

The background features several thick, light green curved lines that sweep across the frame. Two starburst shapes, also in light green, are positioned on the left and right sides, each with eight sharp points radiating from a central point.

Essence of Religions

Does religion cause violence?

- Religion should have been the end of all conflict, but unfortunately religion has become a source of conflict.

Why?

- As long as you believe that your way is right, and someone else believes his way is right, conflict is germane.

And conflicts can lead to War?

- Religions, by itself justify war in right circumstances
- Religion in the hands of the deluded, corrupt and power-hungry has been used to justify war

Religious conflicts in India

- In ancient India, competition sometimes led to violence, destruction and appropriation of places of worship of Buddhism and Jainism as they lost royal patronage.
- In medieval India, Hindu temples witnessed repeated destruction. Aurangzeb imposed jizya. He also issued orders for execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur
- In modern India, political mobilisation and economic competition has at times erupted into pogroms.
- 1983 Nellie massacre, 1984 anti-Sikh massacre, 1989 Bhagalpur riots, 1990 Kashmiri Pandit killings, 2002 Gujarat riots, 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, 2020 Delhi riots



Session Objective

You will be able to explain how religions influence people differently and how they can help in bringing peace

Session outline

- Essence of 4 religions – Hinduism, Islam, Christianity & Sikhism
- Karl Marx on religion
- Religion and types of followers
- Challenges for peace in India

Essence of Hinduism

- Vedas are eternal and contain knowledge of God
- Knowledge is divided into two parts – *karma kanda* which enumerate duties of person in different stages of life and *jnana kanda* which enumerates theory of creation, universal principle Brahman, law of karma, soul, life after death etc.
- External worship, material worship is the lowest stage; mental prayer is the next stage but the highest stage is when Brahman has been realised
- Hinduism is a system which comprises within its fold infinite variety of thoughts

Essence of Islam

- Five pillars – broadly agreed by all practitioners of Islam
 1. Profession of Faith (**shahada**). The belief that "There is no **god** but **God**, and Muhammad is the Messenger of **God**" is central to Islam.
 2. Prayer (**salat**) facing Mecca five times a day.
 3. Alms (zakat) to needy.
 4. Fasting (**sawm**) during daylight hours of month of Ramadan.
 5. Pilgrimage (**hajj**) to Mecca at least once in life, financial conditions permitting.

Essence of Christianity

- Allegiance to Jesus, the Lord and following a way of life which leads to salvation
- The essence of Christianity is to come to know Jesus Christ and to learn from Him what it means to be human.” ~Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI)
- The Ten Commandments. The Golden Rule is “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”
- Jesus gave the Apostles his divine authority and power and established them as the leaders of his church which continues till now as Roman Catholic Church

Essence of Sikhism

- GURU is Spiritual Enlightener, who knows GOD fully well, is himself liberated and can assuredly get his followers liberated with Divine Grace.
- Guru Granth Sahib is the final Guru following lineage of ten human Gurus
- Sikh is a devout Follower of the GURU.
- The Three Pillars of Sikhism · 1. Naam Japna (focus of God), · 2. Kirat Karni (honest living) and · 3. Vand Chakna (sharing with others).

Religion and disciple or true follower

- Religions expound reality which is beyond laws and phenomena of the world
- Religions prescribe code of conduct for its followers
- A disciple believes in higher values expounded by a religion
 - Hinduism: Swami Vivekananda
 - Islam: Maulana Abul Kalam Azad
 - Christianity: Mother Teresa
 - Sikhism: Bhagat Puran Singh



"I am proud of being an Indian. I am a part of the indivisible unity that is Indian nationality. I am indispensable to this noble edifice, and without me this splendid structure of India is incomplete. I am an essential element which has gone to build India. I can never surrender this claim."

Bhagat Puran Singh

Bhagat ji wrote: "From my childhood, my mother had taught me to provide water to the animals, plant trees and water newly planted saplings, offer feed to the Sparrows, Crows and Mynahs, pick up thorns from the paths, and remove the stones from cart tracks.

She had entrusted me to the custody of Gurdwara Dera Sahib, Lahore and started me on a path of virtuous living. By following this path your mind can never waver."



Karl Marx on religion

- Religion is the general theory of this world, its logic in popular form, its spiritual experience, its moral sanction and its universal basis of consolation and justification.
- Religion was constructed by man to calm uncertainty over our role in the universe and in society. It gives answers to existential and social questions of man.
- Hence man is pacified by religion. He is able to accept injustice in world. He is told he is powerless. He accepts soulless conditions. Religion accomplishes this by promising rewards in the after-life rather than in this life.

Contd.

- Religion was a significant hindrance to reason, inherently masking the truth and misleading followers.
- The abolition of the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness.
- Criticism of religion is the prerequisite of all criticism
- European societies who chose to separate state from religion and governance from faith, raced to material and cultural progress.
- Marx never suggested that religion ought to be prohibited. He said man must have time at their disposal for spiritual creative activity and spiritual enjoyment

Religion & Ordinary Follower

- Religion takes care of needs of ordinary followers by:
 - ✓ providing answers to spiritual mysteries,
 - ✓ offering emotional comfort in times of crisis, and
 - ✓ performing rituals which bring order, comfort, through shared symbols and behavior.
- Ordinary followers have a great craving for conformity. They see security in it. So when they see someone breaking the pattern their whole world goes topsy turvy.
- Ordinary followers are prone to moral policing
- Ordinary followers are vulnerable to be recruited as terrorists / suicide bombers.

Religion and negative persons

- Negative persons use religion to spread hatred about others. They become powerful when others support them.
- They are effective in exploiting our negative emotions of guilt and shame in man.
- In India, religion and politics is intertwined. Many negative persons are venerated by some sections of society.
- Some negative persons of Indian society:
 1. Aurangzeb
 2. Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale

Handling negative persons

- You don't need religion to have morals. If you can't determine right from wrong then you lack empathy, not religion.
- Negative people feed on your reaction and if they see you being affected by what they do/say, they'll keep doing it.
- Don't let negative and toxic people rent space in your head. Raise the rent and kick them out.
- Don't let negative people drag you down to their level. Instead use their example as how not to behave

Religion and types of followers

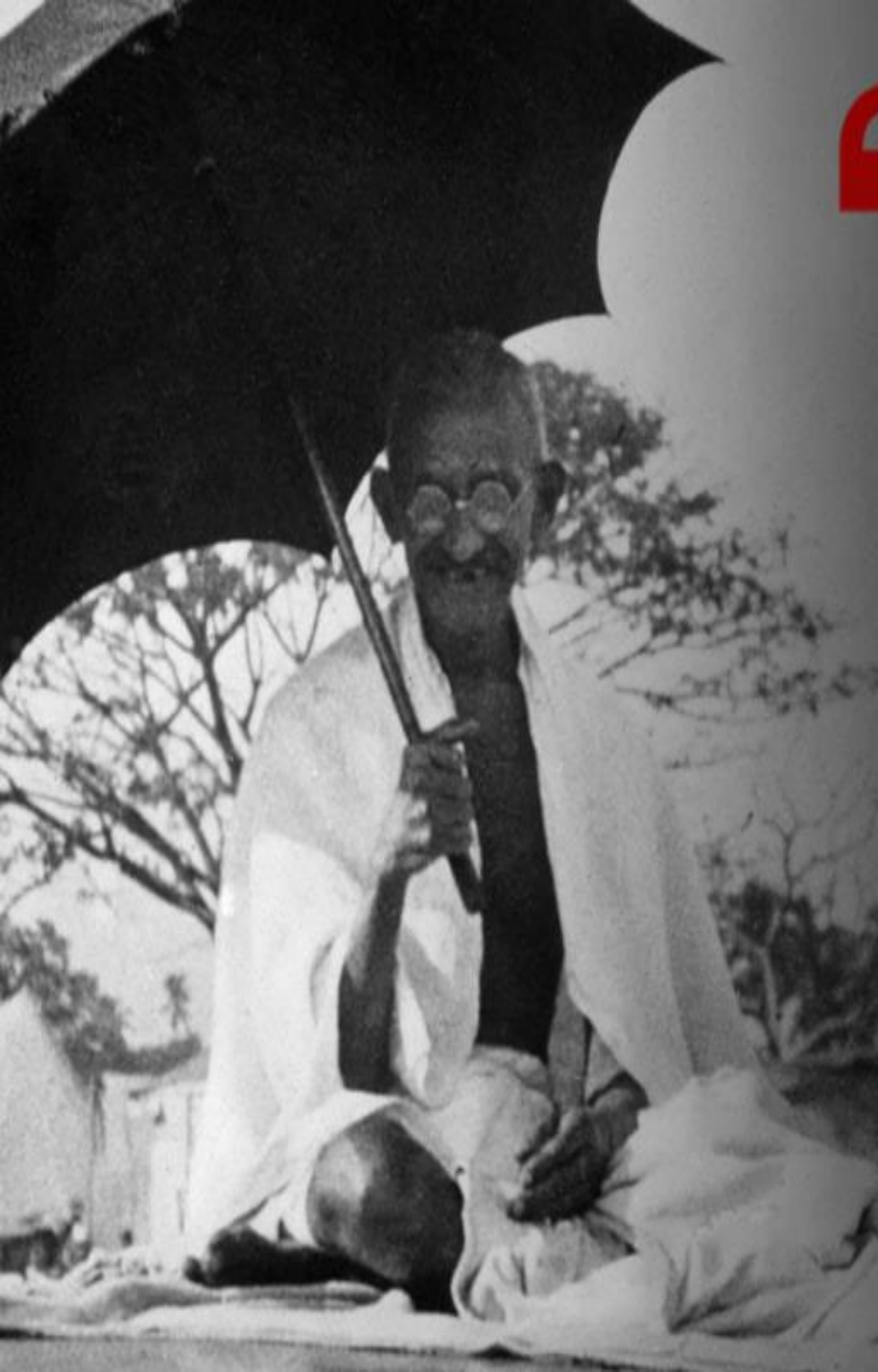
1. The disciple or true follower – he believes in higher human values and is ready to sacrifice his wealth and comfort for achievement of those values
2. The ordinary follower – he seeks solace from heartless world. Shared religious discourse and rituals with co-religionists bring order and comfort.
3. The negative person – The negative person could be negative for a reason. They could have been hurt, angry, broken, confused, or they are simply sinful. They really like to denounce others. They use hatred effectively.

Challenges for peace in India

- Challenge before India:
 - Polarization of votes along religious lines
 - Religion and politics are both combustible subjects, and throwing them into each other's arms is can cause a fire i.e. violence and maybe a pogrom.
 - The struggle to keep religion out of politics must be waged, yet with the knowledge that it will never be won.

How religions help in achieving peace

- The struggle between good and evil is an eternal struggle which takes place in each of us.
- Good is defined as higher essence of religion which is about the expansion of consciousness, which involves breaking down barriers.
- Evil is defined as baser essence of religion which involves hardening of boundaries and dividing people into “us” and “them” until it contracts into a very small circle: you and true persons as defined by you.
- Once that struggle is resolved for each of us, then that challenge shall be overcome.



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I do not sit in judgement upon the world for its many misdeeds. Being imperfect myself and needing toleration and charity, I tolerate the world's imperfections 'til I find or create an opportunity for fruitful expostulation.

Mahatma Gandhi

'Young India' newspaper, March 15, 1928

Thank you
for
listening!



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