

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



Session Objective

You will be able to explain the different approaches to achieving peace in a multi-religious society

Session I Plan

- Evolution of Religion
- Individual Activity
- Institutionalized Religions
- Group Activity

Evolution of religion

- Hominin's larger brains experience broader range of emotions
- Human bonding is possible by positive emotions – empathy, love, caring, loyalty, happiness.
- Religion reinforces positive emotions
- Institutionalized religions developed in more complex societies post Agricultural revolution

Individual Activity

- Take questionnaire asking questions on religion in general
- Objective: self-awareness about ones attitude towards religion
- The questionnaire is confidential and data on your name or religion is not required
- Time: 12 minutes

Institutionalized Religions: Elements

- Beliefs
- Rules of conduct
- Rituals or ceremonies
- Sacred Objects
- Emotions
- Symbols
- Organization

Institutionalized Religion: Challenges

- Reconciling deeply held beliefs with technology driven changes in society
- Defending sacred objects and symbols from irreverent
- Individualized form of religion may become “deviant” with respect to doctrines

Group Activity

- In groups of 8 to 9, discuss and list out three strategies for achieving peace in a multi-religious society like India
- Time: 20 minutes

Session II Plan

- Submissions by Groups
- Karl Marx on Religion
- Inter-faith Dialogue
- Essence of Religion

Karl Marx on Religion

- What is true nature of human existence? To produce and share with community.
- Capitalist system (wages) alienates human from his production and community.
- *'Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. it is the opium of the people'.*

Contd.

- Religion is opium of people
 - Promise of afterlife
 - Virtue of suffering
 - Hope of Messiah to solve problems
 - Accept inequalities as "God's Will"
- Religion is hindrance to reason, masking truth and misleading people
- Criticism of religion is necessary to get out of narcotic effect of religion

Contd.

- 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

Inter Faith Dialogue

- Assumption: Essence of religions is love and peace
- The aim of Interreligious dialogue is to:
 - Improve relations between people of different faiths
 - Obtaining respectful knowledge of all religions
 - Eliminating negative views of other religions
- Dialogue is not debate but sympathetically understanding others religion

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 see security in religion.
- Ordinary followers tend to see Inter Faith Dialogue as debate: superiority of one religion over another

Religion and negative persons

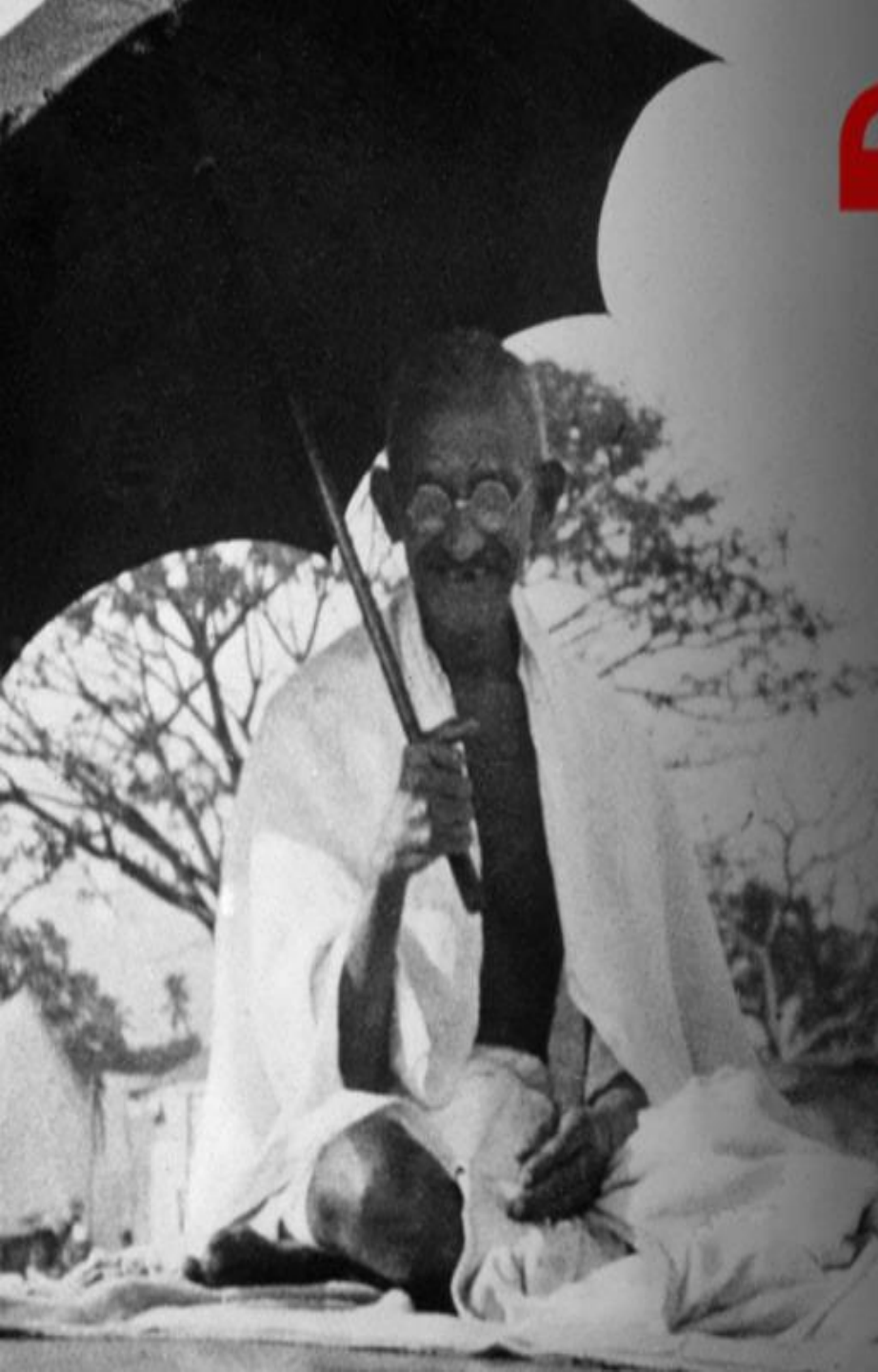
- Negative persons use religion to spread hatred about others. They become powerful when others support them.
- They are effective in exploiting our negative emotions of guilt and shame in man.
- In India, religion and politics is intertwined. Many negative persons are venerated by some sections of society.

Handling negative persons

- Negative people do not lack knowledge of religion.
- Negative people lack empathy.
- Negative people feed on reaction and will continue doing it if they see you affected by it.
- Don't give them space in your head. Kick them out.
- Use them as example of how not to behave.

Essence of Religion

- 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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