

## **Religion and Morality: A Philosophical Concept of Gandhi**

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### **Abstract:-**

Along with truth and non-violence, Gandhiji has also accepted religion and morality in his thoughts because Gandhiji wanted to develop the feelings of love, tolerance, harmony, coexistence, brotherhood etc. for a peaceful environment in the human world. Gandhiji has emphasized on the creative aspect of religion, hence he did not separate politics from religion. He has also accepted morality on the basis of acceptance of the soul and has made it clear that the existence of the human world depends on religion whereas the effect of religion is through obedience to the orders of God i.e. morality. Having faith in the moral system of this entire world, man should follow the moral rules like truth, non-violence, Satyagraha, celibacy etc.

**Key Words** - 1. Self-Realization, 2. Truth, 3. Tolerance, 4. God, 5. Non-Violence.

### **Introduction:-**

Religion and morality have an important place in the new world order created by Gandhiji. In fact, the concept of morality and religion has been the center point of Gandhi's thought, the remaining elements exist around this element, due to which a new vision was born and the foundation stone of the new world order was laid. Gandhiji tried to coordinate religion and morality. According to him, religion and morality are two sides of a coin which cannot be separated from each other. Moral life without religion is like a house made of sand and religion without morality is like a torn bamboo which can only make noise. In other words, one who lacks creative power is far away from religion and morality.<sup>(1)</sup> Gandhiji has given priority to the establishment of moral values and ideals in every aspect of a person's life, be it political, social or economic. Even the nations should adopt moral means to achieve their national interests and Gandhiji considered the sanctity of the means along with the ends as primary. Gandhiji accepted that the welfare of the entire society lies in the fact that we should achieve sacred objectives through sacred means and along with purity of means, be careful in the selection of ends and set such goals so that a good life can be achieved.

### **Gandhiji's Views on Religion:-**

Only religion makes morality possible in a person's life. According to Gandhiji, religion means something worth pursuing. Gandhiji's main goal was to attain God's realization or salvation. So whatever he does is a step in this direction. Gandhiji believed that a person can awaken his soul according to his capacity and for this every person searches for means according to his capacity. The means to attain self-realization lay the foundation of Gandhiji's religion.<sup>(2)</sup> Religion has a very important place and important role in Gandhi's philosophy. Because Gandhiji believed in truth and non-violence, he has emphasized on the creative aspect of religion. By religion he did not mean any kind of superstition, rituals or narrow beliefs, his religion was based on "HUMANITY". According to Gandhiji, there is full potential for change and development in all religions. Gandhiji, who was a one-way thinker, neither saw the complete absence of truth in any religion nor did he accept any religion as the complete

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truth.<sup>(3)</sup>Gandhiji did not limit the concept of religion to God only, rather he believed that real religion should be a matter of our day-to-day conduct.<sup>(4)</sup> Just as we cannot eliminate the diversity of bodies despite having one soul, similarly we cannot eliminate the diversity of religions. Gandhiji has expressed that a rational approach towards religion would mean that one should internalize the fundamental unity of all religions and accept that all persons are children of the same God, whatever may be their religious beliefs. It is not right to discriminate between them. This aspect of religion will make tolerance and harmony towards all religions mandatory.

Gandhiji was of the opinion that the man who does not know patriotism does not know true duty or religion. Therefore, religion is the comprehensive form of human service, all welfare, patriotism etc. Vedas, Upanishads, Geeta, and Puranas were acceptable to him only to the extent that they were acceptable to his conscience. He says that I do not believe in the divinity of the Vedas alone, I believe that the Bible, The Quran or The Avesta are as God-inspired texts as the Vedas. For Gandhiji, all are different paths leading to the same goal. Gandhiji accepted religion through logic, hence he believed that I am ready to reject the sanctity of even the oldest scripture if it is not acceptable to me through logic.<sup>(5)</sup>Gandhiji has said ***“that all religions are based on the same moral rules.”*** My moral religion is made up of those rules by which humans all over the world are bound. Even if a root is supported in all the religious texts of the world, it cannot be free from this rule. Without discretion and intelligence, their destruction becomes necessary. According to him, only knowledge ultimately provides liberation. Emphasizing the universality of religion, Gandhiji said that no area of life is separate from religion and politics also cannot be separate from religion. Politics should always be done under the influence of religion. Gandhiji's philosophy of religion gives a feeling of basic unity and at the same time there is a realization of a common absolute truth free from religion and sect, for which Gandhiji tried throughout his life to establish.

### **Gandhiji's Moral Views:-**

The specialty of Gandhi's thinking is that he also considers morality and good conduct as necessary to achieve the ultimate goal or salvation. He has seen morality in the form of action and God. Policy without action is blind. Gandhiji's morality means following virtues. Fast means firm determination. An unshakable determination is that which does not break even in the face of adverse circumstances and inconvenience. The right thing to do is to do it no matter what. One cannot be said to be moral just by taking a vow for one task. A person will be moral only when he uses fasting in his conduct. Any work should be done through thoughts, words and actions. One should not break the fast even in adverse circumstances, doing so produces virtue and where there is virtue, morality is always present. In following the moral rules, Gandhiji has included all the values like tolerance, honesty, non-violence, feeling of welfare of all, self-control of life, loyalty, discipline etc. Gandhiji's vision, strategy and objectives were both political and moral. Gandhi was successful in gaining credibility and authority as a political figure, but at the core of all this was his moral strength. People accepted Gandhiji not only because he wanted to make him politically powerful but also because his morality acted as a catalyst in their acceptance and everyone was influenced by his moral courage. Gandhiji considered morality to be based on internal acceptance. Man, motivated by moral goals, voluntarily follows his Swadharma, he does not do so for rewards or material achievements but his soul compels him to do so. Gandhiji believes that when a human being lives for himself, his condition is worse than barbarism, when he starts working for the welfare of his family, then he rises above barbarism, when he accepts the entire

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society and community as his own. When the family starts understanding, it moves further, it moves even further when it accepts the castes considered barbaric as its own family. In this way a person becomes great in proportion to the welfare of his society.<sup>(6)</sup> According to Gandhiji, any work can be called moral only when we do it thoughtfully and with a sense of duty. The work which is done due to fear or use of force can never be called moral. In this way, Gandhiji has given synonymous terms to duty and moral conduct.

### **Interrelationship Between Religion And Morality:-**

Gandhiji's political work and means can be considered based on religion related ideas. He believed that the existence of the world depends on religion and the effect of religion is due to obedience to God. Gandhiji studied many religions of the world and concluded that all religions are based on morality and emphasize the growth of morality in human character. Gandhiji considered religion and politics to be mutually related, due to which he believed that those who say that politics and religion have no mutual relation do not know the meaning of religion. Gandhiji's objective was to develop the spirit of truth, non-violence, love, tolerance, harmony and co-existence in politics. Gandhiji believed that politics without religion is like a snake, so he tried to convert it into a snake and said that I want to make him fight a duel with the snake, hence I want to enter religion in politics. If politics and morality are coordinated then the attainment of truth, which is the attainment of God, can be possible and the feeling of justice can be transmitted throughout life. Politics, religion and morality aim at the service of mankind. In Greek political philosophy the place of politics is higher than religion whereas in Gandhian philosophy religion is higher than politics.<sup>(7)</sup> Gandhiji believed that it is religion that connects a person to God. It not only establishes mutual relationship between God and the individual but also keeps the individual bound together. Religion does not separate people from each other, rather it binds people together and establishes unity among themselves.<sup>(8)</sup> If all the people of the society are bound by the thread of unity, then the unity of the nation is maintained and national interests are fulfilled smoothly.

Gandhiji has accepted that political power should not promote exploitation and oppression on the basis of religion and if any ruler does so, then all people should oppose it to establish truth and justice. The state should not impose any particular religion on its citizens, that is, it is undoubtedly appropriate for the state to be secular. Every person should have the right to follow whatever religion he believes.<sup>(9)</sup> Therefore, all such activities in which politics is prominent should be inspired by God or truth only. The result of natural dependence on God is that goodness develops in humans. He is answerable to God for all his activities. Therefore, naturally the relationship between politics and morality is pre-established. In the above explanation, Gandhiji pointed out the human and moral aspect of religion and examined the opinions and beliefs from the holistic point of view. The options presented by Gandhiji by giving credible seriousness to God, truth, non-violence and morals are indicative of greater humanism.

### **Conclusion:-**

Thus, Religion is that which enhances the moral and human nature of a person. According to Gandhiji, the true essence of religion lies in morality. Religion has the same place for true morality as water has for growing seeds in the ground. All religions have a common moral basis which can be called a world religion. This means that there is a moral system in the world, this world religion is above the sectarian religions like Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc. But world religion does not dissolve different religions but coordinates them and gives them a new reality, which also gives an

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understanding of a common absolute truth free from religion and sect, for which Gandhiji tried throughout his life to establish. Was . Hence it is clear that the meaning of religion is the same as that of morality. The essence of morality is to serve mankind. Gandhiji did not believe in the existence of any religion separate from human life. According to him, every aspect of human life should be controlled by religion. In the present times, politics has been distorted by linking it with religion because there is a tendency of religious appeasement by political parties in politics, whereas the basic reason behind Gandhiji's linking of religion and morality with politics was that he considered religion and morality as one. Not dividing it into classes but connecting it to the entire human religion because for him there was only one aspect of religion, "**HUMANITY**". Therefore, in the present time, we will once again have to connect religion and morality with politics according to Gandhian ideas and establish human religion and morality for the entire world. Gandhiji believed that only that person is spiritual who gives up wealth and selfishness and works for the welfare of the entire society. Gandhiji believed that while having faith in the moral system of the world, we should accept the virtues of moral rules like truth and love. Thus, true policy should include true religion. Religion without policy and policy without religion are baseless. Gandhiji made morality more valuable by coordinating ethics and religion.

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