste Indians also entered Natal to set up professional practices businesses, law offices and hospitals.

The Indians living in Natal began to outnumber the whites. Not only that, but the Indians were educated and were steadily growing wealthier. Their education and wealth posed a threat to the whites, who lashed out against the Indians and began to discriminate against them. Indians were not allowed to use the same bathrooms or drink water from the same fountains as whites. Indians were given lower-paying jobs and only had access to less-desirable housing.  

In the month of May 1893, Gandhi reached Durban. Accompanied by Dada Abdulla, one of the richest Indian traders in Natal, who also happened to be his employer, he went to visit the Durban court. The European magistrate at the court instructed Gandhi to remove his turban. He not only disobeyed the commands of the magistrate but issued a protect letter to the press. This was however just the lull before the storm. The final provocation took place during his journey to Pretoria from Durban shook the consciousness of the young lawyer to such an extent that he assumed a staunch position against racial prejudice. This incident played a major role in carving out the future course of Gandhiji’s life.

---

“During his recent visit to India to attend the Tambaram conference, that great missionary statesman, Dr. John R. Mott, called on Mahatma Gandhi at Segaon. One of the questions put by him was “What have been the most creative experiences in your life?” The Mahatma’s reply may fittingly be quoted here:

“Such experiences are a multitude. But as you put the question to me, I recalled particularly one experience that changed the course of my life. That fell to my lot seven days after I had arrived in South Africa. I had gone there on a purely mundane and selfish mission. I was just a boy returned from England wanting to make some money. Suddenly, the client who had taken me there asked me to go to Pretoria from Durban. It was not easy journey. There was the railway journey as far as Charlestown and the coach to Johannesburg on the train; I had a first-class ticket, but not a bed ticket. At Maritzburg, when the beds were issued, the guard came and turned me out and asked me to go into the van compartment. I would not go and the train steamed away leaving me shivering in the cold. Now the creative experience comes there. I was afraid for me very life. I entered the dark waiting room. There was a white man in the room. I was afraid of him what was my duty, I asked myself, should I go back to India, or should I go forward with God as my helper and face whatever was in store for me? I decided to stay and suffer. My active non-violence began from that date”. There is no need here to tell the story of Mahatma’s life and work in South Africa.\textsuperscript{221}

He had to undergo many trials, suffer abuse and even physical attacks, but then long night in the Natal Mountains he made the decision never to yield to force and never use force to win a cause.\textsuperscript{222}

Gandhi’s new method of fighting brings movement spread swiftly through South Africa. Instead of fanning hatred with hatred, violence with

\textsuperscript{222} Easwaran E (2010) “Gandhi the Man” P.41.
violence he argued that exploitation could be overcome simply by returning love for hatred and respect for contempt.

One of the first developments in Gandhi’s campaign brought him straight to the head of the Transvaal government, General Jan Smuts. Gandhi had already developed the essential of his later style, and it is easy to picture him sitting before this able Boer soldier and informing him quietly: I have come to tell you that I am going to fight against your government.” Smuts must have thought he was hearing things. “You mean you have come here to tell me that?” he laughs. Is there anything more you want to say??”

“Yes,” says Gandhi “I am going to win”

Smuts is astonished. “Well”, he says at last, “and how are you going to do that?”

Gandhi smiles “With your help”.

Years later Smuts admitted not without humor that this is exactly what Gandhi did by his courage by his determination, by his refusal to take unfair advantage, but especially by his endless capacity to “stick it out” without yielding and without retaliation Gandhi managed at last to win the general’s respect and friendship and one by one the laws most offensive to the Indians were repealed.223

. . . . . Gandhi secured that Indians were spared the dishonor of being named specifically in the immigration law and he also obtained the redress of several minor grievances of Indians already resident in South Africa. If he hoped, as he doubtless did, when he left South Africa, that the settlement arrived at between Smuts and he would lead to the disappearance of anti-Asiatic prejudice....

223 Ibid. P.47
Yet Gandhi’s leadership has left an abiding mark on the Indian community in South Africa.224

Also undoubtedly it was Gandhi’s twenty years long stay in South Africa which transformed his personality, his thought process his life-style and finally, made him a man of deep faith and firm action.

The most important background for understanding some of the basic elements of his faith could be located in Gandhi’s struggle in South Africa. This was the most momentous phase of his life. He formulated new ideas; experimented with them; had founded Phenix settlement, taken the vow of Brahmacharya (1906) and formulated and experimented with his new found theory of Satyagraha (1907) when he had sailed for South Africa in April 1893, he had no idea of the storms ahead. But once he reached there he could see for himself the pitiable condition of the Indian community they were being treated as less than human beings. . . . It was in South African that he evolved and experimented some of the ways and means to strengthen and sustain his faith. Some of them were:

ASHRAM LIVING

Both Phoenix Settlement (1904) and Tolstoy Farm were early experiments in Ashram living Phoenix settlement was earlier raised to accommodate the families of Sathyagrahis and it is there that Gandhi also lived with his family. Tolstoy Farm (1910) was raised on an entirely different footing: it was entirely based on the principle of self-reliance penance, flesh mortification as an effective means to spiritually influence others was being tested here.

VOWS

During his South Africa days he took two vows or Brahmcharya (celibacy) and Aparigrapha (non-possession) the basic idea behind it was to

strengthen his will to stick to a position once it is taken after diligent deliberation. It was a strategy of gradual climb on the ladder of Sanyas step by step, instead of taking a plunge for Sanyas in one go.

**PRAYERS**

Prayers both private and public were very central to Gandhi’s faith. . . . Community prayer was another method to strengthen the faith of his own as well as that of his followers. It was started in South Africa during Phoenix and Tolstoy farm days.

**FASTING**

Fasting was another method which Gandhi used to deepen his faith as well as to test its veracity in the course of his life he undertook 18 fasts for various purposes and believed in their purifying power.

To sum up, in building up his abiding faith, he liberally drew from myriad sources: his family his social environment, his social and religious contacts and his book-reading both of secular and scriptural nature, intellectual and social movement. In the entire process, his South African Sojourn played the most crucial role.  

4.3.4. THE HARMONIOUS APPROACH IS BASED ON THE FOLLOWING THREE PRINCIPLES

**A) ALL THE RELIGIONS HAVE THE SAME ULTIMATE PURPOSE**

The ancient scripture of Hinduism, the Rig veda says. “Yekham Sath Vipre bahutha vadhanthi” (Truth is one but men have divided it)

The Irish playwright George Bernard shaw once said, “There is only one religion, thought there are a hundred versions of it.” In our pluralistic world an increasing number of people find Shaw’s interpretation of religion appealing. It is not impossible that Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism etc,


167
represent differing, yet valid path to the same destination. Though each religion may choose its own path, all paths converge at the top of the same mountain. Advocates of this position are aware of the diversity in belief and practice that differentiate Buddhist from Christians, Hindus from Jews and Muslims from Shitos. Nevertheless, they typically offer the following points in support of their thesis:

First it is intolerant and ethnocentric to assert that one religion is the true religion and others, which disagree, are false. This type of intolerance, it is pointed out, has caused much bloodshed.

Second, the contrasting claims of different religions do not prove that one religion is true and others are false. Instead it suggests that no religions possess the entire truth but only bits and pieces of it, imagine, for example, that three blind men are touching an elephant. The first blind man is holding on to the elephant’s leg. He explains, “I think an elephant is like the trunk of a great tree.” The second blind man disagrees. “No, I believe an elephant is like a snake,” he says while holding the elephant’s trunk. The third blind man responds, “No, you both are wrong, an elephant is like a wall” (he is touching the elephant’s side) Each blind man thinks he is right and that others are wrong even though all three of them are all touching the same elephant. In a similar ways, is it not possible that all religions are in contact with the same ultimate reality and merely describe it in different ways? Finally, all religions share a common ethical core, some formulation of the Golden Rule, for example is found in Judaism, Hinduism, Jainism, Christianity, Taoism, Islam and Buddhism. In addition, each of these traditions produces a similar ethical moral transformation in the lives of its followers. Moreover, it would be difficult to prove that one religious tradition is more effective than others in transforming the lives of its followers.

These three arguments are typically offered in support of the claim that all paths are valid means to the same destination. Perhaps the most sophisticated formulation of this positions the “pluralistic hypothesis” proposed by
Philosopher John Hick’s pluralistic hypotheses attempts to explain four phenomena: the fact that people are inherently religious, that a substantial diversity exist in the actual content of religious belief, an assumption that religious belief is not an illusion, and the fact that almost every religious tradition positively changes it followers live. Hick claims that there is an ultimate reality (which he calls the “Real”) that each religious tradition, suffering from a Kantian blindness, does not have direct perception of this ultimate reality and each religious tradition represent an authentic way in which this reality is conceived and experienced. Hick is fully aware that various religious traditions hold conflicting beliefs on a number of key points. Nevertheless, he claims that each religion brings positive moral change (What he calls “salvation/ liberation” in the lives of its followers.226

According to Gandhiji all the great religions are equal before God. He is concerned with every person, whether Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Zoroastrian, or Muslim. Answering a question on this point, Gandhi once explained to reverend Keithan, “All men are born equal and free, 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 Keithan. 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 and which is bigger; inherently we are equal. The differences of race and skin, of mind and body, and of climate and nature are transitory.

In the same way, essentially a religion is qual. If you read the Bible, you must read it with the eye of a Christian, if you read the Gita you must read it with the eye of a Hindu. . . . The tree of religion is the same though 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 says,. ‘mine is the superior one.’ None is superior and none is inferior to the other.

226 Johnson, Keith E (1997) “Do all paths lead to the same destinations?”.
“Just as one’s own country is best for oneself. Similarly each religion is very often adequate or the best for its respective adherents. There is one God who is working in the midst of all his people we are all striving to know him and his will. In that fundamental sense, all religions converge towards the same goal. Elsewhere Gandhi writes, “For me, 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”.227

Gandhiji expands on his idea and says “All religions are essentially identical because (a) it is one truth/ god and inspires all religions (b) all seek truth; they are different paths to the same goal; (c) all believe in moral order/ a universal governed by moral law; this law is God/ truth (d) all affirm the same fundamental morality; and religion is essentially morality (non-violence truth, love) € an respect a higher power (f) all religions have served in embellishing mankind, all have produced great saints; i.e. self sacrificing person.228

Gandhiji expands on his idea and says, “All religions are essentially identical because:

a) It is one truth god that inspires all religions.
b) All seek truth; they are different paths to the same goal
c) All believe in moral order / a universal governed by moral law; this law is God/truth
d) All affirm the same fundamental morality; and religion is essentially morality (non-violence, truth, love)
e) All respect a higher power
f) All religions have served in embellishing mankind, all have produced great saints i.e., self sacrificing person.229

Gandhi studied different religions of the word in spirit of open mindedness and found that the moral element was common to all religions,

229 Jolly 2006 (P.300-301
signifying the unity of all religions. That the ethics of piety, forgiveness, humanity, tolerance, compassion and love should influence political activities is the basic view of Gandhi. He himself practiced the moral virtues and wanted that they should be practiced by all in social and political fields. So he believes god is the centre of all religions, which are different paths. The end of all religions, though the ideas and the methods may differ. God is the entre of all religions and different religions are different approaches towards the same goal.230

Gandhiji wrote “The forms are many, but the informing spirit is one. 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.”231

“Religions are different roads converging to the same point. What does it matter that we take different roads, so long as we reach the same goal?”232

B) THERE IS ONLY ONE TRANSCENDENT GOD

To transcend means “to exist above and independent from; to rise above, surpass succeed”. By this definition, God is the only truly transcendent being. The God almighty created all things, yet he exists above and independent from them. All things are upheld by his mighty power, yet he is upheld by himself alone.

Gandhiji on many occasions expressed concept of transcendence of God

He said: there is an indefinable mysterious power that pervades everything. I feel it though I do not see it. It is this unseen power which makes

---

231 Prabhu and Rao, 1945. P.78)
itself felt and yet defies all proof, because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my senses. It transcends the senses.\textsuperscript{233}

He emphasizes “God is certainly one. He has no second . . . there is one God, the God of gods. . . . God has a thousand names, or rather, he is nameless, we may worship or pray to him by whichever name that pleases us. All worship the same spirit, but as all foods do not agree with all names do not appeal to all. Each chooses the name according to his associations and he being the indweller, All powerful and omniscient, knows our inmost feelings and responds to us according to our deserts.

In my opinion, Rama, Rahaman, Ahuramazda, God or Krishna is all attempts on the part of man to name that invisible force. Man only conceives God within the limitations of his own mind what matters, then, whether one man worships God as a person and another as Force? Both do right according to their lights.\textsuperscript{234}

Gandhiji wrote:

I laugh within myself when someone objects that Rama or the chanting of Ramanama is for the Hindus only, how can Mussalmans therefore take part in it? Is there one God for the Mussalmans and another for the Hindus, Paris or Christians No, there is only one omnipotent and omnipresent God. He is named variously and we remember him by the name which is most familiar to us (Prabhu and Rao).\textsuperscript{235}

C) THE ULTIMATE REALITY CAN BE ATTAINED THROUGH VARIOUS WAYS DEVELOPED BY THE WORLD RELIGIONS

Religions denote ultimate reality in various ways. If one contrasts the personal God of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism with the impersonal absolute of Hindu Vedanta, one may infer that each religion has its distinctive way of

\textsuperscript{233} Gandhi M.K (1928) Young India 11 October 1928.
\textsuperscript{234} Gandhi M.K (1971) ”Pathway to God” P.14&15.
apprehending the ultimate reality. However, it is more accurate to consider a
variety of images of the absolute even though important distinctions are to be
made between similar images in different religions. A seven part typology is
helpful for understanding how these passages from various scriptures have
been put together.

First, we may speak of one image of ultimate reality as a personal God;
this image is central to Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism and to the theistic
traditions of Hinduism. Second there is the image of ultimate reality as an
impersonal transcendent being, the ultimate source of all existence; this is
Brahman in some Hindu traditions, the primal unity or Tao of Chinese
tradition, the Christian philosophical image of God as the unmoved mover, the
Sikh one without Attributes, the Mahayana Buddhist concept of Suchne
(Tathata) Third, there is also an image of ultimate reality is immanent within
each person: this is the Hindu Atman which has an eternal substance, the
Mahayana Buddhist enlightening mind or Buddha mind (Bodhi) or womb of
the Tathagata (tathagatagarbha) which dwells in Liberation and has no
substance and Christian concepts of the indwelling spirit. Fourth is an image of
ultimate reality as the ultimate goal or blessed state; here is the Buddhist goal
of liberation (nirvana) and the Jain ideal of the soul in its most purified, divine
stage (Paramatman) Fifth, religions which recognize many spiritual beings may
image ultimate reality as their common solidarity which works with a single
purpose; the Shinto Kami and the Taoist deities and the native American spirits
(Sioux: waken) may be called “Heaven’ or “divinity” in the singular. Yet a
sixth images establishes ultimate reality based upon the manifestation of the
founder; this is the Buddhist image of the Absolute as the Buddha in his eternal
cosmic manifestation (Dharmakaya) the Christian image of the cosmic Christ
on his heavenly throne, as in the book of revelation or again the jain
paramatman as revealed through the Tirthankara. Finally, ultimate reality may
be depicted as eternal law, as Hindu Dharma or Rita, Taoism’s Tao, Buddhist
Dharma, Christianity’s word (logos Jewish Torah, etc. But as this last type is
often recognized to be subordinate and consequent attribute of ultimate reality that is itself beyond any law.

Although this typology can distinguish the several different ways of imaging ultimate reality, in fact the concepts typically overlap. For example, the goodness of God can understood in any of these seven images; the loving kindness of the personal God, the impersonal beneficence of Heaven, the absolute bliss of Nirvana, the solidarity of the Kami for the promotion of beauty and purity, or the compassionate nature of reality as revealed in the compassion of the Buddha on the other words “one guiding principle behind world scripture is that all religions are connected to the same ultimate reality and lead people towards a common goal. This is true even though the various religions make exclusive claims about themselves, sometimes asserting the uniqueness and incomparability of their God or ultimate principle. Nevertheless, in affirming the existence of ultimate reality or an ultimate principle we assume that it can be only one, regardless of the various beliefs which people hold about it. . . . Similarly, the goals of spiritual practice for each religion, while not identical have much in common since the ideals imbued in human nature are universal, we may expect to find that people who have reached the goal, be it enlightenment, salvation, sanctification, self-realization, or liberation indeed manifest the highest human qualities.

Love, compassion, wisdom purity, courage, patience, righteousness, strength of character, calmness of mind and inner joy. Regardless of religious belief, people who have realized such a goal inevitably impress others by their personal virtue. Ultimately these goals converge and become one, inasmuch as they express the best of our common humanity. 

According to Gandhi’s view Truth is the ultimate reality and all religions can lead their followers to the ultimate reality. Thus he believes that search after Truth is the main duty of every individual. He teaches at the same

time love for all service of humanity is therefore the only way to realization of Truth and God. According to him all religions and creeds have certain basic virtues which are similar in content and significance. Rituals attached to various religions, might be different but essentially an religions, are votaries of Truth as the ultimate reality on many occasion Gandhiji emphasized “religions are different road converging to the same point, what does it matter that we take different roads. So long as we reach the same goal? In reality, there are as many religions as there are individuals. In theory, since there is one God, there can be only one religion. But in practice, no two persons have had the same identical conception of God. Therefore, there ill perhaps always be different religions answering to different temperaments and climatic conditions.237

Mary Ann sellars said:

“The important thing for Gandhi wasn’t the path that a person chose, but rather the truth, enlightenment or fulfillment that a person found along the path that gives each path religious meaning. (One) aspect of Gandhi’s religion is his striving for the acceptance of plurality of religions. Gandhi challenges the world to develop a unity that will recognize the fact that regardless of whether we are rich or poor, black or white, we all bleed when we are cut cry when we are hurt and smile when we are happy. As the opening quote stated, he accepted the things in every religion that he felt had something important to offer. He recognized the importance that every religion held for those who practiced it. When I think of Gandhi’s acceptance of plurality in religion, I imagine each religion to be like a musical instrument. Each has an important role to play in the larger whole of the great orchestra. For some people, the violin is the instrument that they hear and this is their guide, and for others it is the trumpet. In Gandhi’s case he hears notes, from many instruments and finds joy in them all what he wants us to recognize, however is that regardless of which instrument you hear, it is important realize that all are important in making the great orchestra complete.

In advocating acceptance and plurality among the religions, he wants, us to realize that were all players in this world.\textsuperscript{238}

To Gandhi Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism etch, were as much inspired religions as, for instance, Hinduism was and though he claimed to be “a staunch Hindu”, he nevertheless, found room in his faith for Christian and Islamic and Zoroastrian teachings.

He said: “The soul of religions is one, but it is encased in a multitude of forms. The latter will persist to the end of time. Wiseman will ignore the outward crust and see the same soul living under a variety of crusts.”\textsuperscript{239}

He wrote “it is my conviction that all the great faiths of the world are true, are God-ordained and that they serve the purpose of God and of those who have been brought up in those surroundings and those faiths. . . . Religions are one tree with many branches. As branches, you may say religions are many, but as tree, religion is only one.”\textsuperscript{240}

\textsuperscript{238} Sellars M Ann (n.d) “Gandhi: A vision for a new world order”.
\textsuperscript{239} Gandhi M.K (1924) “Young India” 25 September 1924.
\textsuperscript{240} Gandhi M.K (1952) “mahatma, Life of Mohandas Karmchand Gandhi” Vol.-III, P.300.