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GANDHI'S CONTRIBUTION TO UNIVERSAL PEACE AND HARMONY THROUGH UNITY OF RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY AND OTHER MEANS



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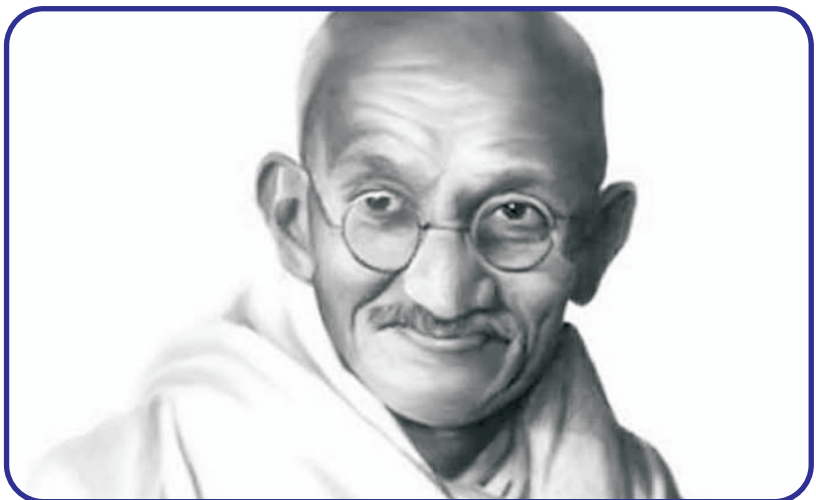
ABSTRACT

Gandhiji was also thinking about the economic, social and political aspects which were the stumbling blocks for peace and harmony in society. Gandhiji wanted untouchability or segregating one section of the people from the other sections to be abolished. He asked the leaders and volunteers of the congress movement to organize the so called untouchables who were prevented to enter in to the Hindu temples and take them into the temples. His way of fighting non-violently for enhancing the social, political and economic status of the downtrodden was followed by the leader in other parts of the world. Nelson Mandela, Martin Lutherking and others fought non-violently for emancipation of the block people in southAfrica and United States of America and other oppressed sections of the society in other parts of the world.

KEYWORDS :World peace, Tolerance, religious harmony, non-violence, Ideal structure of world society.

INTRODUCTION :

Gandhiji was essentially a man of religion He was born and brought up in a family which was observing the Vishnava cult of Hindu Religion in Gujrat. The Vaishnava cult of Hindu



religion was very much influenced by the ideals of Jainism in that part of India. His mother Putlibai used to observe feasts during the auspicious days of few months in a year. During those days she took food only one time in a day and visited temples for prayer. During the above said days sometimes she took food only after seeing and worshipping the sun. It made a lasting impression on Gandhiji. In the drama he had seen during his boyhood days the character Emperor Harichndra had to suffer a lot for the sake of upholding the truth in his life. It impressed Gandhiji, the young boy very much. The years he spent in England and South Africa helped him to understand the central ideas of many of the world religions to a great extent through the books he read and the learned elders he came into contact and

the discussions he had with them. Gandhiji's living contact with the young spiritual diamond merchant Roychandbai for a short period, his reading of the books of Leo Tolstoy and John Ruskin "The kingdom of God is within you" and "Unto this last" respectively made a big impact on his personality and helped him to have a clear vision and goal in his life. He came to the conclusion that the essence of all religion is the same. He interpreted all the development aspects of human life in such way to preserve the eternal human values of Truth, Love, Compassion, Service and Sacrifice. So he wanted to spiritualize the social, Political and economic order of the society. He condemned the western pattern of Industrialization, market economy and centralized political systems which pave way for environmental degradation and the prevalence of greed, blind consumerism, hatred, brutal competition, confrontation and all kinds of violent activities in the society.

THE MESSAGE OF ALL RELIGIONS

In London first time he had one through BhgavatGita, the English translation of Edwin Arnold. He also had gone through the holy Bible – the New Testament, Holy Quran and other religious books. He found no difference between the New Testament and BhgavaGita. He was inspired by reading Sermon on the Mount by Jesus. During his long stay in South Africa he made a good comparative study of religions. He moved with well-informed persons of different religions. When Christian friends tried to convert him to Christianity his family refused and told that being a Hindu he could very well embrace Christianity also. In 1928 in the month of January the members of the International Fellowship hailing from America, England, Switzerland, Russia, and Sweden met in the Sabramathi Ashram During the conference Gandhiji said "After later study and experience I have come to these conclusion that (i) all religions are true (ii) all religions have some error in them (iii) all religions are almost as dear to me as Hinduism.

GANDHIJI'S VIEWS ON UNITY OF RELIGION AND COMMUNAL HARMONY

After making a thorough study of different aspects of Indian society. He strongly felt that unity of religions was quite essential to the peaceful and harmonious life of Indian society. He also thought that kind of unity would set an example to the other nations. He knew that India would become free. So he did not worry about that very much. But he worried to a great extent and thought about the bring unity among different religious and caste groups. He was ceaselessly working for the Hindu- Muslim unity. He did not accept partition of the country into two. He undertook fasts for Hindu-Muslim unity and communal harmony During partition thousands of Hindus and Muslims were killed on either side. He undertook yatra on foot in the areas of Noakhali district (at present in Bangladesh) and requested people to be calm and quite. He evolved a unique kind of inter religious community prayer to inculcate the sprite religious tolerance and appreciation of the good aspects of the other religious among the people.

INDIVIDUAL ENTERED IDEAL STRUCTURE OF THE WORLD SOCIETY.

Gandhiji visualized a non-exploitative social, Economic and political order. He advocated decentralized socio-political and economic setup of society to achieve the above said goal. He also advocated attaining self-sufficiency to a great extend to fulfil the needs of the decentralised society without expecting the help of the external agencies to a great extent. Al over the world economic and political power is centralised in the hands of few. This will give room to create gaps between the rich and the poor. This will also create confrontation and clashes between one and group and the other. Further it leads to exploit the resources of one nation by the other. As a result of it nations and regions are

strengthening their military and economic powers to control and exploit other nations.

Gandhiji thought that the non-exploitative, social, economic and political order having peace and harmony could not be possible without the spiritually motivated individuals who are having a good character and the spirit of service and sacrifices for the welfare of other. So he wanted to introduce new type of value, work and knowledge oriented education from the primary to the higher level to create such individuals. He also asked his followers to observe the following vows to become a real servant to serve society: truth, non-violent, non-stealing, controlling the tongue (avoid talking bad and unnecessary things) providing equal treatment to all religions, engage oneself in physical work at least an hour in a day, Courage, avoiding amassing wealth more than one's need, removal of untouchability, using locally produced goods (Swadeshi) and controlling the senses. His dream of Sarvodaya social order cannot be realized without following the above said vows by the individual members of the community or society. Only such individuals will be ready to sacrifice their life for the sake of their communities and in turn with the same spirit the communities will serve their nations will serve for their nation. And such nations will serve for the welfare of the whole world. He described such a world structure of the society beautifully in the following lines. "In this structure composed of innumerable villages there will be ever widening never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individuals always ready to perish for the village, the later ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at least the whole become one life composed of individuals but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral unit".

GANDHIAN PATTERN OF DECENTRALIZED POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ORDER

Gandhiji's decentralised, political and economic setup will pave way for smaller political units with wide spread small scale industries along with agriculture farms. Participatory democracy will prevail through the Gram sabhas, village and city councils. The small scale industries with their enhanced technology will generate employment opportunities

And produce goods sufficiently for the needs of the village community. The surplus will be sold at reasonable price to the outside world. The consumer goods which could not be produced by the community locally will be purchased from the outside agencies. Thus spirit of Swadeshi will help or the people and comfortable life of the people in society. The Gram panchayats, district panchayats, the municipalities and corporations will plan and implement development programmes with the help of their own people's committee. They are accountable to the Gram sabhas city and corporation council which act like the parliament of nation. Representative to all the above said bodies will be elected on the basis of their conduct and character and their past record of service to the community. The cooperative will function with the help of the elected representative to procure and sell goods at a reasonable price to people. All the heads of the village families will be the members of the general bodies of the cooperatives. The members will elect the representative to run the cooperatives.

The present political, economic social order is mainly responsible for the erosion of human values and corrupt practice in the day today life of the people discarding the simple and high thinking life style. The scientific and technological development should go hand in hand with the preservation and enrichment of moral and cultural values of mankind. Nature should not be marred on account of research and development in the field of science. In the Gandhian concept of political structure there will be village courts to settle disputes. Only big and complicated criminal causes will be taken up by the higher levels. There will be police and military forces. But they will resort to minimum violence during unavoidable circumstance. Of course the military force will not be having nuclear and other deadly

modern weapons. No nation has the power to aggress the other without the knowledge and approval of the world body. All the nations of the world will be members of the international body, united nation organisation. All of them have equal rights and responsibilities to conduct the affairs of the world body.

CONCLUSION:

The current situations of the world make us turn towards the political social, economic and spiritual or religious concepts of Mahatma Gandhi and think and plan for introducing radical changes in the present pattern of development aspects in all respects. There is an urgent need to put the above said Gandhian concepts in to practice to prevent the erosion of moral and ethical values, terrorism, environmental degradation and the adverse effects of climate change. The profit motive market economy paved way for keen competition and exploitation of one group by the other. Big industrial house and business communities have by and large, lost their moral responsibility to uplift the middle and lower income group of the society. In fact all the wealth and the profit earned out of their business are part of the society. The business people and industrialist cannot exist without the help of the other sections of society. So Gandhi said that the rich were the trustees of their wealth. Their wealth belongs to God or the society. So naturally and necessarily they have to spend their surplus to the welfare of all sections of the society particularly the downtrodden. Ultimately, this trusteeship spirit will pave way for the prevalence of peace and harmony in society.

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