

Swami Chinmayanand is a great scholar of Vedanta in modern times and a great sage. He is a well-known personality today. A number of volumes of scholarly studies of Vedas are to his credit. He is founder of Chinmay Mission which has been working to spread the philosophy of Vedas. The wave of modernization has made it necessary to reestablish the ancient values and thoughts as the present day generation has become materialistic. Swami Chinmayanand's thoughts abound with solutions to present day problems. Chinmay Mission has played a vital role in spreading his thoughts all over the world. Discipline, nationalism and religiousness are some of the features of his personality.

Swami Chinmayanand has stated valuable thoughts about religion. Today the environment in which we are living is very fearful with the extreme spread of casteism, religionalism, segmentism and racism, etc. The society is being fragmented in the name of religion. The thoughts of Swami Chinmayanand give us hope in this dark period in the history of humanity. Swami Chinmayananda's definition of religion (dharma) is very clear. According to him Dharma is a Law of Being. Nothing can retain its existence without its inherent law i.e. quality. Anything remains in its own state because of its quality. This basic Law of Being is the religion of the thing. Gurudeo stated a very comprehensive outlook of religion. A person needs to be aware of his religion for his development. A religion shows path and aim to a developed person. The concept of God as propagated by temples, mosques, churches and gurudwaras can not be accepted because these places differentiate man from man. Gurudeo believed that the man made religions turn into deformed institutes. According to him religion is science. It is a system through which man comes to know his position in the vast world. Religion has covered the entire human life. He firmly believed that true religion never ends.

Swami Chinmayanand and Religion

Swami Chinmayanand has stated valuable thoughts about religion. Today the circumstances through which human beings have to live are very difficult. Today we see the rise of casteism, religionism, regionalism, and racism. Religions are breaking down the social structures. Swami Chinmayananda's thoughts about religion show us the way in such situations. Swami Chinmayananda's definition of religion (dharma) is very clear. According to him Dharma is a Law of Being. He says this is the only word which is nearest to the meaning of religion. Nothing can retain its existence without its inherent law i.e. quality. For example to burn is the religion of fire. Anything remains in its own state because of its quality. Hence religion does not mean only goodness of mind or conduct. This basic Law of Being is the religion of the thing. If we apply the same principle to human beings, what would his religion? Swami Chinmayanand says religion is that bundle of lust with which a man is born. The true religion is that every human being should act according to his natural instinct to live a life full of satisfaction. Conduct against the basic instincts is anti-religious. When majority of people of a society do not follow the true religion they prefer animal like life and strife and struggle. Thus religion should be those inherent tendencies which inspire a human being to behave in a human manner. Thus Gurudeo has stated a comprehensive view of religion.

On his discourse of 6th adhyaya (chapter) of Geeta Gurudeo has stated the concept of religion and personality development in an excellent manner. He says, "If a human being has to reach to the inner highest state of cultural and spiritual being, he has to focus on the lower instincts to uplift them to the centralized higher level of instincts." In fact this realization is present in every human being however it is unfortunately confined only to the limits of thinking and does not reflect in action. One can have a very clear and ideal picture about oneself in his mind, but in reality one behaves opposite of it. The degradation from the ideals and practices is the scale to measure

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his fall. If one introspects, one visualizes a morally strong person on intellectual front, physically loving and socially disciplines human being. Nevertheless, the conflict of feelings and aspirations, hopes, love, anger, likes and dislikes keep us away from attaining that desired ideals. Unless a human being becomes aware of these contrasting personalities religion is of no use for him. The realization of these two personalities and the urge to reach the higher level of inner self is possible only by the best means of religion. Mind misleads us from the way of attaining the ultimate goal of life and makes us engage in physical pleasures which are temporary.

Human being needs religion to know the exact nature of its personality. Human being should know the nature of original aspirations. These original aspirations are divine and comprehensive but when these unite with the physical, mental and emotional stages, they give rise to inhuman feelings. However if the divine spirits overcome the inhuman feeling man can lead a religious life.

Does life have any aims or is life just an accident? These are some challenging questions which a developed man faces today. Religion is a guiding force for these people. Any religion has some philosophy. This philosophy tends to provide answers to present-day problems and explains the ways of present day life. The Oriental and Western philosophies differ here. As the Western man is outward by nature, philosophy to him is a science of physical objective life. According to them the philosophy indicates a way about life while for the Orientals philosophy is something more than just a way of life. For them philosophy is a way of living life.

Philosophy is religion and religion is a way of living. Gurudeo has defined religion as ways of conduct based on the philosophy of successful life. He has very strong opinions about religion and God. The concept of God as propagated by temples, mosques, churches and gurudwaras can not be accepted because these places differentiate man from man. Gurudeo believed that the man made religions turn into deformed institutes. This phenomenon has taken place the world over
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but in India the spiritual foundations were never shaken. Based on this fact Gurudeo stated that true religion exists only in India where the Vedas and Upanishads are followed in toto. This definition of religion is very comprehensive one. Its significance is well understood on the backdrop of bloodshed in the name of religion today.

The wave of religious revival struck India in the 18th century but it failed to wash out the evil customs in religion. Today there are many voluntary religious institutes which have been working in the field but they have also chosen wrong ways with wrong concepts. If we want to grow religion we have to root out the evils from it. But today the situation is quite different. The advancement in the field of science is abolishing the sense of humanity from human beings. Today human beings are afraid of natural calamity, but he is more afraid of man made calamities, inventions of science and the diseases which were unknown till yesterday. Today's generations are living under tension. Men living in skyscrapers who have everything to satiate their hunger are still worried. They are in need of guidance to activate the spiritual truths in life. In the same way religion is needed to direct him to keep alive humanity in the world. Whenever religion and aims of life went hand in hand, it was a blessing to human life. On the other hand when religion became corrupt and was isolated from the goals of life, it narrowed down to a few selfish people ending its comprehensiveness. In his book titled 'An Enquiry into Peace' Gurudeo says: Religion is based on duties and responsibilities. It is not based on rights. In contrast the Western way of thought has molded itself upon the principle of right. Rights are to be taken, to be acquired and to be preserved. A civilization based upon rights must necessarily come to fight. In such a society the instincts of acquiring, hoarding and maintaining ultimately upset peace. On the other hand a culture built upon duties recognizes the right to do our duty as a fundamental privilege in life. A generation that understands such culture gets trained to demand of life ample chances to fulfill its duties. Duty therefore develops the spirit of giving.

Gurudeo has defined Religion in his book *Spiritual Culture*. The definition is very broad and comprehensive. He says: Dharma is a Sanskrit word. It has no substitute word in English. Some translate it as Righteousness but it does not reflect the true meaning of religion. Explaining the comprehensiveness of religion, Gurudeo says: It includes all those fundamental values of life that are universally good in all places and at all times. It is the foundation of all efforts at moral rearmaments and ethical perfection encompasses the eternal duties of every person who wants to live up to the full dignity of the human beings and strive consistently to grow into his full stature as a God. Man in this very life translate Dharma as Duty.

Science of Religion:

Gurudeo used to say that religion is a science. Gurudeo thinks of such a religion which helps man seek his own inner powers by which he can face the challenges in life. True religion is that which helps man to live through service to others, can live with faith in the worldly life. Religion is the science of revaluation of life. The experiments that scientists perform are within laboratories but the experiments that *rhushis* and *munis* perform are about human experience and the inner world. The scientists seek to know what the world is whereas *rhushis* seek to know what a man is. Explaining the correlation between religion and science Gurudeo says: Once the religions did not recognize the value of scientific achievements and did not maintain balance with the science, hence religion was defeated. Today science is committing the same mistake. Science has intentionally declared to keep distance from religion. As a result materialism has reached its peak and has become helpless. Religion and science can not make human life comfortable by separating from each other. Religion helps man to blossom his personality and make him able to enjoy life in a better way. The proper and real understanding of the orders of religion provides inspiration for the higher ideals of life and offers a broad view of it.

Religion of the Self:

As a human being grows inwardly, the petty tendencies naturally fell off. The sacrifice of the petty feelings in order to reach the higher values is the achievement of the dignity of mind. The true religion and Pram religion are misunderstood today. Gurudeo says that the orthodox people have narrowed down these concepts for their selfish motive of maintaining the narrow classification of human beings. Self religion does not mean the religion which has fallen on our part because of our birth in that religion. In real sense religion of the self is the awareness of inner 'nature' (*swabhav*) of oneself. It is to act according to one's inner nature. It is a way to live a life full of peace, happiness and success. Paradharm which is opposite of dharma is acting in opposition of one's nature. What is the proper religion of man? Gurudeo says that every substance in the world has to qualities, one the essential and the other is inessential. The substance can exist without the inessential qualities but it can not live without the essential qualities. The length of flame, its colour are inessential qualities of a fire, (*agni*) but heat is its essential quality. This essential quality is called *dharma*. Then what is the *dharma* of man? The body, mind, intellect, temperament are the inessential qualities of man without which he can live? But can he live without the inner spirit (*atmatatwa*) ? This *atmatatwa* is his religions. If this principle is understood we can understand the basic values such as code of conduct, love, compassion, respect, etc are described as religion in all the scriptures. Understanding of this principle will lead to the manifestation of the inner spirit (*atmatatwa*) through the bodily and mental actions. To live as the *atmatatwa* and through our actions and relations with the outer world to achieve the perfection of the inner spirit is the reseeking of our religion.

The wrong understanding of these basic values by the thoughtless thinkers and their uneducated followers polluted the divine knowledge of religion. This leads to degradation of any religion as

they do not receive proper guidance to understand clearly the basic principles of religion.

Acceptance of newer ideas and concepts should also include within their fold the present day needs. To think that the religion has been detached from life is like admitting our ignorance of the true religion. The true religion begins in life, grows in life and ends in life. The religion which detaches from life is no religion at all. Gurudeo has rightly remarked on the wrong interpretation of the concept of religion. He says that if we were cruel enough like animals to deny the existence of religion, we would have been more successful in our material quest. We have neither the courage to deny religion neither the spiritual boldness to walk the path of true religion. What we are doing today is thus a blind game which treats religion like non-religion and non-religion like religion. The true religion makes one to fulfill one's duties towards oneself and the society and then makes efforts for liberation (*mukti*) True religion can never be an obstacle in the way of attaining perfection in individual and social life. One who is constant aware of the needs and sufferings of those around us is a religious person. A society is made up of people having heterogeneous beliefs and faiths. These people have their own philosophy of religion. Generally their feelings about religion are confined with the insanity that is found in temples and churches. Gurudeo has attacked such tendencies. He called such attitudes as religious insanity and religious conflict. He was also against the rituals that go with religions. In the introduction to '*Ishawatsya Upanishda*' he says : Religion has become a inhuman machine which has made human race a crippled one further supported by false feelings and insanity which nourishes fear. The question arises as to what is real religion? In fact every religion has a systematic arrangement of human life and the moral values. Religions have served human beings throughout the history. This led to development of human society but too much of development again proved hazardous to the existence of religion as the advanced human society started to deny religion. The change in the concept of religion is best explained by Gurudeo in the introduction to *Ishawasya Upanishada*. He says: Human race has been constantly growing from

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its ancient tribal life to modern advanced life, from national to international life with all his organizations powers and imbalances. In this development the government and religion joined hands to progress further. During middle age the inventions of machines intervened the development which further hampered by the advancement in science and technology in modern times. Today the generation carrying atom bomb though has captured new horizons of discoveries and inventions has lost the mental satisfaction which is the essence of life. Today the disappointed world is looking at religion with hope to restore the relation between man and religion which has a long gap in them. If we have to restore religion we will have to go back to its origin because religion is a science of life. Animals do not have religion. Religion is a way to understand the place of human beings in the vast world. Gurudeo while explaining the concept through the eyes of rich a says: Religion for the rich is a thing of luxury. They in fact do not know the inner needs of their mind hence do not require any support from divine powers. The anxiety about the pains and sufferings in life can only lead to seeking true religion.

The Sovereignty of Religion :

The concept of religion has covered the entire human life. The word dharma is related with the breathing of human being. While explaining this idea in the introduction to *Kenopanishad* Gurudeo has said: "Religion is a privilege to man and not an animal instinct." Even though human beings get food, clothing, and shelter they are seldom complacent in life. He is always curious to achieve something higher than these. The man who is a perfect creation faces the problems of identity of self. Who am I? Where am I going? What is the purpose of my life? These questions haunt him. Of the two sides of a religion people only think of the rituals and discard the theoretical side. Gurudeo expresses displeasure about his. According to him rituals and theory are complementary to each other, both are incomplete without the other. The religious rituals followed without the theory are mere superstitions. In fact, the focus of any religion is on the aims of life

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and their nature. Religions prescribe the code of conduct which is needed to attain the ultimate goal of life.

Gurudeo says: “Religion does not do any miracles to change the nature of life. Religion can bring no change in the outer world, but it promises to change our responses to the situations thus bringing about a change in ourselves. Religion provides faith to those who believe in it. It gives mental stability and spiritual concentration to personalities. All religions suggest the same ways to look at things. Discard the false pride and its effects on your self. Pains and sufferings are the signs of pride, dedicate them to God. Turn your self-pride into a divine power by destroying the evils and building up the virtues. Religion claims that our real nature is utmost pure and divine. Hence it is a science of all sciences. This is not possible without the complete understanding of religion. Today our life is so affected by selfish motives and pride that it is impossible for us to attain real peace. Hence what we need most today is the spiritual revolution. In his article ‘*Khara Dharma*’ (True Religion) Gurudeo says: “Religion is a science of life which can provide values to life. We have to restructure these values according to present day situations.” Gurudeo stresses a flexible approach to religion. He insists that if the religion can not fulfill the day’s needs we have to make certain amendments to religion. He even goes forward stating that sometimes we have to throw away the old dogmas and adopt new ones. This flexible approach to religion was a unique contribution of Gurudeo to the global thinking about religions.

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