

Gandhiji's outlook on removal of untouchability and Toleration towards Hinduism.

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ABSTRACT

Religion comes out of life and can never be divorced from it. The root meaning of life is that which binds men together and which binds the loose ends of impulses, desires and various processes of each individual. Hence it is an integrative experience of men collectively and individually. In this regards gandhiji's concept of religion contains various aspects-truth, non-violence brotherhood, peace etc.To Gandhiji, a free and peaceful world will emerge only when the spirituality irrigates men's personal and social life.

INTRODUCTION

Gandhiji was neither a prophet nor an exponent of any religious creed. He was a statesman, a humanitarian, a reformer, a social advisor to advocate the unity of all religious and thereby to create ceremony among all the people of the world. He was no doubt born and brought up in a traditional religious atmosphere of a Hindu family. His mother was a pious woman who had pursued with devotion of all the religious practices prevalent in those days. Gandhiji might have imbibed this spirit in his early childhood.

METHODOLOGY

I adopted descriptive and analytical method. In order to achieve the objective of this study secondary data have been used. Secondary data are collected from newspaper, journal, magazine, internet, television etc. Moreover internet (web resources) also will be an important source of secondary data.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- a. To analysis the Gandhi's concept of religion.
- b. To highlight the importance of Gandhiji's Religious concept.
- c. To examine the impact of religious thinking in present society.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION: Removal of untouchability:-

The untouchables were social outcasts in India namely in Hinduism. People of this caste were engaged in lowly work and were considered as polluting. They were denied any social contact with people of higher castes and were ostracized by higher caste people.

The Varna or caste system was meant to organize the society on the basis of one's occupation or calling. It was also an indicator of the nature and inclinations of a person; however, it is evident that the character of a person is not always determined by the nature of work or caste. The Varnas are actually not just a social determinant they are more of a spiritual determinant. Untouchability is also of spiritual nature.

In the casteist society high caste people used to avoid the company of those who were considered untouchable. If by mistake they came in contact with untouchables they felt polluted and went through several rituals of purifying their body and mind.

In fact, anything that vitiates our thoughts, emotions and behavior is polluting and untouchable. The age old adage 'as the company so the person is very true. But company here is not only limited to physical things company can be of various levels of human life. The human soul constantly in the company of something physical or subtle.

At the physical level we are in touch with people, places and activities, who or what we spend our time, thought and energy with will definitely colour our inner and outer nature. Friends, colleagues, peers, work, and hobbies influence us a great deal, we are also constantly connected to our body and its sense organs. Through our eyes, ears, nose and mouth we are constantly touching some kind of energy we need to check the quality of what we are watching, hearing, talking or eating are the creating or sustaining our original purity and well-being or are they vitiating or harming us? ¹

Gandhiji's approach to the presence of untouchability in Hinduism incorporated his awareness that it was inconsistent with his ideal of swaraj in both the limited sense of political freedom and in the larger sense of internal reform. He thought that the presence of untouchability in any form would be detrimental to the goal of swaraj and that the goal of swaraj would remain incomplete if a section of society continued to be exploited and depressed. He in fact equated colour prejudice of the west with the untouchability of Hinduism. In Gandhiji's own words, "We have made it (untouchability) hereditary with a rigidity not yet observable about its imperial edition" (25,397). Hence it may be noted that this approach implies more that meets the eye. There is no doubt that Gandhiji was primarily concerned with the actual removal of untouchability. But it also had deeper implications for him. He saw it as a form of exploitation worse than the imperialistic one. This exploitation was inconsistent with his idea of swaraj. The feeling for removal of untouchability expresses universal consciousness for abolition of not only political exploitation but all forms of exploitation. The removal of untouchability was necessary for the betterment of the unprivileged and for their rehabilitation on the one hand, and for the harmonious relationship of all sections on the other. The concern with the upliftment of the horijans can be seen as the reality and the harmony in society as the ideal. ²

Gandhiji's removal of untouchability towards Hinduism is mostly resemblance with the Hindu sastras. Untouchabilities has of two sides physical and mental. In Mahabharata we see that when Yudhistir (the elder brother of Pandava) went physically to Heaven along with a dog, the gate keeper of the Heaven did not allowed him to enter in the Heaven along with the dog. Then Dharmaraj Yudhistir said to the gatekeeper as all creatures of the world are of equal rights, equal status, Gandhiji also demanded that the equal rights of each castes. Again from the mental aspects both Gandhiji's and Gita hold that there are equal rights of every soul or beings.

In Gandhi's word, "I hold myself to be incapable of hating any being on earth. By a long course of prayerful discipline, I have ceased for over forty years to hate anybody. I know this is a big claim. Nevertheless, I make it in all humibility. But I can do hate evil wherever it exists. I hate the ruthless exploitation of India even as I hate from the bottom of my heart the hideous system of untouchability for which millions of Hindus have made themselves responsible. But I do not hate the domineering hindus. I seek to reform them in all the loving ways that are open to me." ³

The man in the loin cloth was convinced of the teaching of the Upanishads that our mind is like a restless bird, the more it gets the more it wants. The Hindu saints were of the opinion that happiness does not lie in physical comforts, because physical goods like the body are short lived. To quote the Gita, a book which Gandhi referred to as his mother, "As enjoyments, born of contacts (with external objects) have a beginning and an does not find happiness in them."⁴ Gandhiji's admits that some amount physical comfort is essential for the moral and spiritual advancement of man but these does not go beyond a certain limit. A man according to Gandhi, should not choose to think of getting what he can. On the other hand, he should decline to receive what others cannot get.

Tolerance:

Religion leads mankind towards peace. Gandhiji believed that religions are not for separating men from one another, they are meant to bind them. Gandhijis concept of religion is capable of standing the scrutiny science and reasons on the one hand and guiding us to new dimension of the spirit in man on the other. Religion, which is related with practical values like morality and brotherhood in society, becomes a vital force to maintain a strong closely, knit society. Religious virtues are essential for survival and contended life in the society. Virtues like brotherhood, charity, cleanliness, chastity, forgiveness humanity, justice, kindness, love, mercy, purity of heart, truth and trust are all enjoyed by each and every religion no matter by what name they are called and this also forms the essences of all religions. All religion emphasis for the betterment of active mankind.⁵

The true knowledge of religion teaches man how to tolerate other religious faith by acknowledging them as equal to our own, True knowledge of religion breaks down the barriers between faith and faith and gives rise to tolerance. Thus tolerance does not mean indifference to one's own religion, it is a clear and deeper understanding of one's own religion by having a clear comprehension and understanding of other religions.⁶

There might be hesitation in holding that there is one universal religion of the supreme spirit. However, it can be stated that there is one common referent involved in every religion and that there is an absolute standard of reaching a state of difference less in the final practice of every form of religion. But along this absolute standard of reaching the goal in which all differences are blurred and lost, all forms of religion are infected with relativity, even though there are degrees of being higher and lower. The higher form of relative religions is that which consciously and deliberately adopts this standard of differencelessness. The lower forms of relative religions are those which are not aware of the absolute standard of reaching the state of differencelessness. Besides, the lower forms suffer more from anthropomorphism than the higher forms that keep on refining and purifying their religious concepts to escape from gross anthropomorphism. But one has to realize that every form of religion is relative and as such cannot claim the sole monopoly of religious insight. As such each form of religion should exercise toleration.⁷

In Hinduism there has been a history of religious toleration. Gandhiji accepted Hinduism which is full of love and sympathy for mankind. Thus he learnt the truth that salvation could be attained by devotion to god and service to humanity. According to Gandhi, Hinduism is a relentless pursuit after truth. It is the most tolerant of all religions, because it has formed the highest expression and application in Hinduism. True religion must subject its truth to comparison with scientific truth, but it will not surrender its own scientific institution or moral insights. In every country admits the rule of truth and nonviolence as taught by Gandhiji, then the world will run peacefully. There cannot be any war among nations if they have the feeling of tolerance and universal brotherhood. Gandhiji recommends that the attitude towards different religions must be one of tolerance and respect. Every religion contains good aspects and moral teaching. The attitude of tolerance is derived from Hinduism especially from the Gita. Gandhiji considered all religions to be equal and that formed the foundation of world peace. To Gandhiji, a free and peaceful world will emerge only when the spirituality irrigates man's personal and social life. If everyone in the world treats religion in Gandhian thought, then there cannot be any war in the name of religion.

Gandhiji has clearly stated, "I believe in the Bible as I believe in the Gita. I regard all the great faiths of the world as equally true with my own. It hurts me to see any one of them caricatured as they are today by their own followers."⁸

CONCLUSION:

To rebuild a peaceful society, Gandhiji's concept of religion has the utmost significance. Gandhiji's philosophy of life and action may be used on the Panacea of evils prevalent in today's society. If everyone in the world treats religion in Gandhian thought, then there cannot be any war in the name of religion. So, the concept of tolerance which is found in Gandhian thought occupies an important place to maintain world peace.

References:-

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