

Gandhian Sarvadharm-Samabhava, and its relevance today

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Abstract : - It is my aim in this paper to give a brief picture of Mahatma Gandhi's Sarvadharm-Samabhava and its relevance to our modern world, both in its ethical - political and economic - ecological aspect. This paper shows the relevant link between modern world and Gandhi's thought, through the analysis of the work of his Philosophy. Gandhiji believed only an inclusive idea, which validated all God, faith, people, and way of life, would be the final guarantee for global and national peace. Gandhiji thinks that, it is not possible or desirable or possible to have a single universal religion. He always mentioned plurality and diversity of religions. Hence he is not much attracted to have the single universal religion. He says that no two person have the same identical conception of God, either with in one religion or in different religion.

Keywords : Gandhi, religion, philosophy, truth, God, Morality, universal religion, Buddha.

Introduction : Philosophy is the pursuit of wisdom and includes the metaphysical enquiry into the nature of reality as a whole and the moral and spiritual endeavor to realize it. Here the question arises mainly are three different lines : what can we know? What should we do? And what may we hope for? answer to these questions relate to what are familiarly known as *tatta, hita* and *purusartha* or the metaphysical, moral and religious aspects of experience. Philosophy is such a thought, where religion in which the absolute of metaphysics is the God of ethical religion, and its also satisfies the highest needs of life.

Religion is a word which is used by different people by different ways. Religion is also a belief in the ultimate values which are in harmony with the enduring structure of the universe. Religion comes from the words – 're' and 'ligare' i.e., binding together, it is binding of the finite with the infinite, that is man with the God. The God usually is taken to be creator 'God', with all metaphysical attributes like – omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscient, benevolent, Absolute, Eternal, Infinite and the only personality. The Oxford dictionary defines religion as – Human recognition of superhuman controlling power and especially of a personal God entitled to obedience, recognition on conduct and mental attitude.

Indian society is pluralistic and Indian culture is a composite culture. People belonging to different religions and cultural backgrounds, and they groups work together and live side by side as good neighbor. India as a democratic and secular state. Gandhiji was trying to make a strong foundation of a new culture which would be permeated by the all the people, who belongs to different religions and cultures, which is Sarvadharm-Samabhava, treat all religion equal reverence.

To discuss this topic I will focus on the following issues :

1. Gandhian ethical religion
2. Gandhi's equal respect for all religions.
3. Tolerance towards other religions.
4. Gandhian Sarvadharm-Samabhava, a way of resolve religious conflicts.

Gandhian Ethical Religion : Ethics tells us what is ought to be. Gandhi's philosophy is basically religious and he called religion as 'ethical religion'. Gandhiji conceived religion as all- comprehensive dealing with every aspect of human life. Religion is essentially practical and hence finds its fullest expression in and through the ordinary activities of man. Gandhiji said " you must watch my life, eat sit, talk, behave in general. The sum total of those in me in my religion"¹.

For Gandhi truth is God and truth is the substance of all morality. Gandhi believes that morality is the under laying principals of all religions. Religion, in the form of a set of dogmatic beliefs and supernatural influences, does not appeal much to Gandhi. Gandhi's ethical religion is meant for purifying man's character. He thought that, morality must pervade every sphere of human life and activity. Self-realization for Gandhi, is impossible without a complete identification and merging of one self with the whole humanity. He repeatedly asserts that there could be no realization of God apart from service of humanity. Gandhi wrote that through service to humanity one can attain God. Gandhi's ethical religion has an inseparable bearing on social life. Self-realization for Gandhi did not signify isolation from society and leading the life of a recluse. Self-realization, is necessarily connected with service to mankind, and there is no happiness on earth apart from service to humanity. Gandhi means by religious ethics or belief in ordered moral governance of the universe.

Gandhi's Equal respect for other religions : Gandhiji regards that all religions have their origin from the same God though they may differ due to the differences in human perception and interpretation. All religions lead to the same goal, that is the supreme God.

There are so many religions in our country. Gandhi argues that all religions are correct from their own standpoint, and we should not think that one religion is greater than the other because there is only one fundamental reality pervading the entire universe. There is only one God who is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent for all faiths. But he is named variously and we remember him by the name whichever is familiar to us. Gandhi says that it is a misconception to believe that there are separate God – one for Muslims, one for Hindus and another for Christians. Though God is nameless, we pray to him by thousand names,

¹ M. K. Gandhi, 'Young India', , 5-3-1925, p. 81.

which ever name pleases us. All people worship the same spirit, but each chooses the name according to his association. He regards that every religion has some thing good to convey to humanity. Hence, he appeals to all, not to quarrel with one another on the issue of superiority of one religion over the other. All religion have the same goal, that is good conduct, self-realization , or salvation.

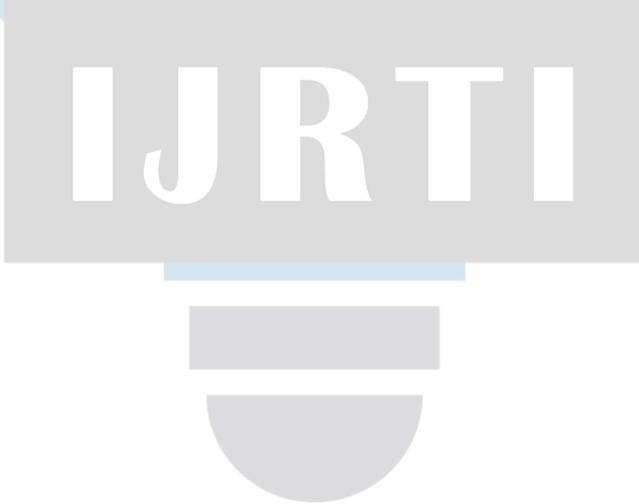
Tolerance towards other religions : tolerance plays a key role in religion. Cultivation of tolerance of other religion will impart to us a true understanding of our own. Gandhiji wants every person to follow his own religion , and the same time, he should be tolerant and appreciative of good thins of all other religions. He always says that, all religions are good and equal. To whatever religious faiths a person may be belong, he should cultivate the same regard for other faiths as he has for his own faiths.. the aim of religion is not separating mem from one another, they are meant to bind them. Gandhi advises the people of India, to develop the sprit of tolerance, which is a necessary condition for peaceful co-existence, of person belonging to various faiths. He is totally opposed to the reckless criticism of other religions on the basis of hatred and prejudice. He was against religious conversions. To Gandhi, one's own religion is equal to one's own mother. There are many religions in the world – Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism, Sikhism, Jainism etc. , due to globalization of economy and development of fast communication and travel many people are migrating to work in distant countries, far from their homeland, belonging to different religious and cultural background. In spite of the differences in their religion and faiths, they need to live in harmony with people of other faiths. Gandhiji gave the messages of peace and Concordia to the modern world.

Conclusion :

The modern globalized world is full of multidimensional and multidisciplinary conflicts ranging from interpersonal to international conflicts. The quest for peace is an eternal pursuit for human existence and fulfilment. Gandhi expounded the philosophy of Sarvadharmā-Samābhava, which is based upon respect, tolerance, for other religions and non-violent technique for conflict resolution. The world today is riven with serious political, social economic and ecological crises. Large part of the developing world continue to be abysmally poor. Gandhi's philosophical approach based fundamentally on truth, non-violence, and the Socratic moral idea of self-examination offers much hope.

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