
UNIT 1 INDIC RELIGIONS: HINDUISM, JAINISM AND BUDDHISM

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

The religions of Indian origin have some features common to them. A broad feature is that all the religions want to uplift the individual, and liberate him from the cycle of births and deaths. These religions address the individual need, rather than the divine command, as in the case of Semitic religions. Religion provides an aid to the individual, a means to overcome the cycle of eternal rebirth, and provide means of achieving it. The cycle of births and deaths is not caused by external factors, but by the individual action, which is called *Karma*, which, when translated loosely would mean 'deed'. The individual has to work, through the guidance provided by the religion, to escape the cycle of births and deaths, and attain 'Moksha' or 'Nirvana', or 'Kaivalya' (liberation / Salvation), as per his approach.

The place of worship in these religions is a shrine, where people congregate, and address the deity on an individual capacity, not in a group. Thus, these religions differ from Christianity and Islam, where people congregate and are addressed by speakers from the pulpit. Many thinkers in India, like Tilak, and leaders of "Prarthana Samaj" thought that it is a weakness of Hindu religion, and tried to make it a congregating religion, by organising Ganesh Puja, and mass prayers. Gandhi also used to hold prayer meetings. Also, Indic religions do not have the concept of believer and non-believer, and do not try to attract people to their religion. They address only the individual good, and accept all religions to be true and have different ways to achieve salvation.

Gandhi was born in a traditional Hindu family, with the society having a Jain ethos. Hence his individual values are Hindu and Jain, predominantly. He was educated in the West, and hence his work ethic is western. When he launched 'Satyagraha', it was a device where an individual demanded the truth on an individual basis for a social purpose.

Aims and objectives

After reading this Unit, you would be able to understand:

- The main sources and thrust of Indic religions, Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism.
- The main precepts of these religions
- How Gandhi's view of life was shaped by these religions
- The roots of Gandhi's eclectic philosophy.

1.2 HINDUISM: SOURCES AND BASIC DOCTRINES

The word, 'Hindu' is derived from the word 'Sindhu', the main river in undivided India. The inhabitants of the riverbanks were called 'Hindus' in Parsi language, and the religion followed by them is known as Hinduism. Compared to Semitic religions, Hinduism is diverse, multi-faceted religion, which can be easily described as a way of life.

Sources of Hinduism

Prasthanatrayi: Three works (in Sanskrit referred to as Prasthanatrayi) are considered to be the authoritative works for Hinduism, like the Bible for Christianity and Qur'an for the Muslims. They are, *firstly* Vedas and specially Upanishads, which come at the end of Vedas, both literally and as essence. The authorship of Vedas is not known, and they are considered 'Apourusheya', meaning that they were not composed by any man, but inherited by a divine transmission. Vedas also contain, in addition to Upanishads, Mantras (poetic compositions), Brahmanas (dealing with ritualistic aspects) and Aranyakas (forest treatises).

Second authoritative work is "Brahmasutra", which is said to have been authored by Badarayana Vyasa. It contains aphorisms, and all the three leading philosophical schools of Hinduism, Advaita (non-dualism), Visishtadvaita (qualified non-dualism), and Dvaita (dualism) have learned treatises written by the leading proponents and teachers of these schools, commenting on the aphorisms found in this text. The commentaries of these three Acharyas (teachers) on Brahmasutra are the foundation of philosophy of these schools.

The *third* authoritative work is Bhagavad Gita, which is literally a part of the great epic, Mahabharata. The Author is Badarayana Vyasa, and it is in the form of dialogue between Krishna, whom the Indian tradition considers to be the Godhead, and Arjuna, the warrior prince. This work, whose title means 'song divine' has inspired many, including Gandhi.

Smriti: Smriti (meaning memory) is a collection of works that lay down the law codes, rules regarding social and personal behaviour, inter-relationship between man and society etc. Well known among them is the Manu Smriti, which is often quoted and referred all over India. Smriti literature contains Dharmashastra, as it gives the rules to follow the Dharma.

Puranas: In addition to these three authoritative works, there are *eighteen Puranas*, (ancient treatises), out of which *Bhagavata Purana* is famous. It contains the accounts of the God's ten incarnations, which includes Krishna's incarnation.

Epics: There are *two epics*, Ramayana (tale of Rama), and Mahabharata. The latter contains within it the Bhagavad Gita, one of the three authorities. The Epics are widely read, and incidents in it are quoted as examples.

Schools of Philosophy: There are six schools of philosophy, known as Darshanas (Darshana means an aid to see). They are Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Sankhya, Yoga, Mimamsa, and Vedanta. They are divided into two groups: one material, and another, theist. There are commentaries on these Darshanas, which have been written in the form of aphorisms. Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* is the work on one of the Darshanas, Yoga.

Varna system: Varnashrama, or the concept of stage of life depending on one's vocation, is also found in the dharmashastras. The concept is that each man should follow a vocation as per his Varna (literally meaning colour), which are four in number, namely, Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra. Varna is supposed to be based on the kind of work one does, and the skill (guna and Karma). Vocation, based on Varna is not ordained by birth, as per Dharmashastras. For example, agriculture and animal husbandry could be practised by people of all the four Varnas, without any restriction. Also, in the time of distress, people could follow vocations outside their Varna, with some restrictions (Apad Dharma).

Ashrama: Ashrama refers to one's stage in life. There are four ashramas- Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha and Sanyasa. First is the learning stage, second the householder's stage, third after the completion of householder's duty proceeding to the forest for tapasya (meditation) for realisation of self and the final stage is freeing oneself from all the social bondage.

Purushartha: Purushartha concept is also in the Dharmashastras. And it means that a man (or a woman) has to do a deed, which results in a worthy act. The four Purusharthas are Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha. Vyasa is of the opinion that both Artha (wealth) and Kama (desire) have to be practised to achieve Dharma (righteousness in life.). Moksha is the salvation from the cycle of births and deaths, and it is the last Purushartha. Thus, it was ordained that a man should work to achieve these goals, all the time.

1.3 HINDUISM AND GANDHI

Gandhi was a strong believer in Hinduism, which he called the 'Sanatana Dharma' (the eternal religion). He wrote, "Hinduism of my conception is no narrow creed. It is a grand evolutionary process as ancient as time, and embraces the teachings of Zoroaster, Moeses, Christ, Mohammad, Nanak, and other prophets I could name." Then, he quotes a verse from Manusmriti, which translates as follows:

"Know that the true religion is one which the wise and the good and those who are ever free from passion and hate follow and which appeals to heart". (CWMG, vol.75, p.375).

Gandhi defined 'Hindu' in *Young India* of 14-10-1926. According to him, a Hindu is one who believes in

- o God
- o Immortality of the soul
- o Transmigration
- o Law of Karma
- o Moksha

And one who practises:

- o Truth and Ahimsa in daily life;
- o Cow -protection in its widest sense;
- o Tries to act according to the laws of Varnashrama.

Gandhi had read the classics early in life, from 1907, onwards, but his intense study of the scriptures happened when he was in the Yerawada jail, near Pune, from March, 1922 to February, 1924. His jail diary indicates that he read about 150 books, most of which were classics, including scriptures. At that time, he was 54 years old, young enough to exert and old enough to understand.

Gandhi's view of scriptures may look very personal and revolutionary, but he had his own way of interpreting the ancient texts and scriptures. To an American, who subscribed herself as a lifelong friend of India, he wrote, "non-violence is common to all religions, but it has found the highest expression and application in Hinduism. I do not regard Jainism and Buddhism as separate from Hinduism" (Young India, 20-10-1927).

The influence of Bhagavad Gita on Gandhi was enormous. "I have studied Bible, Koran, Zend Avesta, and other scriptures of the world with the same reverence that I have given to Gita. They have illuminated many a passage in the Gita."

'I run to mother Gita whenever I find myself in difficulties and up to now she has never failed to comfort me' (*Young India*, 13-11-1930). He called Gita his spiritual dictionary, for it never failed him in distress, and he found it was free from sectarianism and dogma, and had universal appeal (Harijan, 16-2-39).

The characters in the epics did have influence on him. Harishchandra captures his heart, for his principled effort to keep his word. Gandhi asks why not everyone should be truthful like Harishchandra. He also quotes the examples of Rama and Pandavas, who kept their word by undergoing all difficulties. He cites the examples of Prahlad, Sudama, Dhruva, and Shravana, who gave up all worldly comforts for the sake of virtuous principles.

Of Mahabharata, Gandhi says that it is like a rich diamond mine, from which the deeper you dig the more diamonds you find. He was of the opinion that the burden of Ramayana and Mahabharata is to teach Ahimsa (letter to P.D. Gupta, 19.11.26). He has repeatedly said that both Ramayana and Mahabharata tell the story of the victory of the good over evil.

In the issue of *Navajivan*, dated 6.2.1921, Gandhi vehemently declared that he is a Sanatani Hindu, or a Hindu as ordained by Scriptures. At that time, a movement against orthodox Hinduism was building up through Brahma Samaj and Prarthana Samaj; Gandhi had no hesitation in declaring that he is a 'Sanatani Hindu'. He states that he possesses in some measure the qualities described in Narsimha Mehta's song, 'Vaishnavajana', and strives to perfect and cultivate the qualities of the Vaishnava. So, he says, "I do not therefore, hesitate to call myself with all firmness, though humbly, a strict Sanatani Hindu and a Vaishnava."

At the same time, Gandhi's views were iconoclastic, and rebellious. He says that he has understood the Shastras from the view of Dharma. He says that it is possible to attain Moksha (salvation) without reading the Vedas. He also says that the Shastras are not above reason and any Shashtra, which reason cannot follow, can be rejected.

Gandhi has his own views on Varnashrama. He said that he believed that there are no more than four Varnas. He believed that one acquired the caste by birth, and even though one acquires the qualities and character of another, the body does not cease to belong to his Varna. He expressed his desire to cleanse the Hinduism of the caste distinctions that crept in it. He held that Hinduism has sinned by giving sanction to untouchability.

Gandhi did not formally study the Upanishads, but many Upanishads were under his regular study and reference. In the Ashram prayers, part of Isa Upanishad, which, when translated, reads as follows, was recited everyday.

“Enveloped by the Consciousness is everything whatever that fluctuates in the universe. Therefore, enjoy with renunciation and do not covet what is due to others.”

The Bruhadaranyaka Upanishad gave him the concept of supremacy of Dharma over the Kshatras, the temporal power, and even the weak can overcome the strong, with the help of Satya, which is based on Dharma. Taittiriya Aranyaka, which he refers, says that everything is founded on Dharma, the highest good that drives away evil. And Satya and Ahimsa are traditionally identified with Dharma, the cosmic law that governs the human conduct. Kenopanishad also had a profound influence on him.

1.4 JAINISM: SCHOOLS, VOWS AND BASIC DOCTRINES

Jainism, like Buddhism, started as a protestant religion against the ritualistic Hinduism. It claims great antiquity, and it is said that Aristhtanemi, the earliest monk and a teacher, died 84000 years before Mahaveera, the last ‘Teerthankara’, as the guru of ancient tradition in the Jain religion is known. Mahaveera was a contemporary of Buddha, but is not considered the founder of the religion, but the first teacher is said to be Rishabha, and Mahaveera is said to have been preceded by Parswa, in a line of 24 Tirthankaras.

Even though Jainism did not spread outside India, as it did not have preachers who could go overseas to spread the religion, it had a profound influence on life in India. It can be said that vegetarianism became the most accepted way of life in India, may be due to this religion. Also, emphasis on morals and ethics received a boost, as this religion had ethics as its main plank, and produced vast literature in all the languages upholding the path of morality and austerity.

Schools of Jainism

There are two schools within Jain religion, one being ‘Digambara’ (meaning space-clad, ie., wearing no clothes), and the other, ‘Swetambara’ (meaning white robed). There are no major doctrinaire differences between the two cults, except for small differences like writing down the scriptures and not writing them. Also, Digambaras, the more orthodox of the two schools, maintain that perfect saints like Tirthankaras live without food, and that a monk who owns any property or wears clothes cannot attain moksha, and that women cannot attain moksha (salvation). Later, after the two sects separated, about 84 different schools of Jainism came into existence, called ‘Gachhas’. They differed from one another only in minute details of conduct. Both the schools of Jainism have preserved their separate line of succession of teachers from Mahavira downwards. But for this, the relations between the two groups have been peaceful, and both have prospered due to their faith.

Metaphysical View

The Jain view of life is unique compared to other religions, in that it categorises living beings on the basis of senses. The plants and trees are supposed to have one sense, and worms are supposed to have two senses. At the highest scale, man who has mind or reason, has six senses, so do the 'devas'(gods) and the narakas (inhabitants of hell). In between, there are creatures having five senses, like all the animals having vertebrae. The four sensed beings possess all but intelligence. They are bees, butterflies, etc. The three sensed beings are ants, bugs, etc. In Jain philosophy, the four elements earth, water, fire and wind are animated. Thus, the whole world is full of living beings, and the whole space is packed with minute beings, called 'nigodas'. These 'nigodas' replace the space emptied by the souls that are liberated.

Further, the reality according to Jainism is of two types, *jiva* and *ajiva*. When liberated from Karma, the *jiva* is a pure spiritual being. If *jiva* is tainted by Karma, he becomes impure, just like the brightness of the lamp is reduced by soot. The *jiva*, when it comes under the influence of the Karmic forces, is like gold covered with rust. When the person attains the *jnana* (ultimate knowledge), he starts shining like gold from which rust has been removed. By practising the ethics, the *jiva* can get rid of the Karma, and get back his original purity.

The other part of reality, *ajiva*, consists of Dharma and Adharma, in addition to Pudgala, which means matter, and it is called 'astikaya' as it occupies space, and it is made of atoms, without size, and is eternal. The category of 'Akasha' is that entity which pervades the mundane universe (loka) and the transcendent region of the liberated souls (aloka), which allows the subsistence of all other substances like Dharma, Adharma, *jiva*, and Pudgala. The meaning of Dharma in Jainism is not as commonly understood in Hinduism, and does not have any ethical implications. Dharma means motion, and Adharma is state of rest, which gives rise to immobility. While Dharma and Adharma have attributes of extension, the time is infinite, just as the universe is eternal. The universe goes through a number of cycles over the period of time. Dharma is the condition under which movement takes place, like water, which permits the fish to swim in it. Adharma is the one, which makes the things stable, and gives rise to immobility.

Jainism takes a realistic, practical, and pluralistic view of reality. The concept of 'Ahimsa', 'Anekantavada' and 'Asceticism' are central to Jain philosophy:

1. **Ahimsa:** The doctrine of non-violence, non-injury, non-killing, is a major concept in the Jain philosophy. The concept is extended to such an extent that there should be no violence even against an enemy. Of Mahavira, the Sutras say, "Always well guarded, he bore the pains caused by grass, cold, fire, flies, and gnats. In his travel, when the dogs bit him, when he was struck with a stick, when they cut his flesh, he endured them all, undisturbed, proceeded on his way to Nirvana".

Ahimsa extends to all forms of life. It is the first among the five vows taught by Mahavira. A man should neither kill living beings, nor help others to do it. Hence as a precautionary measure, one should meditate on five things: carefulness in speech, carefulness of mind, in walking, in lifting and laying down things, and thoroughly seeing one's food and drink. Ahimsa produces the Karma that liberates one from the karmic elements, (that make one get struck in the cycle of birth and death).

All the monks and orthodox Jains practise the principle of Ahimsa even today. They strain

the water in white muslin before drinking it. The monks clean the area where they sit and where they walk, with a small broom, so that they do not harm the insects by stepping on them. They do not take food after the sunset, for the fear that they may not be able to see the food and water clearly, and by that act, they may harm the insects and lowly creatures.

The principle of ahimsa is not just borne out of compassion for the fellow creatures, but causes Karma that leads to the freedom from bondage.

Jainism has devised *five vows* and *three jewels* to get over the Karma that lands one in the cycle of births and deaths. Apart from the first vow, *Ahimsa* (non-violence), the second one is *Satya* (truthfulness), the third is *Asteya* (non-stealing), and fourth one is 'brahmacharya (abandoning lust for all kinds of things). And the last is 'aparigraha' (non-greed, non-attachment).

The five vows are to be practised according to the status of the individual. For a monk the vows are very strict and flexible for a householder. The strict practice is referred to as *mahavrata* and a relaxed interpretation of the rule for a householder is called *anuvrata*. For the householder *brahmacharya* means monogamy, and *aparigraha* means possession of only essential commodities. But a monk cannot own anything, and if he owns, he cannot attain salvation. He has to practise the five vows and three 'jewels', with care and caution, without any concession though it is slightly relaxed in the case of a householder. The monk has to aim at *kevala*, the perfect knowledge, or the knowledge par excellence, which liberates him from the cycle of births and death. All the vows and jewels are to be practised simultaneously, unlike in Hinduism, where one can choose one's own path according to his disposition.

The *three jewels* are *samyak darshana* (right faith), *samyak jnana* (right knowledge) and *samyak charita* (right character). A monk, or a householder, has to practice all the three jewels, and should not stray away from them, to escape from the 'Karma' that leads to bondage.

2. Anekantavada: Anekantavada is the central theme of Jain philosophy. It reconciles the stand of Vedanta philosophy that the nature of reality is unchangeable and that of Buddhism that there is no unchanging substance and everything is changing, and there is a universal flux (*aniccha*). It views reality as being pluralistic, and is expressing itself in many forms, and no absolute statement of reality is possible. Unlike Western dualistic approach, which states, 'either it is so or it is not', this Jain epistemology emphasises seven. i.e. *Sapta Bhangi* that are (seven situations), as following:

- a) A thing may be
- b) A thing may not be
- c) A thing may be or may not be
- d) May be is, but inexpressible or indescribable
- e) May be is not and inexpressible
- f) May be is, and not expressible
- g) May be is, is not, and inexpressible.

These seven situations exhaust the possibilities of reality, and lead to the spirit of free enquiry. This principle prevents intellectual arrogance, and gives person humility to listen to the argument of other person and appreciate it. The example of several blind men seeing the elephant, and each describing differently, one declaring that it is like a snake, feeling the tail, other saying that it is like a pillar, feeling the leg is the classic example of this perception. The complexity of the truth should make the seeker of truth humble, and make him accept the point of view of others with respect. This philosophy of the Jains contributed to the tolerance of different thoughts in India.

3. Asceticism: According to the Jain tenets, which are based on the ethics and *jewels* given above, asceticism should be followed all through life, not just in the fourth stage of life, as in Vedic religion. It does not mean that a person should lead a life devoid of joy and bliss, but lead a life in right path, which produces good results and prevents the person from indulging in bad Karma. Taking a practical view, it is advised to steer clear of the pitfalls, fully knowing them. The vows of asceticism are very strict for the monk, or mendicant, who cannot consider anything to belong to him, whereas a householder can claim limited possessions for carrying on the normal life. The purpose of practising this is to reduce the hold of Karma, and make man follow an uncluttered life voluntarily, so that he can proceed on the way to achieve his goals. The first goal is to achieve the state of *Kevala*, the state of supreme knowledge. The other one is to see his world more clearly. The first step in understanding the life is to understand its limitations. This principle does not mean running away from the world, or becoming passive.

The Jain emphasis on austerities is famous all over India. Fasting is an essential austerity, which can be followed by the monks and householders in different ways. A monk cannot claim to possess anything, and the householder has to have limited possessions. The austerities are both mental and physical. Jainism is known for its physical austerities, which to a layperson look extremely difficult and self-punishing. But the goal of all these, including fasting, is self-purification, to overcome the evil effects of Karma and nothing else.

4. Non-Theism: Jainism does not recognise God to be maintainer or creator of the world order. One sutra (aphorism) urges the mendicant not to believe in the power of God. The Jain view denies that the world is an effect, caused by an all powerful reality, and asks, if a Supreme Being created the world, who created the Supreme Being. If one has to assume that God made the universe, then the same argument should apply to the man who digs the ground and claims that he created new space. Mahapurana, a Jain classic, holds that no one should be attributed for creating this world. If God created the world, where was he before the creation, the Purana asks. Jains saw that the world operates as per the natural law, and prevented men from rationalising their deeds in terms of God's will. Only the man is responsible for himself, and by following a good path, he should attain freedom from Karma, and no supernatural being will come to his help. The views of Jainism on God or Supreme Being are same as that of the Buddhist school. The seventh and sixth centuries before Christ saw great upheaval in the beliefs of India, and Jainism came up to satisfy a particular need of the hour.

1.5 GANDHI AND JAINISM

Gandhi acknowledges the influence of Jainism in his upbringing, and subsequent career; his entire outlook is moulded by Jainism. Porbandar, where he was born, and the state of Gujarat, where he received his early education, has a significant Jain population.

The first influence on Gandhi was that of his mother, who took up fasting for self-purification, even though they were not Jains. Fasting was a part of her life, and this influenced the children profoundly. Even later, when he undertook fasting for self-purification, the fasting of his mother, which was a regular affair, was at the back of his mind. His mother would take up a kind of fasting, where she would not eat without seeing the sun. The children would line up outside, to spot the sun on a cloudy day, and when they spotted him, would call out the mother to see. Gandhi recalls, that ‘by the time she came out, the sun would disappear, disappointing all the children’. Fasting, which is essentially an all-religious practice, has acquired the flavour of Jainism in Gujarat, and it had an influence on Gandhi. Just as the Jain tenets preach fasting for self-purification, Gandhi would also do it for the same purpose, not to pressurise or influence others.

Gandhi also followed the asceticism, as enjoined by the Jainism, though he did not accept people calling him an ascetic. His concept of simple living and high thinking is the one prescribed by the religion. For the inmates of Sabarmati Ashram, he prescribed eleven vows, out of which many are vows of the Jainism.

There were eleven vows that were prescribed to the residents of the Sabarmati Ashram. The first five vows of truth, non-violence, non-stealing, Brahmacharya, and non-possession were extended to suit the requirements of the Ashram. The first five are the vows of Jainism, and he said that all of them are inter-related, and the violation of any one of them would lead to the total violation of the entire code of conduct of the Ashram. Ahimsa for Gandhi was not just a means or a way, but a creed and a religion, a philosophy of life. When the civil disobedience movement turned violent, in a village called Chauri Chaura, Gandhi withdrew the entire movement, stating that the people were not ready for the principle of non-violence, and that the movement has to be resumed after the country was ready for that. He writes, “non-violence is a spiritual food we have to take continually. There is no thing as satiation” (Harijan, 2.4.1938).

Gandhi defined non-violence in different contexts and circumstances, and some of them are inspired by the Jain thought-form:

- Non-violence is a law of suffering.
- Not a weapon of the weak.
- Soul force, an attribute of the soul.
- As long as physical existence is there, perfect non-violence cannot be practised.
- Goodwill towards all life.
- Not being violent even to snakes, scorpions and other poisonous creatures.

Gandhi and Anekantavada

If Gandhi did not take an extreme stand on any issue, we may say that it is the result of inherent Jain tenet of Anekantavada, which does not take a rigid stand on any issue, but aims at approaching the truth with humility, with respect to the opinion of the other person. When someone pointed out that there was contradiction between his two statements, he said that always, the later statement should be taken, and the earlier statement should be ignored, as it was made under the circumstances that existed earlier.

Gandhi writes in *Young India*, 21.1.1926: “My Anekantavada is peculiarly my own....I

very much like the doctrine of manyness of reality. It is this doctrine which has taught me to judge a Mussalman from his point of view and a Christian from his. Formerly, I used to resent the ignorance of my opponents. Today I love them because I am gifted with the eye to see myself as others see me and vice versa. I want to take the whole world in the embrace of my love.”

Gandhi's theory of Karma also comes close to the Jain perception. In Jainism, Karma is both the cause and the effect. Karma is a cause for getting the past corrected, and also necessary for future, so that good deeds lead to good happenings in future, as per the belief of Gandhi. Gandhi's adherence to the tenet of Ahimsa is legendary, and his non-violent resistance attracted the world attention, and brought in many practitioners, who by following the principle, brought about dramatic changes in their society.

1.6 BUDDHISM: FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS AND THE EIGHT FOLD PATH

The Life and Time of Buddha

The seventh and sixth centuries before Christ were a time of turmoil and upheaval in Indian philosophy. There were at least three currents of thought. The first was that of sacrificial Karma, and by the force of magical rites, one could achieve his desire. The second was that of Upanishads, by which the self-realisation was the ultimate goal, and everything else was unimportant. The third was the nihilist school of thought, which propagated that there was no law, no abiding reality, and everything comes to being by some unknown fate. At such time, Buddha was born.

Buddha was born near Kapilavastu, a small town north of Banares, in Nepal, in 563 B.C. His father, a king of Sakya tribe, named his son as Siddhartha, the wish fulfilling one. The sages warned his father that his son would become a ruler or a mendicant; his father surrounded him with great luxury, so that he is not affected by the day-to-day life of the common people. One day, travelling through the city, Siddhartha first saw a man crippled by old age. Then after that, he saw a man, rendered helpless by fever, then a corpse being carried to the cremation ground, and finally a wandering mendicant with calm and serene composure. Seeing all these, he was moved so much that he decided to forsake all his luxuries and seek the truth. He returned to the palace, and had a look at his wife and son for the last time, and set out on his 'great renunciation' that very night. He entered the forest for meditation.

Hoping to get enlightenment, he spent six years in penance, but with no results. Near Bodh Gaya, he met five ascetics. Soon, he realised that they could not help him, and set out to attain enlightenment through meditation. For seven weeks, he sat under a papal tree, and according to legend, evil forces tried to dissuade him from his goal. Determined, he carried on, and at the end of seventh week, he arrived at the much-sought enlightenment. Then he became the Buddha, the enlightened one, and the exalted one.

His enlightenment occurred around 528 B.C. His first disciples were the five ascetics. Thus began the Sangha, the Buddhist ascetic order. For the next forty years, he travelled and preached, gathering more and more followers. In his eightieth year, when he was journeying to Kusinagar, with his disciples, he realised that his end was near, as he suffered from food poisoning. All the followers gathered, and Buddha preached his last sermon, and told them to work for their deliverance, and attain 'nirvana'. Thereafter, he

gave up his worldly body, and remained in the world as source of enlightenment.

Early Buddhist Literature: The early Buddhist literature is in Pali language, and consists of three different collections. The first is called the Sutta, that relates to the doctrines; the second is Vinaya, relating to the discipline of monks; and the third is Abhidhamma, which has the same subject as Sutta, but has dealt with it in a more theoretical and technical manner.

Sects in Buddhism

There are two sects in Buddhism, by name, Hinayana and Mahayana. 'Hinayana' means a smaller vehicle and the 'Mahayana' means a bigger vehicle. (Hina:small, Maha:big, Yana:vehicle). The ultimate goal of the Hinayana adherent is to attain his own Nirvana, whereas the ultimate goal of the Mahayana adherent is to not only seek his own salvation, but also to seek the salvation of all beings. The Hinayana goal was lower, and hence the instruction he received, the efforts he made to achieve salvation was lower than what a Mahayana adherent would be expected to do. The Hinayana adherent could achieve salvation in three lives, and the Mahayana adherent had to go on and on to achieve his own salvation, and the salvation of all beings. Since the goals are different in matter and substance, the sects get the names accordingly.

The Four Noble Truths

Buddha's teaching had *four noble truths*. They are:

1. There is suffering (dukkha) in the world.
2. The suffering has a cause
3. The suffering can be overcome by removing the cause of suffering
4. The eight-fold path to salvation is the means of overcoming suffering.

Firstly, suffering is universal, and no one is exempt from sorrow and disappointment. The *second* principle clearly indicates that there are specific causes of suffering, and Buddha declared that the desires are the great causes of suffering. Cravings for wealth, power, fame, and material things, thinking that they would bring happiness, are the root cause. Instead of bringing happiness, craving stimulates greed, jealousy, and anger that cause violence. The only way to get away from suffering was to move away from desire.

The *third* truth, based on the cause and effect relation, states that suffering can be made to cease by removing the cause of suffering. Buddha stated that there is a determinable solution as well as the cause. Just as an effect is caused due to a prior event, it can be overcome by a subsequent act to remove the cause. The *fourth* noble truth indicates that suffering can be overcome by following the eight-fold path, which is interrelated.

The Eight Fold Path

The eight fold path is as follows:

1. **Right views:** Truth should be separated from the falsehood, right from the wrong, and immortality from the death. When the right view is grasped one realises the rightness of the four noble truths.

2. **Right resolve:** After knowing the truth, one should resolve to practise it. He should move steadfastly in the direction of the truth he has discovered. Taking a step in the right direction, he is one step nearer to the goal.
3. **Right speech:** The third step is Right speech. The Buddhist text, Dhammapada says if a man speaks or acts with evil thought, evil will follow, like the wheel following the foot of the ox that draws carriage. In his 'Sermon on Abuse', Buddha underlines the importance of not slandering or vilifying another.
4. **Right conduct:** The fourth step is the right conduct. Thinking and talking are incomplete without action. Right resolution and right speech should lead to the right conduct. The five important principles for right conduct are abstaining from destroying life, from theft, fornication, lying and drunkenness.
5. **Right livelihood:** The fifth step is the right livelihood, as it enjoins one to earn the livelihood by honest means. A living can be earned without harming others. Any livelihood, which debases and cheapens life or uses others for achieving one's own ends, is not right.
6. **Right effort:** The sixth step is the right effort. Continuous effort is needed to reach one's goal, and evil thoughts have to be banished and right ones have to be adopted.
7. **Right mindfulness:** The seventh step is the right-mindfulness. The quality of thought determines the person's life, and Buddha says, just as the rain breaks through an ill thatched house, so passion will break through an unreflecting mind. Mind is the source of bliss or corruption.
8. **Right concentration:** The eighth step is the right concentration, an intense form of right-mindedness. Right concentration separates the good from the evil, and the truth from falsehood. It perfects one's wisdom and virtue.

The four noble truths provide both the goal and means of reaching it. The eight-fold path was described by Buddha as the 'middle path', a path between indulgence and mortification. He said that the truths are not divinely revealed, but are a product of reason and experience. They allow one to be in line with Dhamma (righteousness), and view the reality in terms of Karma, and based on the doctrine of 'aniccha' (impermanence).

1.7 GANDHI AND BUDDHISM

Gandhi considers all the great religious leaders as great teachers. He says, "Buddha, Jesus and Muhammad- they were all warriors of peace in their own style. We have to enrich the heritage left by these world teachers" (Harijan, 28-1-1939).

"Gautama himself, when he saw oppression, injustice, and death around him and when he saw darkness in front of him, at the back of him and on each side of him went out in the wilderness and remained there fasting and praying in search of light"(Speech at a public meeting in Toungoo, Burma, 18.4.1929).

Following are the excerpts of his speech delivered as reply to the Buddhists' Address, Colombo, on November 15, 1927.

"It is my deliberate opinion that the essential part of the teachings of the Buddha now forms an integral part of Hinduism. It is impossible for Hindu India today to retrace her steps and go behind the great reformation that Gautama effected in Hinduism".

“Gautama was himself a Hindu of Hindus. He was saturated with the best that was in Hinduism, and he gave life to some of the teachings that were buried in Vedas, and which were overgrown with weeds.”

“Buddha never rejected Hinduism, but he broadened its base. He gave it a new life and a new interpretation”.

“His whole soul rose in indignation against the belief that a being called God required for His satisfaction the living blood of animals in order that he might be pleased—animals who were his own creation. He therefore, reinstated God in the right place and dethroned the usurper”.

1.8 SUMMARY

Hinduism, very often has been described as a way of life, rather than as religion. It encompasses schools from atheism to polytheism, and has six schools of philosophy. Pluralism is an essential feature of this religion. The three authorities of Hinduism have been commented upon, written about by all the eminent teachers and theoreticians of various schools of Vedanta philosophy.

Gandhi was proud to be a Hindu, but questioned many a practice contained in these codes. He felt that many laws were inserted subsequently without authority and wanted everything to be examined in the light of social well-being. Gandhi was influenced by the Jain concept of metaphysics, philosophy, and cosmology and its main tenet non-violence, which had to be practised even under extreme circumstances. The principles of ‘Anekantavada’ also influenced Gandhi. In Buddhism, Gandhi was impressed by the message of compassion given by Buddha and the four noble truths and the eight fold path to Nirvana.

1.9 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Bring out the influence of Indic religions on Gandhi’s concept of Ahimsa.
2. Explain the sources of Hinduism.
3. How did Gandhi conceptualise Hinduism?
4. Discuss the impact of Jain tradition on Gandhi.
5. Examine Eight Fold Path to *Nirvana*. Why did Buddha call them ‘middle path’?
6. Write short notes on the following:
 - a) Anekantavada
 - b) Jain Atheism

SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 2 SEMITIC RELIGIONS: JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

Structure

2.1 Introduction

Aims and Objectives

2.2 Judaism: History, Theology, Philosophy

2.3 Christianity: The Teachings and Basic Doctrines

2.4 Gandhi and Christianity

2.5 Islam: Spread of Islam, The Holy Quran

2.6 Gandhi and Islam

2.7 Summary

2.8 Terminal Questions

Suggested Readings

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The Semitic religions are based on monotheism, with an ethical stand. They interpret human life in terms of concepts like God, creation, revelation, law, sin, believer and non-believer, and Judgement. The main features of Semitic religions can be summarised as follows, on broad terms:

There is a single divine being, personal in nature, connected to the humankind through a prophet or a messenger. God has created the world as a reality distinct from Himself.

Religion began with a revelation from God, who gave the laws of relationship with God and between human beings, in which the justice occupies a prominent place, and any injustice is bound to incur the wrath of God. All men will be judged on the basis of obedience to this Law.

Except Judaism, the other two religions have the concept of believer and the non-believer, and it is the duty of the believer to bring the non-believer to the order of believers.

All the three religions had origin in the desert, and their founders came from among the people who later became followers of the religion.

Gandhi was very much impressed with the Semitic religions, even though he did not have much contact with Judaism. He says that Jesus Christ and Muhammad are world teachers, and was highly impressed by the *Sermon on the Mount*, which, he says transformed him. He included the Christian and Islamic worship in his Ashram prayers.

Aims and objectives

After reading this Unit, you would be able to understand:

- The spirit of Semitic religions-Judaism, Christianity and Islam
- History of each of Semitic religions, and the circumstances in which they were born.
- How they influenced Gandhi in his outlook of life and social outlook.
- The principles of Semitic religions, necessary to understand the social and political milieu in India.

2.2 JUDAISM: HISTORY, THEOLOGY, PHILOSOPHY

Judaism is the oldest of the three Semitic religions, which introduced the concept of Monotheism. Its basic scripture, “Old Testament” is viewed as an exhaustive document, indicating the God’s will for humanity. Its Hebrew scriptures were written around 450 BC, and notable among them, is the Jewish book of divine instruction, the “Torah”. This book contains five Books of Moses. These five books are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. This scripture also encompasses the Prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, Isaih, Jeremiah, and Ezckiel, and twelve Minor Prophets. It also contains Writings: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Song of Songs, Ruth, Esther, Daniel, Chronicles, and Ezra Nhemiah. The entire Jewish holy literature is called “TaNaK”, containing the first letters of Torah, Nebium, and Ketubim, meaning Law, Prophets, and Writings respectively.

The book of Exodus gives the account of how Moses led the people of Israel out of their miserable condition in Egypt and led them to the wilderness of Sinai. The book says that Moses went up the mount, and brought from the Lord, the following Ten Commandments to the people of Israel.

1. Though shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.
2. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
3. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work.
4. But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates.

For in six days Lord made the heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

5. Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.
6. Thou shalt not kill.
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
8. Thou shalt not steal
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.
10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s.

These Ten Commandments establish the ethical monotheism in Judaism.

History

‘Torah’ and ‘Prophets’ tell the twin stories of exile from Paradise, which concerns the entire humanity, and the second one about the people of Israel, the people of the Torah. Judaism traces its history from Adam and Eve, and loss of Paradise, and the Garden of Eden. The first human beings on earth lost the paradise because of their rebellion against God, as the holy books maintain. The people had acquired the Promised Land as per the God’s wish, revealed in Torah. However, they lost to Assyrians, the northern kingdom, in 722 B.C. And in 586 B.C. they lost the southern kingdom to Babylonia (present day Iraq). The Babylonians destroyed the temple of Jerusalem. In 530 B.C., the Persians conquered the Babylonians, and called the Jews to return and rebuild their temple. This was done, and around 450 BC with the consent of temple priests, and *Torah of Moses* was declared as the law of the land.

‘Torah’ describes the exile as a consequence of rebellion, and later repentance, and restoration of the Promised Land as reward for repentance, and adherence to Torah. The first document relating to oral tradition, Mishnah (200 BC), and the commentaries on Mishnah, namely, the Talmud of the land of Israel, and the Talmud of Babylonia (600 A.D) augmented the Scriptural law of Judaism. The Torah was enlarged to include Talmud.

By 70 B.C., more Jewish population lived outside Palestine than inside. Due to upheavals of migration, the temple system with priests lost its importance, and the Synagogue system with Rabbis came into existence. The synagogue was a place of worship, a place to meet, and a place to study.

Theology

The theology was written in about first six centuries of the Christian era. After the destruction of the temple, Rabbis took over the Jewish theology, and the dialogues between the early prophets and the masters and disciples, were handed down by oral tradition, and laws were laid down for topics covered by scriptures, and laws were also framed for topics not covered by the scriptures. The same Rabbis produced the commentaries on scriptures also.

The *monotheism* of Judaic doctrine which is set forth in Scriptures is in strong contrast with the polytheism prevalent at that time. There was a fear that multiple Gods would be difficult to please or appease, and a single God, all powerful and omniscient, would be in a better position to take care of man’s needs. Man could make an appeal to Him, appeal to His kindness, and under all circumstances, he had to be just. He had to maintain equity and justice to create a world order.

Four Key Beliefs in Judaism

1. God’s world order regulates both public life and private life. God’s creation is perfect, and is in keeping with the world order. Those who possess Torah are the followers of God, and those who go against his will, the gentiles, reject him in favour of the idols. The present state of Israel is God’s wish to punish the Israel for its rebellion, and he has used gentiles (among the Jews, persons not belonging to Jewish people or faith) as the medium to punish the Israeli people.
2. The perfection of creation, which results in exact justice, ensures timelessness for human affairs, and ensures that there is a social commonwealth, which ensures that

- scarce resources, once allocated remain unchanged. The perfection also ensures complementarities, between God and man, who was created in God's image.
3. Israel's condition, public and personal, is due to standing up against the will of God. Since man defied the God, his sin that results from this defiance disrupts the world order. As it happened to Adam and Eve, it has happened to people of Israel also. God encourages repentance by punishing man's arrogance. When man repents, God forgives, and brings about an improvement in man's condition. Repentance means humility, and humility begets God's favour.
 4. God will restore perfection that was originally in his plan of creation. The death which existed because of sin would die, and the dead will be raised and judged for their deeds. And many having been justified will regain the paradise that was lost. Just as Adam and Eve regain the paradise, the people of Israel will get back their land of Israel, and idolaters will perish, and the remaining humanity, will know the God, and spend the eternity in His light.

Philosophy

The theology developed by the Rabbis up to sixth century AD, was amplified by the intellectuals and the philosophers. But the advent of Islam in the seventh century made it mandatory for Jewish philosophers to match the rational rigour of the Muslim philosophy. Therefore, it brought about a different kind of intellectual activity in Judaism. They had to study the Torah through the instruments of reason and discipline of philosophy. They had to match the general principles of Torah, and the scientific principles of Aristotle. How can the scriptural notion that God changes his mind, be reconciled with Aristotelian principle that change indicated imperfection? How can the principle that miracles change course of nature can be reconciled with the principle that laws of nature are immutable? If God is arbitrary, it goes against the nature of God himself.

The Judaic philosopher, in addition to philosophic questions, had to confront questions from his own people. How can God's chosen people remain homeless, and live in ghettos in hostile countries? How could the philosopher explain the prosperity of the sister religions, which came later, and prospered immensely? Also, the Judaism had to reconcile with the Greek philosophy, where the truth should stand the test of reason, and revelations should be subjected to these tests. There was an inherent contradiction between the reason and revelation. The Jew was hard put to reconcile between two truths, one personal, and another based on reason. If God is all forgiving, how can he take a decision to set aside his laws to forgive people? It was hard to reconcile faith and reason.

Judaism and Other Monotheistic Religions: Judaism's existence became precarious with Christianity becoming the approved religion of the state in the fourth century of the Christian era. Till then, Jews in Christian countries were tolerated to some extent. But as the Christianity gained official acceptance, the states were in a dilemma: should the killers of Christ be punished, or should they be kept alive, and ultimately converted, at the time of second coming of Christ? The pluralistic character of some states made survival easy for Jews, as the state did not come heavily on the Jewish minority. India's Jews, even though in small number, were treated well, and the synagogues in major towns bear a testimony for that. In Christian and Muslim countries, Judaism kept a low profile, as the Christians and Muslims defined the issues, and Judaism could not compete, and absorbed the ideas as much as it could. However, Judaism has made valiant efforts to retain its ethics, and try to accommodate the secular value system.

Reform, Orthodox, and Conservative Judaic Religious Systems: These three main streams in Jewish thought took shape between 1800 and 1850. The first school, Reform Judaism, which developed in the early nineteenth century, recognised the right to make changes, and classified the change as reform, to give it legitimacy. Second one to develop was Orthodox Judaism, which was a reaction to Reform Judaism. It did adopt traditional Judaism, but selectively. But it denied the validity of change. As a reaction to both, positive Historical Judaism came, and is known in America as Conservative Judaism. It maintained that change is possible, as reform, only if it can stand the test of historical validity, upholding theological principles.

Judaism and Modernity: With the American Constitution of 1787 and the French Revolution of 1789, the Jews in these countries aspired for the rights given to the majority population, and equality before law. The Jews tried to make out that ethnicity and nationality are two different issues, and both can reconcile with each other. They have met with success to some extent.

Conclusion: Judaism has been a religion of the individual and the family, and of everyday life. But the religion has suffered all through history, and contributed concepts like the Diaspora, exodus, holocaust, and ghettos. All these concepts evoke a response of sadness and suffering. In spite of that, the outlook of the religion is cheerful, and life accepting. A poem by Prof. Albert Einstein (an eminent scientist and a Jew) given below, is a witness to the 'never say die' spirit of the religion.

"That man is here for the sake of
Other men...
Above all, for those upon whose
smile and
Well-being our own happiness
depends, and also
For the countless unknown souls
with whose
fate we are connected by a band of
sympathy.
Many times a day I realize how
much my own
outer and inner life is built upon the
Labors
of my fellow men, living and
Dead, and
how earnestly I must exert myself
in order to
give in return as much as I have
received
and am still receiving."

2.3 CHRISTIANITY: THE TEACHINGS AND BASIC DOCTRINES

Of all the Semitic religions, Christianity is associated with economic development, much more than other two, Judaism and Islam. It has shown a long association with the development of temporal institutions, which aided secular development. Even in India, when secular institutions started developing, the social leaders like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda, and the educated elite started showing interest in Christianity, with the belief that there is a direct relation between traditional values and backwardness, as opposed to adopting modern values, which they thought are embodied in Christianity. Even though this trend was short lived, it shows the capacity of this religion, as a factor in institution-building in secular atmosphere.

This apart, Christianity has been one of the major religions in the world, practised all over the world, and in all the six continents. Its contribution to theology, philosophy, and other social sciences has been significant. The architecture it inspired in building the churches has resulted in creating monumental works.

There have been two major divisions within this religion, one being Roman Catholic and other Protestant movement, started by Martin Luther. In addition, there have been many denominations of each of these divisions, some region specific and some based on minor differences. Since the religion was started with Jesus Christ, it is necessary to know the essential teachings, and the philosophy and ideals for which he lived.

The information about the birth, parentage, life and preaching, and ultimate crucifixion of Jesus Christ is generally known. It is important to know the factors that led to making Christianity a universal religion and its special appeal to Gandhi, and the special qualities that made it universally acceptable.

A very uncommon common man: Many great teachers were born in the upper strata of the society whose parents or guardians possessed property, and could give early education to their children. Jesus was not born to any well to do parents, did not study under any teacher, and followed a profession demanding little skill in a small town. But his teachings attracted many people, and his miracles established his superior abilities. Even if one does not believe in the miracles, his gospels, full of spiritual experience and conviction, endeared him to the masses around him.

Originality of Jesus' teachings: Many people claim that there was nothing original in his teachings, and the ideas were already there in Judaism and Greek-Roman tradition. Even if it is granted that this may be so, presenting them and highlighting them to suit the need of the time calls for a genius. If the words he had spoken and the parables he delivered did not contain new ideas, there would have not been such a violent reaction to what he said, leading to his crucifixion. He was a revolutionary of his time, and his ideas took a long time for acceptance, and the society of his time was not ready to take his sermons. He was ahead of his time.

Basic Doctrines of Christianity

The Concept of Brotherhood was given a new meaning by Christ, and it became universal brotherhood, all being the children of one father 'God'. Not just the brotherhood had to be assumed, it had to be demonstrated and practised. Jesus said, "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you". His

love extended to his enemies, his detractors, and evil doers. Anybody, who had a germ of goodness deserved to be loved, and Jesus asked, “And who has not?”

The Concept of Divine Father: All religions have unknown elements and fear of unknown keeps the flock on the fold. The invisible powers have to be propitiated, by making offerings, holding ritual ceremonies, and many other ways, so that they do not harm the survivors and the faithful. Jesus raised this unknown Supreme Being to the father image, God as father. Unseen, but always watching his children, not only their outward actions, but inward motives, the way in each overcomes their crises, and the good and the bad in them. The all watchful Father was always around, beseeching his children not to walk away from the path of righteousness.

The Future Life, its influence: All Semitic religions have the concept of future life, a life after death. Jesus brought the concept of *future judgement*, by which, the temporal inequalities would be redressed. The belief that a future judgement is to take place, in which the conduct of men would be evaluated, according to the conduct in this life, has had influence in determining the conduct in this life. It has elevated the moral tone, and has brought fresh converts into the fold.

Importance of Faith: Faith is the key in Christ’s teachings. While other religions may exhort the practitioners to believe in their doctrines, and to practice them, Jesus said that faith would give the believer the salvation and forgiveness, and other boon if required, could be obtained by faith. The ancient world was suffering from a consciousness of the sin. When the world was getting weighed down by the concept of sin, Jesus said that the faith in Him would relieve the soul of the burden of sin. When the faith has elevated and purified the character, man can start on a higher course of life, as the faith becomes the healer.

The Demand for Truth: It is said that nature itself establishes truth. That which pretends will perish and men in conflict with reality cannot hold on to their positions for long. The spirit of enquiry should ascend all the hurdles, and advance towards absolute truth in all directions. This was emphasised by St. Paul, who said, “Prove all things”. “We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth”. The adherence to truth in the Christianity is so strong that those who work for preconceived notions and interested parties can be rated as those opposed to Christianity.

Law of Kindness: When the ancient world was holding on to the concept of “eye for an eye, limb for the limb”, Jesus gave the call for kindness. Fellow men are to be treated “as a loving Father would treat his loved and erring children”. He taught men to “love their enemies, to do good to them that hate them”. This principle has enormously influenced the thinkers like Count Leo Tolstoy, and Gandhi. Both of them made it the guiding principle of their lives.

His relation to God the Father: Jesus said, “He who hath seen Me hath seen the Father”. By this saying, Jesus revealed and exemplified the Divine Father in his person. He provided the ordinary man a person in flesh and blood, with exemplary conduct to see the Supreme Being, at least in part. He was aware that he is only a part of Holy Father, when he said, “No man can see my face and live”.

His relation to Mankind: Jesus could relate to the entire mankind, with his unity of will and spirit with his Supreme Father. He could be the Son of God and son of man, and the common man could relate to him. God was not a distant all powerful force, but a

loving Father. He, the Son of God, was here, to carry out His wish and will, and he could reveal the mind and nature of his Father to the man.

His treatment of Women and Children: When the status of women in his times was inferior, Jesus was very kind, considerate, and concerned. When he spoke of the marriage union, he made no distinction of subjection between the parties.

Towards Children: Jesus had a special affection, and always he spoke of them, and to them, with special consideration. “To become as a little child”, was an aspiration, and this has become the ideal of Christians. Since he was the “son of God”, the filial relation gets emphasised all through his speech and conduct, and inspires love for the children.

Of Miracles: Jesus is said to have performed many miracles, which go against the physical law. But his teachings, even without the miracles, are everlasting and beneficial to the mankind. Maybe, miracles are required to establish some belief. Some Christians believe that when a person has such a high spiritual and moral status, he may be aware of the technique of establishing the supremacy of mind over matter. However, Christianity can stand its ground even without miracles.

Liberation from Lower Nature: When Jesus would admonish people for their shortcomings, they heard him. Even though it was not palatable, his words reached their conscience, and made them think, for he had no selfish interest, no personal gain, but only a desire to relieve the man of his burden.

His Mode of Teaching needs no explanation. His parables, which gave examples from day to day life, were concrete, practical, and definite. His imagery and metaphors transported one from the mundane to the spiritual sphere. All kinds of people in the society figure in the parables, and every man can relate himself to one of the characters.

2.4 GANDHI AND CHRISTIANITY

Gandhi's interaction with Christianity has been long and fruitful, though was repelled by it when he was in the school. Even a local conversion to Christianity created a bad impression on the young Gandhi. When he went to England, he met a Christian from Manchester, and narrated his bitter experience. Then this man sold a copy of the Bible to him, and Gandhi states that he started reading *Old Testament*.

The *New Testament* though impressed Gandhi. He read the “*Sermon on the Mount*”, which, he says, “went straight into my heart”. He further continues: “I compared it with the Gita. The verses-‘But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also’, and ‘If any man take away thy coat, let him have your cloak too’ delighted me beyond measure and put me in mind of Shamal Bhatt’s ‘For a bowl of water, give a goodly meal’ etc., My young mind tried to unify the teachings of Gita, The *Light of Asia*, and the *Sermon on the Mount*. That renunciation was the highest form of religion appealed to me greatly.”(Autobiography, Part I, CH XX)

Gandhi emphasised that prayer is important, but held that congregational worship is no true worship. He quotes Jesus, “When though prayest, though shalt not be as the hypocrites are; but enter into thine inner chamber and having shut the door, pray to the Father, which is in secret”.

Gandhi called Jesus “one of the greatest teachers of the world”. On another occasion, he said, “In my humble opinion, he (Jesus) was a prince among politicians.....He gave the devil his due. He even shamed him and is reported never once to have yielded to his inclination” (Young India , 25-8-1920). He called Jesus Christ, “A prince among passive resisters”.

2.5 ISLAM: SPREAD OF ISLAM, THE HOLY QURAN

Islam was born in the desert of Arabia, where Bedouin tribes lived. These were tribes of the desert, true sons of the soil. The desert had its stamp on the character of the people. The climate was extreme and water was scarce; burning hot sun, hot sands and storms were the realities they had to live with. In such hostile ground, the tribesmen tended their animals for livelihood. They depended on the camel for transport, and the sun and the moon for time and guidance. Under such circumstances, where they had little to give, hospitality was a virtue; they were in physical danger all the time; bravery was a virtue. Where fear could easily overtake a man, manliness was a virtue.

In such land, as if to answer the needs of men, Prophet Muhammad was born. The tribes, which were many in number, fought amongst themselves, followed polytheism, animism, and had strange rituals. They had to be unified, and made into nation. Hence was the advent of Islam.

Spread of Islam: The spread of Islam in the West Asian countries was more due to socio-economic causes prevailing at that time. It gave a relief from quarrels and strife, and various practices like polytheism, and animistic worship. The end product was a new faith and a new state, which suited the local population. In areas outside West Asia, various factors like discriminatory taxes against non-Muslims, desire of the leaders of society to become part of the body politic, the desire of the bureaucracy to preserve its privileges, the desire of the land-owning class not to pay the tax, and the desire to become a part of the upcoming empire, and various kinds of threats and privileges led to the spread of Islam. In the centuries following its birth, Islam spread by conquest and occupation, religious activism and peaceful missionary work. Gradually, it spread to North Africa, Europe, Arabian Peninsula, Central Asia, and up to Indus River in the east. In South East Asia, in countries like Malaya, and Sumatra, it was due to traders, who established themselves in these countries.

Holy Scripture: The holy scripture, Qur'an, considered to be the direct and true word of God, was transmitted by angel Gabriel to Muhammad , when the prophet was in a state of divine inspiration akin to trance. In this state, the prophet was ordered to recite (Iqra) the word of God, and hence Qur'an, a “recitation”.

After the death of the Prophet, the holy book could not provide specific answers to the questions posed by the growing community in search of extra guidance, the faithful turned to the life, habits and practices of the Prophet, and thus arose the practice of compiling, recording, and classifying the tradition. This is known as Hadith. Out of this compilation, grew the subsequent material, a completed product. ‘Sunnah,’ gave the customary way of doing things, which expresses the ideal behaviour for the pious, orthodox Muslims, who call themselves the followers of the custom (ahl al sunnah) from which the term, Sunni was born.

The prophet's position in Islam is venerable: Kalimah, the holy word says, “There is no Deity but God, and Muhammad is his only apostle”. This phrase is the foundation

of Islamic faith, and it differentiates the believer from the non-believer. From this exalted position, the prophet becomes a human being, a warm and kind person, in Hadith which is a collection of the practices of the prophet.

The Holy Qur'an: *Qur'an* contains 114 chapters, which are arranged in decreasing order of length. There is a Mecca portion, and Madina portion, and they reveal a prophetic genius. Its essential theme is the *Unity of God*. The believer is exhorted to accept the envoys of God, from Adam, continuing with Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and finally Muhammad. Throughout the Holy Scripture, two veins run. One is that of impersonal, remote, and all powerful God, who can punish the guilty and sinful, and the other, compassionate and merciful, who gives the purest form of divine benevolence and love.

The great achievement of Prophet Muhammad was to disentangle the earlier beliefs, without cutting them abruptly, and retaining some elements of them, without causing a cultural and emotional shock. This involved cutting out totally some earlier practices and retaining some, after reinterpreting them in the monotheistic way. They were reinterpreted to accommodate them into the broader, monotheistic values of *Qur'an*. Even though some of the elements of earlier faith were retained, they were put into a new structure, which was capable of handling them in the concept of strong monotheism, described in Arabic as 'Tauhid'.

Five Pillars Of The Faith: The practice of Islam involves following the five pillars of faith, which lead to being a faithful follower of the religion.

a) **Kalimah:** The holy word. When translated, it reads as follows:

'There is no deity but God. Muhammad is the apostle of God'. This sentence, recited everyday during the prayers, establishes the principle of monotheism, and "Tauhid", the principle as ordained in holy *Qur'an*.

b) **Namaz, the prayer:** Each person has to pray five times a day, after following the principle of ritual cleanliness. The prayer can be done even at home, but ritual cleanliness is more easily achieved in the mosque. However, the Friday prayer is to be done in the mosque.

c) **Zakath, the almsgiving:** Each person is ordained to give a portion of his wealth as alms, depending on his capacity. Certain class of persons, who are not capable of giving, are exempted from this.

d) **Roza, the fasting:** Each Mussalman has to fast in the month of Ramadan. In this month, a person has to fast from sunrise to sunset, during this period should abstain from food, drink, tobacco and sex. Those who are unable to follow, like pregnant women, children of pre-puberty age, the aged, and the sick, are exempt from fasting.

e) **Haj, the pilgrimage to Mecca:** Each Mussalman has to do his pilgrimage to Mecca, provided he has the physical ability and means to undertake the journey. This practice has brought about a communication in the Muslim world, and has cultural and political significance. Even if a man is unable to go, he can experience the holiness and atmosphere of the pilgrimage in the company of the pilgrim, which is shared by all.

Law and Jurisprudence: During the formative period of law, there was no definitive interpretation, and it was done as per the customary tenets, by following some elements

of the Roman and pre-Islamic law. By the end of Umayyad period, about 725 and 750 A.D., the Qur'an and Sunnah became established as the principal sources of Muslim jurisprudence, and the body of jurists grew, who could develop these sources and find solutions to the hitherto unknown problems.

Hadith, the practices of the Prophet, was also a source of law, and to prevent different interpretations and narratives, a method was established by which the veracity of each recorded practice could be verified. This started after two to three hundred years after founding the religion, and by ninth century, A.D., the study was institutionalised, and a full-fledged scholarly tradition came into existence. The compilations of al-Bukhari (d.870) and Muslim (d.875) enjoy universal acceptance in Islam.

The legal edifice was completed with the introduction of the principle of consensus (Ijmah), which brought about integrity in the entire legal framework and the religious thought. This principle of consensus has origin in prophet's saying, "My community will not agree in error". Ijmah verifies the authenticity and guides correct usage of the 'sunnah' tradition, and reinforces the community's sense of divine origin of laws, which lead to a strong belief and respect for the law.

Sects within Islam: There are two major sects within Islam, and several minor sects. The major sects are *Sunni* and *Shia*. Sunni Muslims are traditionalists, and the word, Sunni, means "one on the path". (Sunnah means path, the path ordained by the Prophet). The other sect is Shia, which literally means "followers". They are the followers of Ali, the first cousin of Prophet, and the husband of his daughter, Fatima. The Shias maintain that Ali was the first legitimate Khalif, or successor to the Prophet, and others are usurpers. The Shias are in small number compared to the Sunnis, and may constitute about 8 to 10 percent of Sunni Muslim population. Other sects are too small in number, and are confined to specific regions. There are sub-sects which were part of the Shia sect, like the Zaidi branch, and Ismaili branch. Ismaili branch survives mainly in India and East Africa, and several offshoots of Ismailism like the Druze, the Nusairi and Yazidi sects display such extreme character that it is difficult to consider them as fully Muslim.

Sufi movement was an example of synthesis between theology and mystic movement in Islam. Sufism was a way of practising religion through the personal mystical experience. It was not against the orthodox Islam, and in many ways complemented it. Soon the power of popular Sufi movement began to be seen among the masses, and for the fear of being upstaged, the orthodoxy moved away from it, even though this movement gave strength and popular acceptance to the orthodoxy. In many countries like Iran, Sufism, along with orthodox religion, contributed to national revival.

Islam and the State: There is a close nexus between religion and state, and state is considered to be a device for upholding the faith. The Khalif is the chief executive of the state, without legislative powers, as all the laws have their origin in *Qur'an*. This institution was founded after the death of Prophet, and the Khalif was supposed to be the successor to the Prophet in temporal and spiritual powers. The institution of Khalif had a chequered history, and it was formally abolished by Turkish republic in 1924, and it created stir in the Muslim world, and many Muslim countries held a meeting in Cairo in 1926, to revive the institution, but it was of no avail. Gandhi launched the Khilafat movement in support of Muslims in India at the same time.

Islam and Society: Islamic states are facing many challenges in the recent times. All over the world, the increase in oil prices has given an advantage to the Arab world, which has

become cash rich, and is promoting pan-Islamist movement all over the world. At the same time, the international terrorism brought about negative perception to the community, and has put the moderate, upwardly mobile, and those who want to be upwardly mobile, into difficulty, as it has become difficult for them to shake off the label. The Orthodoxy is not ready to give up its grip, and the emerging middle class among Muslims are in a dilemma over demands of the modern world and orthodoxy.

2.6 GANDHI AND ISLAM

Gandhi included the “Kalimah” in the Ashram prayers. This brought out an angry reaction from one of his Hindu friends, “You have now given the Kalimah a place in the Ashram. What further remains to be done to kill your Hinduism”? About this, Gandhi wrote, in *Harijan*, (15-2-1942):

“I am confident that my Hinduism and that of the other Ashram Hindus has grown thereby. There should be in us an equal reverence for all religions. Badshah Khan (Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan) whenever he comes joins in the worship here, with delight. He loves the tune to which the Ramayana is sung, and he listens intently to the Gita. His faith in Islam is not lessened thereby. Then, why may I not listen to the Qur’an with equal reverence and adoration in my heart?”

Gandhi included the well known verse from Qur’an into the Ashram worship, known as “Al Fateha”. His views on Islam have been dealt at length in the succeeding sections.

1. I take refuge in Allah, from Satan the accursed.

2. Say: He is the God the one and only
God, the Eternal absolute
He begetteth not, nor is he begotten,
And there is none like unto Him.

3. Praise be to God,
The Cherisher and Sustainer of worlds,
Most Gracious, most Merciful,
Master of the day of Judgement
Thee do we worship.
And thine aid we seek.
Show us the straight way,
The way of those on whom
Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace,
Those whose (portion) is not wrath
And who go not astray.

2.7 SUMMARY

Even though Judaism is the oldest among the Semitic religions, it did not prosper as much as its successor religions. The Jews think that it is due to incurring the wrath of God, by violating his commands. The Jews suffered displacement and persecution all through the history. Still, the community has shown resilience, and many a time they have reinvented themselves under hostile circumstances. It is essentially a religion of individual and family.

Even though the principles of Christianity look well accepted universally, Jesus Christ was a revolutionary of his time. Even though the religion faced many hurdles in its early years, it proceeded to become one of the major religions in the world. It brought out the concepts of brotherhood, faith in the Lord, adherence to truth, kindness and empathy towards women and children, and above all, the simplicity of teaching through parables and psalms.

Islam had its origin in Arabia, among the Bedouin tribesmen. It spread all over the world with vigorous preachers, who brought the word of God, 'Qur'an', which was given to the world through Prophet Muhammad. It further had two sects within itself, without any change in principles, but only in methods. It developed its jurisprudence, art, architecture, philosophy, theology, epistemology, and various other disciplines. It has spread in all the continents, and has a strong adherence by its followers.

2.8 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Explain the key beliefs of Judaism.
2. Bring out the basic doctrines of Christianity and how they influenced Gandhi.
3. Evaluate the significance of five pillars of Islamic faith.
4. Bring out the common features found in Semitic religions.
5. Discuss how the Semitic religions have shaped Gandhi's thinking.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 3 WESTERN PHILOSOPHY: GREEK TRADITION, RUSKIN, TOLSTOY AND THOREAU

Structure

3.1 Introduction

Aims and Objectives

3.2 Greek History, Tradition and Philosophy

3.3 John Ruskin

3.4 Leo Tolstoy

3.5 Henry David Thoreau

3.6 Gandhi and Thoreau

3.7 Summary

3.8 Terminal Questions

Suggested Readings

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Gandhi was born in a traditional Hindu family, but went to England for education at an early age. Coming from a small town in Gujarat must have resulted in a cultural shock, but Gandhi tried to adjust to the new environs by wearing western clothes, adopting their mannerisms, and understanding their culture.

In those days, all the educated Indians thought that the word, 'British' was synonymous with fairness, justice, and equity. The title of Dadabhai Naoroji's book, *Poverty and UnBritish Rule in India*, is an example. The presumption was that whatever was unfair and unjust, was 'UnBritish'. Around this time, the attitude of the educated Indian leadership was slowly changing, and leaders like Tilak and Gokhale were emerging stronger in India. At this juncture, it is interesting to note that Gandhi adopted Gokhale as his political guru. By doing so, Gandhi started on a moderate course, like all Indians educated in the western method.

Gandhi studied the western authors of his interest, right from Socrates, and Plato. But a few thinkers, who had compassion for the mankind, attracted his attention, and he studied them thoroughly, and started implementing their philosophy in his day-to-day life. Socrates appealed to him as a satyagrahi. Plato's concept of education is seen in his approach to education, where he stresses basic education. Tolstoy influenced him so much that he started a settlement, Ashram, and named it Tolstoy Farm; Ruskin influenced economic thought, and Thoreau, his idea of civil disobedience. Even though he went to the west in an impressionable age, we see that he matured over the years, imbibing the best in western philosophy and values.

Aims and objectives

After studying this Unit, you would be able to understand:

- The main currents in Greek tradition with an emphasis on the views of Socrates
- The economic views of Ruskin
- The brief history of non-resistance and the philosophy of Tolstoy
- Thoreau's conceptualisation of civil disobedience.

3.2 GREEK TRADITION: HISTORY, TRADITION AND PHILOSOPHY

Ancient Greece has been the cradle of western civilisation since the beginning of history. Greek art, literature, philosophy, metaphysics, epistemology, politics and ethics, astronomy, mathematics, logic etc., have shaped and moulded the western thought for many centuries and the process has continued even after the dawn of Christianity. Arnold Toynbee rightly remarked, "By seventh century after Christ, when ancient Greek civilisation may said to have finally dissolved, our own civilisation was ready to shoot up and thrive". W.C.K. Guthrie, the author of *A History of Greek Philosophy* is of the opinion that Greek philosophy forms the basis of western philosophy. He calls it 'the formative period' of western thought 'the making of the framework...until at least the latter part of nineteenth century' which is indicative of the 'dateless character' of Greek thought.

Greece, The Land and People

Greece, or Hellas as the Greeks called it, is a peninsula extending from the mainland Europe into the Mediterranean Sea. The land which could not support agriculture produced seafarers. The availability of excellent marble stone brought out the creativity in artists, sculptors and architects. Mountainous terrain where movement was difficult resulted in the formation of small city-states. City-state, which in Greek is the *polis*, meaning fortified site, contained the people, the fort, the city and the countryside. Of the city-states, two were significant. They were Athens, a seat of democracy and Sparta, essentially a military state. The year of first Olympiad that is 776 B.C., is marked as the beginning of Greek history.

The spirit of enquiry made Greeks the pioneers of rational thinking in Europe. There is hardly any area of enquiry that escaped the searching critical eye of Greeks. As Plato rightly remarked, 'philosophy is the child of wonder'. Religion and superstition never appealed to them, and in their search for reality they transcended their personal experience and became universal. Though, as Livingstone puts it, Greek thought suffered from two major limitations of 'difference of scale', aimed at universality and the thought was confined to the experiences of small city states and the 'difference of outlook between Greek and modern speculation', that is, it starts from universal to particular and the modern is vice versa. Yet their universal appeal cannot be ignored.

History of Greek Philosophy

Guthrie divides the history of Greek philosophy into two categories taking into account the difference of outlook and interest and also the centres of influence. Nevertheless the thread of continuity runs through, making them a continuum.

Pre-Socratic period

During the Pre-Socratic period the focus of the philosophers was on the nature of universe and the true basis of conduct. Thales, considered as the 'first European philosopher' belongs to this period. **Milesian School** focussed on the study of *matter* as an intellectual pursuit. The nature of external world and its unity were the subjects of discussion. This school held that world has one substance, a single principle which is manifested differently in the beings and the change is due to its intrinsic character. **Heraclitus**, considered *fire* or the *hot and dry* as the basic substance and concluded that everything is in a state of flux, emphasising movement. His influence on the philosophical thought of Greece was phenomenal. **Democritus**, an advocate of materialism, gave the theory of atom, and the spontaneous movement of atom. His political views about the origin of state, political obligation, good ruler influenced Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.

As opposed to this monism, **Empedocles** advocated that four substances have made up this world and they are earth, water, air and fire. Thus the focus of early Socratic philosophers was towards understanding the nature, its components and the change.

Pythagoras focussed on the *study of form* with an intention to find a sound basis for life; applied the mathematical truths to the human life and came out with the principles of asceticism as an outcome of the principle of limit, community living and the doctrine of three classes based on the innate quality of the soul.

Socratic period

The relative philosophy of Sophists was essentially 'practical and political'. Sophists were greatly responsible for the shift of focus of philosophical enquiry from nature to man. **Protagoras**, 'the most famous' (Guthrie) philosopher gave the doctrine of 'man the measure'. He writes: "Man is the measure of all things, of the things that are that they are, and of the things that are not that they are not". This became the basis of empiricism of Sophists.

Socrates

Socrates (470-399 B.C.), an Athenian, believed that he had a divine commission to make others understand their mistake and improve. Aristotle was of the opinion that Socrates brought a shift of focus in philosophy 'from nature to practical morality and political thought'. Later Cicero writes "Socrates called down philosophy from the skies and implanted it in the cities and homes of men". He "brought it into communal life, compelling it to attend to questions of virtue and vice, good and evil".

Socrates followed his inner conviction under all circumstances, as is evident during his lifetime and even at his death. He never compromised with untruth and ignorance. He stood out alone in support of what he considered to be right. His action corroborated what he thought. There was no gap between preaching and practice. He was indifferent to pleasure and pain; what mattered most was the good of the soul, not the body.

Karl Popper in his book *Open Society and its enemies* (Vol I, p.207) beautifully summarises the mission of Socrates. He writes, "Socrates' death is the ultimate proof of his sincerity.....He showed that a man could die, not for fate and fame and other grand things of this kind, but also for the freedom of critical thought, and for a self-respect which has nothing to do with self-importance or sentimentality".

Though Socrates did not write anything, the details about his life, trial and conversations in the prison and drinking poison (hemlock) can be found in Platonic dialogues and Xenophon's writing. The great noble speech of Socrates is found in Plato's *Apology*; Plato's *Crito* is devoted to Socrates' refusal to escape punishment. The views of Socrates can be summed up as follows:

1. **Method of Socrates:** He followed inductive method, where general truth is understood through particular cases. Socrates followed question-answer method of analysis. This served two purposes: firstly it aimed at discovering truth and secondly it educated others to understand truth.
2. **Ethics is more important than science because of its practical use:** Xenophon opined that on four grounds Socrates rejects the pursuit of science and prefers study of ethics: Human affairs concerns us and therefore one cannot ignore the study of it; No two scientists come to an agreement as to what is correct in science; natural science is of no use; the secrets of nature are unfathomable.
3. **Virtue is knowledge:** The wrong doing is due to ignorance. Men do wrong because they do not know what is right. Socratic analogy for virtue was art or craft, not theoretical science. Hence knowledge is not just intellectual but practical. It is not just the natural gifts, learning and practice but it requires disciplining of mind by practice of dialectics and body by self-control.
4. **Wrong doing is involuntary:** For Socrates the most precious possession of man is his soul. Wrong doing is harmful to the soul. Out of ignorance, unknowingly one does wrong; therefore he needs to be persuaded and made to realise the distinction between right and wrong.
5. **An unexamined life is not worth living:** The search for self-knowledge is one's supreme duty, without which good life is not possible. Guthrie writes "one of Socrates' most instant exhortations to his fellow citizens was that they should look after – care for, tend-their souls". Body is the tool and the soul is the workman, the former should be under the control of the latter. In *Apology*, Plato writes "deck the *psyche* with her proper adornments, self-control, justice, courage, freedom and truth".
6. **Political obligation:** Socrates preached and practised obedience to state laws, the basis of obedience being the contract between the individual and state. 'The willingness of the individual to live in society governed by laws implies acceptance of contract...hence to disobey the law means dishonouring one's agreement' (Norman Gulley, 1968). The duty to obey laws is thus a moral duty. His refusal to escape punishment is a proof of his respect for law.
7. **Immortality of soul:** He believed that soul existed before the body and therefore death cannot destroy it. Death, for him, was 'either nothingness or a migration of soul from one world to another'.

Platonic utopia and Aristotle's investigations too form significant part of Greek tradition.

Plato, in his famous work *Republic*, gives a picture of an ideal state, the spirit of which is justice—individual and social. Individual justice refers to the harmony in the three elements of human soul namely reason, spirit and appetite. Individual justice can be attained by temperance. Corresponding to these elements there are three classes in the

community and the proper harmonious functioning of three classes results in justice in society. Education is a device through which one can know the vocation for which he is best suited.

Plato's views on education were far ahead of his time in many respects. He advocated uniform, state-controlled education for both boys and girls. He was of the opinion that a state that was devoid of the services of half of the population will be paralysed and there is no difference between man and woman as far as the elements of the soul are concerned.

Plato goes to the extent of providing a detailed curriculum. No wonder Rousseau declared that, *Republic* was the finest treatise on education ever written. He dwells on subjects which are to be taught at different stages, keeping in mind the growth of mind, body and soul. The purpose of education for Plato is turning the eye of the mind inward.

Gandhi drew support to his views from different sources, and one such support is ancient Greek philosophy in general and Socrates in particular. Socrates, a great satyagrahi, who was fearless even at the doorstep of death, inspired Gandhi. Gandhi had read Plato's dialogues. The summary of the views of Socrates in his defence were introduced to the readers of *Young India* by Gandhi in his series on 'the life of a Satyagrahi'.

3.3 JOHN RUSKIN (1819-1900)

John Ruskin, the author of *Unto this Last*, was an eminent critic of art and architecture, and evolved into a critic of social and economic architecture of his time. Son of a rich Scottish wine merchant, his mother was a devout Christian, and put her son through a Bible course along with his schooling. In 1837, Ruskin went to Oxford, and took a degree in 1842. He grew in eminence day by day, and became a celebrated critic of art and architecture. He had the reputation of introducing many talented painters to the British society, who, without his scholarly support, would have slipped into oblivion.

Gandhi held Ruskin in great esteem, for his book, 'Unto this last', which he read on his train journey from Johannesburg to Durban in 1904, and that was a turning moment in his life. Gandhi writes in his Autobiography, "I was determined to change my life in accordance with (Ruskin's) ideals". Of all the books that he had read, he said, "the one that brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation in my life was *Unto this last*. I translated it later into Gujarati, entitling it 'Sarvodaya' (the welfare of all)". He summarises Ruskin's ideas in three main lessons.

1. The good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
2. That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's, inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.
3. That a life of labour, i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the craftsman, is worth living.

Gandhi adapts Ruskin to the Indian context, for his anti-industrial, pro-labour, and pro-community views, and redefines Ruskin's values in the Indian rural context. Ruskin's concern is up to the last man, and Gandhi's 'Sarvodaya', is the welfare of all, differing in sequential aspect but spiritually the same.

Ruskin's Time

The Victorian era, in which Ruskin lived, was an age of contradictions. The period enjoyed a long phase of peace, with social turmoil caused by the industrial revolution. The social historians observed contrasting characteristics. It was an age of 'faith and doubt', 'morality and hypocrisy,' 'splendour and squalor', and 'idealism and materialism'. Ruskin was a product of age, and drew inspiration from Plato and Bible; art and architecture. Even though he was a great art critic, he entered the field of Economics and attacked the well established theoreticians of his time with iconoclastic zeal.

Unto This Last

The book *Unto This Last* gets its title from the Bible (Mathew xx14). It is a reference to the words of Jesus in the parable of workers in the vineyard. The book was first published as a serial of essays in Cornhill Magazine. The initial response to the book was hostility, derision, and opposition. Firstly, it tried to attack the Economics of Laissez Faire, and the concept of 'economic man', who is solely guided by the utility, and not at all concerned with the human values.

Secondly, it presses the need to consider human values, and ethical considerations for the economic activity. His critique of the eminent economists of the day, like Ricardo, J.S. Mill and Malthus created uproar, and Ruskin was criticised as lacking in logic and systematic thinking in a science, that was not his. However, Ruskin managed to make a dent in the conventional Economics. His kind of thinking began to be recognised.

The Roots of Honour: The first essay, named as 'The roots of honour' argues that the orthodox theory of Economics is outdated, as it considers man to be an 'economic being', ignores human relations, like the relationship between the employer and the employee. The author says that human relations should be based on affection and justice, not on hostility and competition. He gives the examples of 'five great intellectual professions', in which men should be ready to die, on 'due Occasion', namely,

The soldier, who is ready to die on the battlefield,

The physician, who will not desert a patient in need.

The pastor, who would preach truth, in all circumstances,

The lawyer, who would not give up the path of justice for any consideration.

The merchant-what is his due occasion of death

The author says, that it is the main question for the merchant, as for all of us, and says that a man who does not know when to die, does not know how to live. Ruskin feels that merchant does not have the commitment to stick to principle in adverse circumstances. Therefore, the author says that for proper employer-employee relations, wages should not be left to the market forces, irrespective of fluctuating demand for labour. The wages should be so determined that the worker should be ready to take responsibility for his work; the merchant comes in bad light for the author, as he does not take responsibility like the earlier categories. The employer-employee relations should be such that responsibility is established, and worker should be ready to suffer for his job.

Veins of Wealth: The second chapter, called 'Veins of Wealth', brings out a distinction between the 'Mercantile Economy' and the 'Political economy', where the former is concerned with riches people accumulate at the cost of others, and the latter deals with the economic well-being of the state, and citizenry. Unequal distribution of wealth is

harmful to the nation, and mercantile economy leads to such distribution and reduction in the power of the state. A proper distribution of wealth should be based on moral considerations. That gives the state power over men, and the real wealth would be happy and contented citizens.

Just Distribution of Wealth: The third chapter, called ‘Qui Judicatis Terram’ (*You are the Judges of the earth*) examines how wages can be properly distributed, leading to proper wealth distribution. The author admits that absolute justice is unattainable, and just wages depend on promise to give a person wages equivalent to the labour he has given. It has to be determined in terms of currency, and it is difficult to assess, but a practical, approximate assessment is possible. Underpayment and overpayment of wages is to be avoided, and this gives a chance for the poor to come up, and diminishes the power of the rich to acquire luxury and exercise moral influence.

Distress of the working man is due to forces of competition and oppression, let loose by the laissez faire economy, and government should make efforts to make these forces ineffective by cooperation. The author says that by proper efforts, proper exercise of judgement, this condition, conducive to working class, can be brought about.

Redefining Economic Terms: In the fourth chapter, ‘Ad Valorem’, the author tries to define the various economic terms, like value, wealth, price, and produce, and states that the definitions of traditional economists are inadequate. ‘Any valuable thing’ should be available for life. He says that the gold used to decorate the coffin has no value. Price is the exchange value and is expressed in currency. The price of a thing is the quality of labour given by a person to acquire it. The price of labour is invariable, if it has given quality and kind. Political economy considers production as an end in itself, but the author says that production should end in consumption, and the end consumption is life.

Having defined the various terms, the author argues that positive labour is the real wealth of the nation, and economics of self interest is harmful to the nation. The real wealth of a nation is a happy and contented work force, which seeks not only food, but also facility, for education, wisdom and salvation. Only with such a social condition, there will be bread and peace “unto this last as unto thee”.

Ruskin and Gandhian Economic Thought

Elizabeth T. McLaughlin, in her scholarly work, ‘Ruskin and Gandhi’, says that Ruskin can be easily called the “father of Gandhian economic thought”. When Gandhi summarised Ruskin’s thought, (given in paragraphs above), he said that the first principle he knew, and the second one he had dimly realised. He says, “The third never occurred to me. *Unto this last* made it clear as daylight for me that the second and third were contained in the first.” In Gandhi’s autobiography, the heading of the chapter relating to Ruskin is “Magic spell of the book.”

McLaughlin states that Ruskin influenced Gandhi’s conception of soul-force as a substitute for physical force; he was the chief source of Gandhian economic ideas, but above all, “he changed Gandhi as a person”. This is far more than exerting influence. The suddenness of the change was more akin to an instantaneous religious conversion. She says, “Gandhi’s discovery of Ruskin’s book was as significant a contribution to his development and as genuine as an encounter between two deeply concerned human beings, as any actual meeting could have been”.

Gandhian economics has continued to hold sway on people's minds, and successor to Gandhi in his economic thought was J.C. Kumarappa, whose work, *Economy of Permanence* brings out the Gandhian thought and puts it in a systematic and theoretical format. His ideas are India specific, and Gandhi himself certified that Kumarappa was his heir apparent in carrying forward his ideas on Economics.

Another person who significantly contributed to this branch is E.F. Schumacher, whose work, *Small is Beautiful* had an impact on economic thinking all over the world. He said that he was treating Economics "as if people mattered". His book, "Small is Beautiful" had Gandhi's picture on the cover. He popularised the concept of "intermediate technology", which in his own words, would complement a man's initiative, instead of killing it. He said, "Bring machine to the man, and not man to the machine". He has profusely quoted J.C. Kumarappa and his work throughout his book, and has drawn inspiration from him.

Thus, the tradition of Ruskin continues, through his disciple, M.K. Gandhi. Ruskin once told his admirer that he would not care whether one enjoyed his books or not, but the important question was that, "have they done you any good?" His book continues to do good to the world through his able follower and admirer.

3.4 TOLSTOY, COUNT LEO NIKOLAEVICH (1828-1910)

Born in 1828, Tolstoy was one of the greatest influences on Gandhi. He was born into Russian aristocracy, and led a life of pleasure and indulgence. At the age of fifty, his introspection began, and started getting tormented internally. Tolstoy confesses, "my life was but a long indulgence of my passions: it was a thing without meaning and evil". Questions relating to nature and self, good and evil, purpose of life, started agitating his mind. He studied many western philosophers like Plato, Kant, and Pascal. Schopenhauer, who was opposed to rationalism, and based morality on feelings, sympathy, asceticism, and saintliness, had a special appeal for him.

Dissatisfied, he turned to religion for solace, and sought answers for his questions there. His main intention was to free himself from 'nihilism'. His eminence as a novelist is unsurpassed. He wrote great novels like *War and Peace*, and *Anna Karenina*. His other works include *My confessions*, *My faith*, *The Christian teaching*, *What are we to do*, *My life*, *My Religion*. The work which influenced Gandhi most was a long essay called, *The Kingdom of God is within You*.

Influences on Tolstoy: Tolstoy belongs to a line of Christian thinkers who believed in the non-resistance to violence, either by the individual or the state. He points out in his long essay:

- *From the very foundation of Christianity the doctrine of not resisting evil by violence has been professed, and still is professed by the minority of men.*
- *There have been many Christian sects which practiced non-resistance as a creed. The Quakers, a sect which believes in non-resistance, which, for more than two hundred years, has been practicing the teachings of Christ, as to non-resistance of evil by violence, and not to use weapons for self-defence.*

Tolstoy is in the line of non-resistance thinkers, who include the Christian sects like Quakers, Mennonites, Bogomiles, Paulicians, and other independent thinkers, who were inspired by the Gospel. One of them was Lloyd Garrison, who in 1838 took

part in a discussion in a society for the Establishment of Peace among men- on means of preventing the war. They issued a declaration signed in 1838 which was signed by many members, to carry forward the work of peaceful and universal reformation. The Quakers, especially with a book published in 1827, showed that Christianity can be never reconciled with violence, far less with war. In spite of that, they wondered, how can church preach that war and Christianity can combine, which is continuously being preached.

Another person who influenced Tolstoy was Adin Ballou, who preached the principle of non-resistance for fifty years. 'Jesus Christ is my lord and master', declared Ballou, and said that if there is a conflict between being a citizen under the Constitution and being a Christian, he would prefer to be a good Christian, as ever. He died in 1890.

Tolstoy was also influenced by Chech Chelcicky, whose work was known by the title, 'Net of Faith'. A Christian, according to Chelcicky, cannot be a ruler or a soldier, nor can he take part in government, not even can be a landowner, or a merchant, because all these activities involve violence in one kind or the other. Hence he can only be an artisan or husbandman.

Tolstoy was a very devout Christian, who sought intellectual, philosophical, and moral justification for his daily life in the teachings of Gospel. He was an anarchist, who thought that Christianity is a substitute for the state. His philosophy can be summed up as follows.

1. **Human life:** His philosophy of life is derived from Gospel. Though he believed that infinite perfection that Christ delivers cannot be attained, efforts can be made in that direction. He writes, "Striving towards full and infinite perfection will constantly increase the good of men, so that good can be endlessly increased". The animal life should become divine. This can happen only when man frees himself from animal force and subjects himself to divine force. Tolstoy considered this a true life. Tolstoy conceptualised human life at three levels: animal, social and divine in ascending order, the highest being divine, where the essence of soul is limitless love.
2. **Social and divine conception of life:** He makes a distinction between social commandments and Christian commandments, calling the latter positive prescriptions and the former negative sign-posts: no ill-will towards any one, perfect chastity even in thought, not promising anything for the future, not to employ violence and to love enemies. Tolstoy, through this view of life, tried to answer the rationalists and the positivists who challenged it as impracticable.

The social conception of life restricts the expanse of love to oneself, family, tribe, and clan and at the highest nation. It does not go beyond this. For Tolstoy there is a possibility of endless extension of sphere of love. It brings man back to his "elementary consciousness; not of himself as animal but of himself as God- the divine spark in himself."

3. **Universal sympathy and love:** Tolstoy believed that man's animal tendency and separateness makes him work towards the satisfaction of his own passions and needs, taking him away from his true self. There are six enemies that hinder the realisations of true self. They are sensuality, avarice, idleness, ambition, sexual sin etc. In order to overcome these sins, man must free himself from intoxication of body and mind. Since intoxication cannot be completely overcome, he thought that it can be

minimised. Hence he preferred an ascetic life to sinful life. He wrote in his article, 'Demands of love' (2.10.1897), wherein he asserted that "We must go forward prepared to die. Only that life is true which knows no limit to sacrifice- even unto death".

4. **Rejection of force and violence in all forms:** According to Tolstoy, 'men are caught in a circle of violence', which has *four links* of a chain. The first one is *intimidation*, where the existing state organisation is held to be sacred and immutable, where anybody opposing it is punished barbarously, and no attempt to alter it is acceptable. Russia prosecuted the so-called Nihilists, America anarchists, and France imperialists. The various devices of the state, like railways, telegraph, telephones, photography, and perfected method of disposing them of men without killing them, give advantage to the governments to prosecute men and intimidate them. He says that there is no possibility of overthrowing the governments, however cruel and insensitive they may be.

The second one is *corruption*. This, according to Tolstoy, is taking taxes from the working class, and distributing it among the officials, who, for this remuneration, keep the people enslaved. He says that these 'bought officials', from the highest to lowest rank, make an unbroken chain, and the more submissive they are, greater is the violence, and promote their own welfare by the money they get.

The third means, he says, is the *hypnotisation of the people*. This is adopted to retard the spiritual development of men, and giving them a concept of life, on which the power of the government rests. They are taught the superstition of patriotism, and the pseudo obligation to obey the state. The fourth method is to select some men, who have been influenced by the three methods above, and subject them to *stupefaction and brutalisation* so that they become instruments of the state, to promote its brutalities.

5. **Rejection of private property:** Tolstoy rejected the concept of private property. He maintained that the private property promoted crime, and the state becomes an instrument in preserving the private property and the consequent crime. He identified himself with the downtrodden and toiled men, and said that the crimes committed by such people are less harmful to the society than the crimes committed by the state.
6. **Principle of non-violence:** This principle, glorified in the words of Christ, had not attracted much attention, as it was relegated to background and small creeds, which professed non-resistance and non-violence, were not heeded, and this thought was never allowed to come into the mainstream Christian thought form. Tolstoy began to preach them, and more importantly began to practise them, and he began to attract scorn and denunciation. He was excommunicated by the Most Holy Synod, and was placed under police supervision, and many of his works were suppressed by the censor. When Gandhi adopted the principle, he could give it a mass base, and make it a tool of the oppressed. He compared Tolstoy to the ancient sages in India, who gave eternal values, which were adopted and practised by generations of men.

3.5 HENRY DAVID THOREAU (1817-1862)

A philosopher, non-conformist, naturalist, individualist, and a rebel with a cause, Thoreau is one of the notable American thinkers of the 19th century. His experiments of living with nature, in harmony with it, which have been documented in his work, '*Walden Pond*',

have become ideals for naturalists and conservationists. He was not a reformer, and did not wish to be a reformer. He agreed with Socrates that each person has to scrutinise right or wrong with his individual reasoning. He was a friend and contemporary of Ralph Waldo Emerson, and was a supporter of John Brown, who fought for the abolition of slavery in America.

His father was a pencil maker, and Thoreau worked in this profession in 1844. He also worked as a schoolteacher, after his graduation from Harvard. He gave up pencil making after sometime, and remarked that it would take ten years to stabilise in the trade, and by that time, he would be on his way to the 'devil'. He also worked as a surveyor, and worked on his job in the mornings, and devoted the rest of the day for the pursuit that was dear to his heart: upholding the individual dignity and liberty.

Thoreau is well known for his two works, the first and the foremost being his essay, '*Duty of Civil Disobedience*,' published in 1849. This work, which upheld the individual liberty and dignity against the machinery of the state, influenced thinkers like Tolstoy, in 19th century, and Gandhi in 20th century. Another important work is '*The Service*', in which he advocated the doctrine of simplicity, after he came out of his Walden Pond experiments. His doctrine was based on his earlier experience, which led to his respecting and revering nature, and perfect his own unique self. This idea got crystallised in his thirties and forties, and a complete statement of this came about in his early essay, '*The Service*'. He aimed at achieving a perfect mankind, by making each man perfect, thus achieving universal perfection.

The duty of man, according to Thoreau, was to perfect his unique self, whatever may be his calling. "Every stroke of the chisel must enter our own flesh and bone", he said. What he said in his writing, he proceeded to realise in his life. He wanted to put his spiritual assertions into practise, so that he could test his assertions on the anvil of pragmatism. He did not get any opportunity to do that, and realised that the market economy, which did not allow any creativity, sucked in the man, and reduced him to a faceless worker, "the slave of the strongest." He said, "We do not ride on the railroad, it rides upon us", and said that each of the sleepers put on the railway line is a man. "The rails are laid on them, and they are covered with sand, and the cars smoothly run over them".

He and the fellow thinker, George Ripley, established their experimental orders on the same principles. Neither of them provided for the employer-employee relations as that would lead to the class conflict and economic exploitation. He spoke of a simple life, where man would not hire another, nor would he work for another. Each man would eat what he grew, and grow only what he ate, and avoid as much as possible, the trade and barter. Their aim was that each man should receive the entire value for his labour, and to *eliminate the distinction between the work by hand and work by mind*. By doing so, they thought that man's activity would lead to his perfection. Both the applications were not practical, and remained academic curiosities. Only the spirit of their experiments, and the goodwill both thinkers had for the mankind, remain as examples of efforts to marry spiritualism to practical behaviour.

On Duty of Civil Disobedience

Thoreau's essay, published in 1849, had a great influence on Gandhi. It gave moral and ethical support to Gandhi's movement, which he had just then launched in South Africa. Thoreau discussed the nature of governments, and what he expects of them. He says, "it is not enough if we have a government which governs the least, but we should have a

government which does not govern at all". He says that government is at best, an expedient.

He discusses the role of the government taking two issues that were current at that time. The Mexican War and the abolition of slavery were the two burning topics of the day. He says that when a majority government decides to go to war, it is not due to any wisdom on its part, but it is physically strong and may not have the conscience.

He says that all voting is a sort of gaming, playing with the right and wrong, and the wise man will not leave the right to the mercy of chance. He says that when majority votes for the abolition of slavery, there is little slavery left to be abolished by their vote. A man's vote hastens the abolition when he asserts his freedom by his vote.

He says that we tacitly support the immoral activities of the government, and after the first blush of sin, comes the indifference, and from immoral, it becomes unmoral, not necessary at all to the life we have made. He admits that unjust laws do exist, but can one wait until the majority is persuaded to alter them? If someone resists the law, they think, the remedy would be worse than evil. Why not provide for the reform, and why not cherish its wise minority? He says that it is the fault of the government that makes remedy worse than the evil. Thoreau writes:

"If the injustice is a part of the necessary friction of the machine of the government, let it go, let it go: perchance it will wear smooth—certainly the machine will wear out. If the injustice has a spring, or a pulley, or a rope, or a crank, exclusively for itself, then perhaps you may consider whether the remedy will not be worse than the evil, but if not is of such a nature that it requires you to be agent of injustice, to another, then I say, break the law. Let your life be a counter-friction to stop the machine. What I have to do is to see at any rate, that I do not lend myself to the wrong which I condemn".

Thoreau says that if the Constitution does not provide for a remedy to the citizen, then the very Constitution is evil. He states with the conviction of a crusader, that if a government imprisons unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison. He exhorts, "cast your whole vote, not strip of paper merely, but your whole influence. A minority is powerless while it conforms to the majority, it is not even a minority then; but it is irresistible when it clogs by its whole weight."

When he was jailed for not paying the taxes, he said, "I cannot help being struck with the foolishness of the institution which treated me as if I were mere flesh and blood and bones to be locked up. As they could not reach me, they had resolved to punish my body, just as the boys, if they cannot come at some person against whom they have spite, will abuse his dog. I saw that the state was half witted, that it was timid as a lone woman with her silver spoons, and that it did not know its friends from its foes, and I lost all my remaining respect for it, and pitied it." He was ready to submit to the authority of the government, "if they know and can do better than him, and in many things, even those who neither know nor can do so well, is still an impure one: to be strictly just, it must have the sanction and consent of the governed."

3.6 GANDHI AND THOREAU

The influence of Thoreau on Gandhi has been written about, widely, whenever the freedom movement in India is discussed. While emerging as the leader of people of Indian origin in South Africa, Gandhi was fighting the Asiatic Registration Act, which required

people of Asiatic origin, residing in Transvaal to register themselves. They had to give fingerprints, and failure to register attracted punishment and deportation. Gandhi launched his agitation against it, and in his article dated September, 11, 1907, in *Indian Opinion*, declared the 'advent of Satyagraha'. The article declared that Indians would not submit to the Ordinance, and would suffer all the penalties for their disobedience. This article quoted Thoreau, and his views on civil disobedience, and the necessity to oppose a tyrannical rule. If Gandhi were to quote profusely from Thoreau, he must have read it by that time. But, Gandhi in many of his letters makes it clear that he had adopted the method of civil disobedience before he read Thoreau, but reading Thoreau underlined, fortified, and justified his belief.

In his 'Appeal to American Friends' in 1942, Gandhi wrote, "You have given me a teacher in Thoreau, who furnished me through his essay on the 'Duty of civil Disobedience', scientific confirmation of what I was doing in South Africa". Americans like to believe that Thoreau was a decisive influence on Gandhi. But, Gandhi himself denies this, and his letter written to P.Kodanda Rao, of the Servants of India society, states as follows:

"The statement that I derived my idea of Civil Disobedience from Thoreau is wrong. The resistance to authority in South Africa was well advanced before I got the essay of Thoreau on Civil Disobedience. But the movement was then known as passive resistance. As it was incomplete, I coined the word, 'Satyagraha' for Gujarati readers. When I saw the title of Thoreau's great essay, I began to use his phrase to explain the struggle to English readers".

Gandhi was well advanced in his tactic of Satyagraha and civil disobedience, even before he read Thoreau's essay. But his essay provided the legitimacy for the western readers, and made west understand his methods. Gandhi had named his movement as "passive resistance", but there was nothing passive about it, as it involved boycotting schools, colleges, courts, and making bonfire of imported clothes, and courting arrest by violating the prohibitory orders. The concept of Satyagraha was far wider than the 'civil disobedience', which moved only after a tyrannical government moved to subjugate its citizens. Satyagraha moved on its own, as an engine of protest, against injustice.

3.7 SUMMARY

Gandhi's early initiation to western education, and stay in England made him come under the influence of western thinkers. He hailed Socrates, his teachings, and called him a great Satyagrahi. His thoughts on education were influenced by Plato. Ruskin was his inspiration for his economic policy, and translated the former's book, "Unto This Last" as "Sarvodaya" in Gujarati, which amplified the ideas of Ruskin in Indian circumstances. Tolstoy was a leading thinker of the Christian principle of non-resistance to violence. His book, "The Kingdom of God is within you" influenced Gandhi so immensely. His admiration of him was so immense that he started a community living farm named after Tolstoy, to follow his principles. Thoreau gave justification to Gandhi's struggle against the state, when it took steps which were repressive. Gandhi was already leading the struggle against the South African Government when he read the essay by Thoreau, 'On Civil Disobedience'. He was so impressed by it, that he wrote a series of articles in his magazine about it. It not only got moral support from Thoreau, but also enabled the western world to understand Gandhi.

3.8 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Why did Gandhi call Socrates a great Satyagrahi? Substantiate.
2. Critically examine the principles of Ruskin's economics. How did he differ from classical economists?
3. Examine the influence of non-resistance thinkers on Tolstoy.
4. Examine Thoreau's arguments in support of civil disobedience
5. Bring out the influences of western thinkers on Gandhi's economic and political philosophy.

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UNIT 4 EASTERN PHILOSOPHY (VEDANTA, BHAKTI MOVEMENT- KABIR, TULASIDAS, VAISHNAVISM, ANASAKTI YOGA)

Structure

4.1 Introduction

Aims and Objectives

4.2 Vedanta

4.3 Bhakti Movement and Vaishnavism

4.4 Kabir and the Sufi Sect

4.5 Tulasidas: Social Concern and Formless Rama

4.6 Vaishnavism

4.7 Anasaktiyoga

4.8 Summary

4.9 Terminal Questions

Suggested Readings

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The Hindu thought-form has maintained an unbroken link from its past to the present day. Many ancient civilisations, with their characteristic thought, have vanished and their thought forms remained only as a fossil, to be studied by historians. But Hindu thought lived through the ages, and has evolved over the years. Even though a value judgement is neither possible nor desirable, its continuity from ancient times to the present day, from Indus valley to the independent India cannot be denied.

Gandhi was born into a traditional Hindu family in a small town. His parents were devout Hindus who followed all the traditions of Hinduism. This had a deep impression on Gandhi's life, which was carried through all his life. After his early western education, as he started facing crisis after crisis in his political life, he turned to religion for solace. Hinduism was deeply enshrined in his mind, and with the conviction and courage developed through it, he had no hesitation to explore the tenets of other religions, and find for himself, that the same spirit, truth, non-violence, compassion, sense of equity, and concern for all living creatures ran through all of them. It made his faith in Hinduism all the more stronger. He says, "I have read Bible, Zend Avesta, Qur'an, and all the great books of the world, and it has helped me to understand Gita". Even with such conviction, Gandhi could say that one should reject that part of the scripture which is not in the broad interest of humankind. He says that it must have come to the scripture in a peculiar circumstance, or it must have been extrapolated. A deep conviction in religion gave him the courage to question the fundamentals of the religion.

Aims and objectives

After studying this Unit, you would be able to understand:

- The nature of Vedanta philosophy
- Bhakti movement and its effect on the people of India.
- Influence and contribution of Kabir and Tulasidas.
- Vaishnavism as the religion of love.
- Anasakti Yoga and the Gita according to Gandhi.

4.2 VEDANTA

The time of Vedic literature has always been a matter of debate between Eastern and Western scholars. Generally it is accepted that the time may be around second millennium B.C. This literature, consisting of four Vedas, Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva, deal with hymns in praise of the Gods, the rituals that have to be followed and their methods, musical rendition, and the material science, respectively. From this literature, grew the various philosophical and theological speculations, which provided the material for various thought forms that ultimately came to be known as Hinduism, or ‘Sanatana Dharma’.

The later stage of Vedic literature came to be known as ‘Upanishad’ or ‘Vedanta’, which means ‘at the end of Vedas’, which literally and physically occurs at the end of the Vedas. The Vedas were handed down from generation to generation by the word of the mouth, and they are described as “Apourusheya”, meaning that they were not composed by any person, but heard, from Divine source. Hence they are called ‘Shruti’ meaning ‘heard’ literature, as against ‘Smruti’, the ‘remembered’ literature. Therefore, Shruti’s authenticity could not be in dispute, but can be interpreted differently, as sometimes clear meaning could not be rendered, and remained ambiguous. Different schools interpreted the Upanishads in their own way.

One of the six schools of philosophy is “Mimamsa”, the exegetics of Vedic literature, which lays down the rules as to how to interpret them. This literature is divided into ‘Purva Mimamsa’, which deals with interpretation of the older Vedanta literature, and the ‘Uttara Mimamsa’ which deals with the interpretation of the ‘later’ Vedanta literature. These two schools differ in the emphasis they place on various injunctive and ritual aspects, as opposed to the portions that are beyond sensory organs. This has given rise to various treatises interpreting scriptures.

Major portion of the Vedanta literature is composed of ‘Sutra’, which are aphorisms. A ‘Sutra’ is a short statement which is capable of being remembered, in the oral tradition. The brevity of the Sutra, while making it easy to remember, provides the commentator opportunity to comment on that and draw his own interpretation. The Sutras of Purva Mimamsa have been composed by Jaimini, and have been commented upon by various commentators like Shabara, Kumarila Bhatta, and Prabhakara. The commentaries are called as “Bhashya”, and commentators ‘Bhashyakara’. Many a time, the commentator composed his own verses, for easy memorisation, and provided his own commentary on the verse he has composed.

Vedanta literature has *three major works*, which are considered to be authorities and reference works for Vedanta literature. They are Upanishads, Brahmasutras, and Bhagavad

Gita, which is a part of the epic, Mahabharata. The author of the two works apart from Upanishads is said to be Badarayana Vyasa, a sage whose time is unknown. The commentators of all the three systems of Indian philosophy- Advaita, Vishishtadwaita, and Dwaita have commented on all the three works, which are called 'Prasthanatrayee' meaning the three authorities. However, some commentators have commented on works, which may not constitute the authorities, like the Vishishtadwaita commentators have commented on "Pancharatna" treatises.

Brahmasutra of Vyasa is one of the three authoritative works, and all the schools of Vedanta have commentaries written on this text. The date of this work is not known; generally it is placed one or two centuries before Christ. All the three schools claim that the aphorisms of Brahmasutra expound their tradition, as the small aphorisms, having a few words in each, can be interpreted to the commentators' point of view. There are various commentators, who are known as 'Vrittikaras' even before these three schools came into existence. Shankara refers to one such commentator by name, Upavarsa. Generally the commentators do not refer to the other commentators by name, and their view is indicated by saying, "it is said".

The three schools of Vedanta have contributed to the debate on the nature of 'Brahman', and the 'atman', and have engaged themselves in endless debate. Many a time, these debates are held only with the intention of subduing the opponent, and to score a victory over them. Nevertheless, they have enriched the philosophical tradition in India.

Advaita Vedanta

Over the years, the Vedanta has come to be identified with Advaita Vedanta, even though there are two other prominent schools of Vedanta. Also, Advaita Vedanta is identified with Shankara's work. The seeds of Advaita Vedanta are found in treatises earlier to Shankara. The proponents of all the three schools claim that all the earlier thinkers like Yajnavalkya, Vyasa and Uddalaka Aruni, belong to their school. Since aphorisms render themselves to different interpretations, each of them is able to make out their case. Since Advaita was the earliest school, and it came in the wake of Buddhism, it occupies prime position in Vedanta philosophy. Summary of the **Advaita philosophy** is given below.

1. The purpose of philosophy is to help Jeeva (the human being) to liberate himself (moksha) from the bondage (Samsara) of births and death.
2. The bondage is the result of 'Avidya', or ignorance. But the self (atman) is not bound, and is eternally liberated.
3. Bondage is eternal, and continues as long as the ignorance persists.
4. Since bondage exists because of ignorance, the only way to overcome the bondage is to acquire 'vidya', that is the knowledge.
5. The ignorance exists because it creates apparent distinctions (bheda) where none exist.
6. Therefore, knowledge is acquired by knowing that the distinctions are false, especially the distinction between the knower and the known.
7. The awareness, which is the real knowledge, is free from subject-object distinctions, and is pure consciousness (chit, anubhava)

8. The true self is itself just that pure consciousness, without the distinction between the subject and the object, and the cause and the effect.
9. The same true self, is not different from the ultimate universal principle, the Brahman. If the 'Brahman' was conceived as an object of self-awareness, then it would involve a subject-object relation, which is at the base of "avidya", that is ignorance.
10. The real is that which is not set aside as false. The real is not affected (badha).
11. By the above criteria, "Brahman" is the only ultimate reality, since it is not affected by ignorance, and it is one thing not sublatale, since sublation depends on consciousness.
12. Pure consciousness is experienced during deep sleep. Since we awake refreshed, it is inferred that the true consciousness is also ultimate bliss.

These are major Advaita tenets. The other two schools, Vishishtadvaita, and Dvaita, have also their own tenets on the relation between the 'Jeevatman' (individual self) and 'Paramatman' (the ultimate reality).

The Theory of Vishishtadvaita

Shankara's theory of Advaita has been refuted by Ramanuja, the chief proponent of the Vishishtadvaita School. His main arguments are:

There are three sources of knowledge- Scriptures, perception and inference. All the three sources should have character, in order to establish a proof.

1. He refutes the basic tenet of Advaita, that Supreme reality is unqualified (Nirvisesha). This cannot be proved, as all proofs are based on the assumption of qualified character. Scriptures do not speak about the unqualified character of the supreme reality.
2. The Advaita School holds that the unqualified nature of the absolute reality can be experienced directly. Even in direct experience, some traits of Supreme reality have to be qualified, for experiencing.
3. Regarding perception, it is held that any perception, if it is to manifest, has to have character (Savikalpa pratyakhya). Hence, Ramanuja holds that perception without character is not possible.
4. Inference is based on perception and hence it has also revealed a thing with certain characteristics. Hence, it cannot remain unqualified.
5. Shankara's assertion is that perception relates to pure beings and pure beings alone. If that were to be true, then characteristic differences are necessary to distinguish one from the other, like saying, 'this is a jug' and 'this is a cloth'. If all objects are perceived to be false, there can be no differences between the objects.
6. Shankara states that the world looks like a manifold entity due to 'dosha', or 'Avidya' (defect). Ramanuja states that Avidya needs support, and cannot exist by itself. It cannot exist in individual souls, as they themselves are results of 'Avidya'.
7. Ramanuja holds that all knowledge is real. He gives the example of conch shell and silver. If an illusion has to appear, it has to be like another reality. A conch shell cannot appear like imaginary silver.

Ramanuja favours 'Anyatha Khyati' theory of illusion, that is, a real thing should appear to be like the illusion of another real thing, like the conch shell appearing like silver. He also defends the school of his seniors, 'Yathartha Khyati', saying that the difference between his school and the school of his seniors is only 'ontological' (Ontology: The science or study of being; that part of metaphysics which relates to the nature or essence of being).

The Theory of Dwaita (Dualism)

Madhwa, the chief proponent of Dwaita School, also refutes the concept of 'Maya' or 'Avidya' of Shankara, but his arguments are different from those of Ramanuja. His main arguments on tenets of dualism are:

1. As against the totally unqualified nature of Supreme reality in Adwaita, Madhwa holds that the supreme reality, that is Brahman, is full of qualities and characteristics. His concept of Brahman is 'Gunapurna Brahman'.
2. His concept of the world is that it is real, not an illusion, as is found in Adwaita. Adwaita holds that the world is "Mithya" (not real), while Dwaita holds that it is 'Satya' (real).
3. Dwaita holds that there is ultimate difference among the Supreme reality, souls and matter, but Adwaita holds that there is only "Vyavaharika", or illusory difference between them, and does not recognise the existence of souls and matter.
4. The Dwaita philosophy is termed as 'Tattwawada', as is mentioned in Dwaita works, and the Adwaita is termed as 'Mayavada'. This indicates the basic difference between the two Schools.

4.3 BHAKTI MOVEMENT

The Bhakti movement that started around eighth century in India, has been a religion of love. The concept of monotheistic God, all purveying, all powerful, capable of punishing the wicked, gradually gave way to the concept of love, both in Christianity and Islam, and at the same time, started flourishing in India too. The Sufism, which reached its height in tenth century A.D, preached the love of the Lord. Before that, Alwars of the Srivaishnava School established the Bhakti movement in the eighth century. The eleventh century belonged to Ramanuja (1016-1137) and Yamunacharya. After this, in the twelfth and thirteenth century, Madhwacharya, and subsequently, the Goudiya Vaishnavism inspired by him, also spread the cult of Bhakti. The movement flowered almost at the same time in all regions of India.

Popular and in local language: The movement gave a boost to the regional languages all over India. Earlier, the divine literature was written in Sanskrit and its sister languages. The concepts of theology could be understood in a limited way, as the concepts and language was a barrier. Bhakti movement simplified the concepts by explaining difficult concepts with examples from day to day life, with parables, songs, and folk literature. For example, Kabir and Tulasidas adopted the concept of 'Nirgun' (propertyless), and their Rama was formless. The Vedanta concepts of 'Nirgun' and 'Nirakar', meaning propertyless and formless 'Brahman', was carried to the masses by these two stalwarts of the Bhakti movement.

Kinds of Bhakti: Once the Bhakti movement made the Supreme Godhead near to the devotee, various kinds of devotion came to be practised. Ramanuja said that in order to attain Moksha, the surrender to Lord, 'Prapatti' is absolutely essential. Hence, there was 'Dasya rasa', the sentiment of servitude; 'Madhura rasa'(relation of love), as was between Krishna and Gopis; 'Shanta rasa', a relation of being in absolute peace with the Lord; 'Sakhya rasa' , the friendship with Lord, with absence of difference between the friends; and 'Vatsalya rasa', the love of the parent to the offspring, are some main categories.

Bhakti Movement and Vaishnavism: Though there is a direct relation between Vaishnavism and Bhakti movement, there are examples of Bhakti in Saivite School also. Akka Mahadevi, the poetess and saint of Karnataka, in the middle of twelfth century, considered Shiva in the form of 'Channamallikarjuna' to be her husband, even though a prince offered to marry her. Another great saint poet, Basava, considers Shiva to be a great trader, who does not incur a loss, nor does he incur a profit, and conducts the world with even hand.

Vaishnava devotion is more profuse and varied. Ramanuja has awe and reverence for the God, and therefore, it is called the 'Aiswarya pradhana bhakti,' and is more intellectual in character than the Bhakti of Nimbarka School, who worship Krishna the cowherd, accompanied by Radha. There is not much of awe and servitude, but only love for the cowherd, and hence it is called 'Madhurya pradhana' (love for God). For Madhwacharya, the bhakti was deep love of God, inspired by an adequate knowledge, with a firm and unshakable love of God. He draws up a hierarchy of love towards Krishna. Gopis come lowest, next come queens of Krishna, next is Yashoda, above her are Devaki, Vasudeva and Balarama, and highest in the scale is Brahma. The Bengal school of Vaishnavism, of Vallabha, though inspired by the Madhwa school, has difference of opinion on this subject.

Bhakti Movement and Social Reform: The Bhakti movement also brought out many poets, saints, composers, social reformers, and revolutionary thinkers all over India in all the regions. It would be difficult to list all of them, but a few prominent among them are Kulasekhara, one of the Alvars of Srivaishnava sect; Tulasidas and Kabir whose influence on Hindi region needs no explanation; Purundara Dasa of Karnataka, considered to be the grand patriarch of Karnataka music; and also a social reformer, Rahim, who composed beautiful couplets praising Krishna; Guru Nanak, founder of the Sikh Panth; Baba Sheik Farid, who brought about Hindu-Muslim unity; Narasimha Mehta of Gujarat, whose poem, "Vaishnavajana" influenced Gandhi immensely; Jnanadeva, Tukaram and Namdev of Maharashtra; Shankaradev and Aniruddhadev of Assam; Chaitanya and his successors of Goudiya Vaishnavism, to name a few. Bhakti movement has thus enriched the social and cultural life of our country.

4.4 KABIR AND THE SUFI SECT

The name Kabir evokes in the mind the meaning of the name "the great". It is one of the ninety nine names of Allah in Arabic theology, mentioned six times in Qur'an. Kabir lived up to his name and his influence in Hindi speaking area is all pervasive. He is quoted at every step, and has relentlessly campaigned against both Hindu and Muslim orthodoxy.

His influence over his contemporaries has been important and has been written about. It is stated that Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion came under the influence of

Kabir when he was twenty seven years old. Nanak mentions Kabir in his work, *Janam Sakhi* (Evidence on the story of Birth) and states that he is a 'Bhagat' (devotee) equal in merit to Nanak himself, and other Bhagats are exhorted to follow his example. On many occasions, Nanak quotes the verses attributed to Kabir. *Adi Granth*, the sacred book of the Sikh Panth, gives information regarding the life of Kabir and his teachings. The interest that Guru Nanak took in Kabir is reflected in the works of Kabir being included in the *Adi Granth*, and it is stated that both had good rapport.

Other religious teachers have also been influenced by Kabir. They are Dadu of Ahmedabad, who founded the sect that bears his name, and Jag Iswar Das from Oundh (1760), who is the founder of Satnami Sect and many other then contemporary religious teachers, like Bribhan, founder of the Sadh Sect (1658), Baba Lal of Malwa and Shiva Narain of Gazipur. Even though Kabir is not a founder of any cult, many claim that they belong to his cult, which is called 'Kabir Panth' and the followers of this sect are called 'Kabir Panthis'. In the census of 1901, about eight lakh and forty three thousand people registered themselves as belonging to this sect in the four states of North India. His pithy and stark words are quoted in day to day conversation, and wandering minstrels sing his songs, taking them to millions of people.

The information about the year of his birth and other information is scanty, and historically not proven. According to Benares Gazetteer, Kabir was born in Belhara, a village in Azamgad district. According to Kabir Panthis, he was born in 1398 and died in 1518. The date of birth might be a matter of conjecture, as there was a need to make him the contemporary of Ramanand, the founder of the Bhakti movement in North India. A pamphlet was published by the Kabir Panthis in Mumbai in 1885. It is said to have been produced with information from books as well as tradition. Much of the legend relating to Kabir has been sourced from this pamphlet.

Kabir's foster parents are said to be Niru, a Muslim weaver, and his wife, Nima. There are two versions of his birth. A Brahmin widow was unknowingly blessed by an ascetic, for begetting a child. Realising his mistake Ramanand tried to make amends. He said that the child would be born out of the palm of the mother, and accordingly the child was born. The mother kept it in a lotus flower, in the tank, and was picked up by Nima, his foster mother. There are other interpretations but it was said that Kabir was found somewhere by Niru and Nima, and that they are his foster parents.

Kabir followed the profession of his foster parents, and became a weaver, a "julaha" in Hindi. Kabir was said to have become the disciple of Ramanand, and got initiation from him to be the devotee of Rama. *Adi Granth* says of Kabir: "By caste weaver and of mind, utters Kabir with natural ease the excellencies of Ram". True to his profession, Kabir compares the cycle of life and death to the shuttle that travels in the loom.

Kabir and the Sufi Sect

It has been a matter of debate as to whether Kabir belonged to the Sufi sect or not. No doubt, he was vehemently against both orthodox Islam and Hinduism. For this reason, he incurred the wrath of the orthodox sections in both the communities. Nabhaji, who has written "Bhakta Mala" in 18th century, makes the following statement:

"Kabir refused to acknowledge caste distinctions or to recognise the authority of the six schools of Hindu philosophy, nor did he set any store by the four divisions of

life (ashrama) prescribed by the Brahmins. He held that the religion without Bhakti was no religion at all, and all the asceticism, fasting and almsgiving had no value if unaccompanied by worship (bhajan and Hymn singing). By means of *Ramainis*, (a short exposition of religious truth) *Shabdas* (a word or saying, relating to God), and *Sakhis* (evidencing the Lord's glory) he imparted religious instructions to Hindus and Muhammadans alike. He had no preference for either religion, but gave teaching that was appreciated by the followers of both. He spoke out his mind fearlessly and never made it his object merely to please his hearers”.

Formless Supreme Being (Nirguna)

Kabir is also a proponent of Nirguna, the Supreme Being without form and properties. This concept, which came into philosophy with the Advaita School, caught the imagination of Kabir as well as Tulasidas. Kabir's strong opposition to idolatry stems from this philosophy. He says, “If worshipping a stone idol gets Hari then I will worship a mountain. Better is the grinding stone, which grinds and feeds the world.”

Kabir's works are contained in two books. One is *Bijak*, and another is *Adi Granth*. During the lifetime of Kabir, his sayings were not documented, and the process of writing them down started at least fifty years after his death.

Sayings and Poetry of Kabir: Kabir's sayings are pithy, and many a time, sound like riddles, but the meaning is conveyed clearly. To illustrate the point, a few selected couplets of Kabir are given here.

“Fire does not burn it, the wind does not carry it away, no thief comes near it; collect the wealth of name of Ram, that wealth is never lost”.

“What is muttering, what austerity, what vows and worship to him whose heart there is another love?”

“Pearls are scattered on the road; the blind draw near and depart; without the light of the Lord, the world passes them by”.

“Sandal, restrain thy fragrance; on thy account, the wood is cut down; the living slay the living and regard only the dead”.

4.5 TULASIDAS: SOCIAL CONCERN AND FORMLESS RAMA

No work of literature in Hindi language is more read, followed, quoted, revered, and worshipped than *Ramcharita Manas*, “The Lake of Deeds of Rama”, composed by Saint Goswami Tulasidas. Tulasidas was born in Rajpur, in Banda district of Uttar Pradesh in the year 1589 AD. He died at the age of ninety one. Even though he was a great Sanskrit scholar, he is known for his works in Hindi, especially *Ramcharita Manas*. This work is known as the Bible of North India: many of its verses are recited everyday as part of ritual, many sentences are used as proverbs, many incidents from the book are used as exemplary anecdotes, and many phrases have passed into the common parlance, even without the speakers being aware of the origin. His doctrine, even today, has a powerful influence on the present day Hinduism. Even though he founded no cult or school, he is universally accepted as a poet and saint, an authority to guide everyday life. His composition, *Hanuman Chalisa*, a part of *Ramcharita Manas*, a forty stanza praise of Lord Hanuman, is recited by all Hindi speaking people.

Sources and Manuscripts

A manuscript of the Ayodhya Kand, said to be written in poet's own hand, exists in Rajpur in Banda, in his birthplace. Another manuscript, dated Samvat 1661, is in Ayodhya, and it is said to have been corrected in poet's own hand, nineteen years before his death. An excellent translation into English has been made by F.S.Growse, of the Indian Civil Service. An introduction to the grammar of Ramcharita Manas has been written by Edwin Greaves titled *Notes on the grammar of Ramayan of Tulsidas* (1895).

His magnum opus is written in a dialect of Hindi, known as 'Awadhi' which is spoken around Ayodhya in UP. Even though Tulasidas uses the Valmiki Ramayana as the source and acknowledges it, he definitely makes a departure from other poets who have narrated the epic before him.

The narration follows the pattern given by the poet, around the mythological reservoir, which is called 'Manasa'(consciousness); four banks have four pairs of speaker and listener, who are narrating the various episodes of Rama's life. The four pairs are

1. Yajnavalkya and Bharadwaja
2. Shiva and Parvati
3. Kakabhusundi and Garuda
4. Tulsi and assembly of saints.

Tulasidas, in course of his work, writes about all sections of the society, irrespective of caste, creed, and sect, and analyses their behaviour, emotions, and their opinions. His narration reflected the contemporary society, and good values are juxtaposed with the bad values. The ideal or desirable behaviour is advised and exemplified in it.

Tulasidas clearly states that his work is based on Valmiki's Ramayana, and derives its inspiration from Vedas and Puranas, Nigamas and Agamas. By this, he recognises the authority of the ancient texts, which is necessary for acceptance of any classical work on mythology.

Tulasidas has spoken about nine kinds of spirituality leading to Bhakti, the devotion to Godhead. Rama, in the course of Discourse to Shabari, speaks of the nine kinds of devotion (Navavidha Bhakti).

1. Cultivation of the company of Sadhus, or the people seeking devotion.
2. Deep interest in the 'lila' or life of the Lord.
3. Service at the feet of the guru.
4. Singing of the praise of the Lord, without any blemish.
5. Chanting the name of the Lord, with firm belief.
6. Practising self-control, self-renunciation, and craving for a virtuous life.
7. To regard the whole world as permeated by God and respecting the saint more than God.
8. Contentment with whatever one gets, and not craving.
9. Dependence on the Lord, simplicity, freedom from wile, no elation or depression.

Bhakti can be achieved by following any one of these steps, but the most important requirement is the company of the devotees. First, the devotee, by his constant love and devotion, becomes dear to the Lord. When the Lord sees the devotion of the devotee, he would take interest in him, and liberate him from the Karma, cycle of births and death. The Bhakta or the devotee, becomes free from lust, anger, greed, pride, and achieves a level-headed state, the Stoical state.

Another important component of Bhakti is Rama nama Japa, repetition of the name of Rama. Tulasidas says that the name of Rama is greater than Rama himself. It is said that Hanuman attained control over Rama by 'Rama nama Japa'. Even Gandhi got inspired by Tulasidas's words, and found solace in repeating the name of Rama.

Attitude towards Knowledge

Tulasidas thinks that seeking knowledge is a fruitless exercise, and one should become a devotee. He says, that out of millions of 'Jnanis' (knowledgeable person), one 'Vijnani' (enlightened person) is born, but a 'Bhakta'(a devotee) is rarer than a 'Vijnani'. He says that knowledge is difficult to express, difficult to understand and difficult to practise rationally.

Social Concern

He propounded two principles which brought about immense social integration and general acceptability of his works. The first principle was the social equality. He said that Rama will accept only the relationship of devotion. "He accepts the bonds of devotion only". "A high birth without devotion is like cloud without vapours". He said, "None will question your caste or creed, you devote yourself to God and you belong to Him". Thus he attacked the root of the caste system.

The second principle was his equality between Saiva (the devotees of Shiva) and Vaishnava (the devotees of Vishnu) cults. During that time, when the differences between the two schools of worship were becoming sharper, Tulasidas refused to see the difference. He showed great reverence to both Shiva and Rama. He pointed out that service to Shiva will beget perpetual devotion to Rama. He made no distinction between the two deities. In Ramcharita Manas, Rama says that he does not like the critics of Shiva. Rama says, "If Shiva's critic is called a follower of mine, to me he does not appeal even in dream".

Formless Rama

Tulasidas also adopted the conceptual symbol of Monoism (Adwaita) which says the Supreme reality is formless and propertyless. He adopted the concept of Rama, without body, as per the principle of Monoism. This concept was very dear to Gandhi. He says, "Tulasidas too has described Rama as without a body. This one without form pervades all forms. Him we worship. I am a worshipper of this Rama. How can I ever worship Ravana? You may kill me, spit me in my face, but I shall go on repeating Rama Rahim, Krishna Karim till my last breath. And even at the moment you shower blows on me I shall not blame you. Nor shall I complain to God. I am his devotee'.

4.6 VAISHNAVISM

The earliest occurrence of the word, "Vishnu" is in Rig Veda (1.22.20). This hymn of Rig Veda has been translated by the eminent scholar, R.G. Bhandarkar as follows: 'The wise

see the highest place of Vishnu (Paramam padam) as it were an eye fixed in heaven'. The hymn indicates that Vishnu had a high position in Vedic pantheon, though not the highest. Also, the Taittiriya Samhita mentions Vishnu, by saying, "Yajna vai Vishnu" thereby meaning, "Vishnu is sacrifice". It is clear from the above two references that the name of Vishnu occurs in Vedic and early literature.

"Vaishnava" means 'that relating to Vishnu', and it is generally used as an adjective, and to indicate a sect, by adding 'ism' with it. There are four schools of Vaishnavism, whose main principle is that Vishnu is the Supreme deity, and others are subordinate to him. They hold that Shiva is subservient to him, and a Vaishnava himself.

Four Schools of Vaishnavism

There are *four Schools of Vaishnavism*. They are:

1. Vishishtadwaita (Qualified non- dualism), a school founded by Ramanuja, whose sect is known as the Srivaishnava sect.
2. Dwaita (Dualism), a school founded by Madhwa, whose sect is known as the Madhwa Vaishnava sect.
3. Shuddhadwaita, a school founded by Vallabha, and others.
4. Kumara Sampradaya, a school founded by Nimbarka.
1. **Vishishtadwaita:** The important feature of Ramanuja's Vaishnava philosophy is 'Sharanagati' or 'Prapatti', which is surrender to the Supreme deity, Vishnu. Earlier to Ramanuja, the Alvars, a tradition of Vaishnava saints, had composed *prabandhas*, compositions in praise of Vishnu. Ramanuja in his work, *Gadyatraya*, declares that Bhakti (devotion) is the surest way to salvation, but 'Prapatti' is the direct route to salvation.

Two types of surrenders are illustrated in Vishishtadwaita. One is the "*Marjala Kishore Nyaya*", where the individual surrenders like a kitten to the mother cat. The kitten makes no effort, but its complete surrender to the mother ensures its welfare. Similarly, complete surrender by the man to God ensures his salvation.

The second one is the "*Markat Kishore Nyaya*", where the relation is like between a baby monkey and its mother. Even though the mother is making all efforts to protect the baby, the baby also has to make efforts to cling to the mother. Similarly, man should make some efforts to seek the God.

2. **Dwaita (Dualism):** This school was founded by Madhwa (1238 to 1317 AD). As the name suggests, it holds that the soul (jeeva) and Supreme soul (paramatma) are different, and hence the duality between them, unlike in Advaita philosophy, the God is of full of virtues (gunapurna) and flawless (nirdosha). Brahman of Vedanta philosophy and Vishnu of Dwaita philosophy are one and the same, and Vishnu is the Supreme Godhead in Dwaita. Hence the Bhakti cult developed in this philosophy, as the devotees could sing and praise the attributes of Godhead. The Vaishnavism in Dwaita is the revival of the Pancharatra School, considered to be authoritative; the Panacharatra literature has two branches, Brahma Sampradaya, and the Sri Sampradaya. Sri Sampradaya has been adopted by the Vishishtadwaita, and the Brahmasampradaya has been adopted by the Dwaita School of Vedanta. Both are Vaishnava traditions.

3. **Shuddhadwaita:** Vallabha's philosophy is known as 'Shuddhadwaita', or Pushti Marga which translates as 'the way of grace'. Bhakti of any kind depends on His grace. Krishna is the supreme deity according to this school, and he is 'Para Brahman', 'Sachidananda' or the Supreme Bliss. The devotion that results from common grace is known as the 'Maryada Bhakti' and that which results due to His special grace is known as Pushti Bhakti. In this kind of Bhakti, God becomes the only object of desire, and in this state, even Moksha or the salvation becomes secondary. Vallabha lists *four kinds of Pushti Bhakti*.

- **Pravaha Pushti Bhakti:** Here the devotee's ego, 'I' and 'mine' are retained, and the devotee is inclined to do the deeds that are dear to the Lord (Pravaha-flow).
- **Maryada Pushti Bhakti:** All desires disappear, and the devotee is on the path of renunciation. He wants to listen to the scriptures.
- **Pushti-Pushti-Bhakti:** In this state the devotee receives the special grace of the Lord, and becomes omniscient. He possesses the knowledge about the Lord, and his Lila (play).
- **Shuddha Pushti Bhakti:** This is the ultimate state of mind where the devotee has nothing but love for the Lord. This state is supposed to be extremely rare.

4. **Kumara Sampradaya or Nimbarka School of Vaishnavism:** The start of the philosophical school is claimed to have a hoary tradition. In R.G.Bhandarkar's Report of the Search for Sanskrit Manuscripts, 1882-83, it is stated that the first teacher of the Nimbarka School was Hamsa, and his pupil was Kumara, of the form of 'four Vyuhas'. Kumara's pupil was Narada, who preached '*prema-bhakti*' in Treta Yuga. It is said that Nimbarka was the pupil of Narada, and an incarnation of the 'Sudarshana Chakra' of Vishnu. Nimbarka's time is said to be immediately after Ramanuja, as he refers to Ramanuja in his works. This school specialises in the worship of Radha and Krishna, the divine couple, and devotion towards them.

According to Nimbarka, there are three kinds of 'Jivas' or souls. Those that are eternally free, others who have gained freedom from bondage, and those who are bound by the cycles of birth and death. In the Free State, the individual soul can enjoy Brahman. The God is the only subject of enquiry, for those who want salvation (Mumukshu).

Vaishnavism and Bhakti Movement: Vaishnavism inspired the Bhakti movement, as Vishnu, or his incarnations, Rama and Krishna, become the personal Gods of the devotees, due to their history and character, and endeared themselves to the worshippers. The people could find all the qualities they sought in Gods in these two Godheads, and they could become ideals to emulate, strong characters to seek protection, and could be father, son, or brother, as the devotee desired. Narasimha Mehta, Gujarati poet composed the song, 'Vaishnavajana', which had immense influence on Gandhi. Gandhi hoped that all the good qualities which Narasimha Mehta expects in a Vaishnava are in him, and that he always made efforts to fulfil Mehta's description of a true Vaishnava. This song became the part of Ashram prayer.

4.7 ANASAKTI YOGA

'Anasakti Yoga' is the name given by Gandhi to the spirit of Bhagavad Gita. The word, 'Anasakti Yoga' is not to be found in any ancient text on Yoga, one of the eight schools

of philosophy. Patanjali is held to be the authority of the ancient school, and he does not use this word anywhere. Gandhi held *the Gita* in high esteem, and it inspired his thought and work throughout his life. He wanted the message of *the Gita* to reach the common man and resultantly he published “Anasakti Yoga”, which was mainly meant for the Gujarati readers. Gandhi, while writing this book, deliberately kept out the complex technical terms, and did not delve on the subjects, which would not interest the ordinary reader. He did not mention the word, “Upanishad” anywhere, in his notes, or even in the introduction to his work, even though *the Gita* is said to be the essence of Upanishads.

Gujarati Translation:

When Gandhi was imprisoned, he could read Tilak’s book on *the Gita*, in its Gujarati translation. He says that this work whetted his appetite, and he began to read more works on *the Gita*. His first acquaintance with this work was when he read Edwin Arnold’s *Song Celestial*. Later, he read the Gujarati translation, and says that reading all the possible works on *the Gita* could not get him enough courage to do his own translation, as he felt, “My knowledge of Sanskrit is limited, and my knowledge of Gujarati too is no way scholarly.”

The driving force behind his translation into Gujarati was to give this great work for the benefit of the ordinary people like women, commercial class, and the downtrodden sections of the Gujarati population. He was a staunch practitioner of this work, and says that whatever knowledge he possessed, he wanted to pass on to the ordinary people of Gujarat. He was assisted in this work by his fellow workers like Vinoba, Kaka Kalelkar, Mahadev Desai, and Kishorilal Mashruwala.

English Translation:

Gandhi took Swami Anand’s suggestion to translate the Gita into English seriously. During his prison term in Yerwada, he undertook this task and the translation appeared in the column of *Young India*, on 6.8.1931.

He later entrusted the work to his trusted secretary Mahadev Desai who diligently translated it according to Gandhi’s expectations. Mahadev Desai, gave the title to the book, *The Gospel of Selfless action*, or *The Gita according to Gandhi* and was first published in August, 1946. Gandhi vouched for the accuracy of the translation.

Many principles which were dear to Gandhi got corroborated, underlined, and emphasised in the work. The concepts of Ahimsa, bread labour, and above all, selfless action are the main principles. Gandhi makes it clear that selfless action does not mean the ‘absence of purpose’. He said that there should be selfless purpose behind our action. To be detached from the fruits of action is not to be ignorant of them or to disregard or disown them. To be detached is never to abandon action, because the contemplated result may not follow. On the contrary, he said, it is the proof of the immovable faith in the certainty of the contemplated result following in due course (*Young India*, 15.3.28). Gandhi states with emphasis, that even at the risk of repetition, he would like to point out that “the matchless remedy is renunciation of fruits of labour”.

In his commentary, Gandhi also brings out his argument that the main message of Gita is Ahimsa, or non-violence. He says that if one understands the central teaching of the Gita, one is bound to follow truth and Ahimsa. When there is no desire for the fruit, there is no temptation for the untruth or himsa (violence); untruth and violence will be found at

the back of the desire to attain the cherished end. He opined that a strong desire to achieve the fruit in itself involves violence, and the only way to achieve non-violence is to get into a situation where the violence is not needed, that is liberating oneself from the desire to get the fruit of action. Gandhi's translation is unique, as it upholds his philosophy, and gives strength to him, and millions of other people who follow him.

4.8 SUMMARY

Post-Buddhist period in India generated a debate as to what constitutes the essence of Vedic thinking. This led to the development of Vedanta literature, which discussed the relation between the Supreme Reality and the individual. Three schools emerged Advaita, Vishishtadvaita and Dvaita that have been dealt at length. Bhakti movement also emerged between eighth and fifteenth century, which took the devotion to God from an intellectual and dialectical level to a relation of love. This movement reached the common man through the great leaders of this movement like Kabir, Tulasidas, Nanak, Alvars in Tamil Nadu, poet saints of Maharashtra, Dasa movement in Karnataka, Chaitanya's Gaudiya Vaishnavism and similar movements all over the country. Vaishnavism is closely related to the Bhakti movement, as most of it came out in Vaishnava tradition, with some examples from Saiva tradition. Anasakti Yoga is Gandhi's work on **Bhagavad Gita**, which had the greatest influence on him. Gandhi gave his own interpretation, and he held that the central message of this work is to forego the fruits of labour or selfless action. Undoubtedly Gandhi drew enormous strength from these philosophical sources in order to emerge as a true Satyagrahi.

4.9 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Examine the debate about 'Brahman' and 'Atman' in three schools of Vedanta.
2. Discuss the conceptualisation of 'Ultimate reality' in Vedanta.
3. Bring out the contribution of Bhakti movement.
4. What is Vaishnavism? Discuss the tenets of four schools of Vaishnavism.
5. Critically examine Gandhi's Anasakti Yoga.
6. Discuss the efforts of Tulasidas to bring about harmony in society.

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