

16.2.2 Moral Evils

While Natural evils are caused by Nature, moral evils are caused by human actions: They are the products of human will. It is man who is responsible for existence of moral evils. There are two views about the existence of moral evils. One view is, natural evils were in the world from before. They created occasions for the development of moral evils. Hunger, want, pain and such other kinds of suffering caused by natural evils due to drought, famine and flood drove men to immoral activities like theft, robbery, dishonesty. Theft, robbery, dishonesty, etc. are moral evils. Natural evils have incited individuals to do wrong. In order that the natural ills like pain, want and ignorance etc. grow into moral evils, the activity of the personal will is necessary. God has given man the freedom of will. When man abuses his freedom of will and he instead of making a right choice opts for a wrong choice, there is moral evil. Moral evil is thus caused by man's abuse of freedom of will. Man, therefore, is responsible for moral evil. Dishonesty, greed, falsehood, treachery and the like are moral evils. Another view is, moral evils were prior. Natural evils are in this view punishments to teach man a lesson; to bring him on the path of righteousness. Man abuses freedom of will given by God. When God granted him the gift of free will, it was expected that he would use the gift in the right direction. But man belied God's expectation. God, therefore, sent Natural evils as an act of punishment to bring man on the right track. Natural evils are actually exhibition of God's anger. Tigers, snakes, hunger, death etc. are natural evils. They give trouble to man. In this view natural evils developed after moral evils. But the claim that man existed before Nature came into existence does not seem to be plausible in view of scientific facts. The theory of evolution championed by science does not lend any support to the theory that man pre-existed nature. Nature with all its equipments like flood, famine, earthquake, hurricane pre-existed man. Man had to struggle hard to fight the natural forces or evils as we designate them. Nature presented a challenge to man's existence and man, therefore, undertook moral and immoral methods for maintaining his existence. Prof. Galloway rightly maintains that hunger, want and pain really drive man to moral evils. It means that had there been no natural evils, there would not have been any moral transgression.

16.2.3 Problem of Evil

The existence of evil was not a problem during the early phases of religious development. Our early religious thinkers thought that there are good spirits as well as wicked spirits. Good spirits do good to individuals while wicked spirits are responsible for evils in this world. In the development of religion, when people believed in a plurality of God's evil was not a problem. Of the numerous Gods, some wicked Gods were responsible for the existence of the evils. Some thinkers have explained existence by positing two absolute ultimate realities. Plato has called Being to be absolutely perfect and the ultimate source of good. Non-being, according to him, is the cause of all evils. In Aristotle's

philosophy also there is dualism of matter and form: The universe in its progress is approaching Form. And matter is the cause of evil. In Ditheistic religion there are two ultimate Gods : one responsible for the good and the other responsible for the evils. Ahura Mazda and Ahriman are both regarded as Gods in Persian religion. Ahura Mazda is responsible for good and Ahriman is the cause of all evils in the world. Ahura Mazda is compared with Light and Ahriman is regarded as Darkness. In Pantheistic religion also there is no problem of evil because when all is God, and God is all, the question of evil does not arise.

Evil is actually a problem for the theists. The theists believe God to be omnipotent creator of the universe. They also regard God to be good and kind. They also believe in the reality of evils. Evils are real and their existence is a fact. The theists are hard put to explain the existence of evil. The existence of evil is not in accordance with the nature of God who is essentially good. If the evils exist and God cannot prevent their entry in the world created by God, then God cannot be said to be omnipotent. Thus evil is a problem for the theists.

Two kinds of defence can be given. Firstly, man is a finite being and his knowledge is always incomplete and so men regard evils as real because of his faulty knowledge. Evils are not really evils from the point of view of Infinite God. The existence of evil is illusory. They appear to be real from a limited point of view.

Another defence may be that the presence of evil in the world actually enhances the beauty and grandeur of the world. As a pinch of salt enhances the taste of food, as a discordant note amidst a musical event increases the sweetness of music, so the presence of a few evils contribute to heighten the goodness of the universe. Evil is needed as contrast to good. "Evil is a necessary complement of good," says C.E. M. Joad. For Hegel, from the partial point of view evils are real but from the point of view of whole evils are unreal.

16.3 Summary

Natural evils are caused by Nature. Earthquake, famine, flood, hurricane and drought are events in Nature which bring untold suffering to mankind. Moral evils are caused by men. God has given man freedom of will. When man abuses the freedom of will and acts in ways detrimental to God's will, there is moral evil. Dishonesty, greed, falsehood, theft and sin are moral evils. Natural evils cause hunger, pain and anger and men are tempted to undertake evil ways to satisfy hunger. Natural evils therefore cause moral evils. The problem of evil exists only for the theists who believe in the goodness and omnipotence of God. How can the evils exist when they are contradictory to God's nature; Why should not God prevent evil from entering His creation? The theists are hard put to explain the existence of evil in this world. The existence of evil is a problem for the theist.

16.4 Key words

- (a) **Evil** : every kind of sorrow and suffering is evil
(b) **Natural evil** : Sorrow and suffering caused by nature
(c) **Moral evil** : Sorrow and suffering caused by man's inhumanity to man ; Evils breaking laws of morality

16.5 Questions for Exercise

16.5.1 Objective Questions

- (i) Moral evils are caused by
(a) nature (b) God
(c) men (d) wild animals
Answer— (c)
- (ii) Problem of evil exists for the
(a) Deists (b) Pantheists
(c) Ditheists (d) Theists
Answer— (d)

16.5.2 Short Answer Questions

- (i) Explain Natural Evils.
Answer— See 16.2.1
- (i) What do you understand by Moral Evils?
Answer— See 16.2.2

16.5.3 Long Answer Question

- (i) Distinguish between Natural Evil and Moral Evil.
Answer— See 16.2.1, 16.2.2

16.6 Suggested Readings

1. J.S. Mill — Three Essays on Religion
2. J.S. Mill — Is there More Evil than Good in Nature?
(Published in Approaches to the Philosophy of Religion by Bronstein and Schulweis)
3. Nelson Pike (Ed) — Good and Evil
4. William Temple — The Problem of Moral Evil
5. John Hick (ed) — Classical and Contemporary Readings in the Philosophy of Religion

THEISTIC SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Lesson Structure

- 17.0 Objective**
- 17.1 Introduction**
- 17.2 Main Theme**
 - 17.2.1 Theistic solution of the problem of evil**
 - (a) Evil is illusion
 - (b) Evil is necessary as counterpart to good
 - (c) Evil is necessary as a means to good
 - (d) The universe is better with some evils in it than without any evil
 - (e) Evil is due to human free-will
- 17.3 Summary**
- 17.4 Key words**
- 17.5 Questions for Exercise**
 - 17.5.1 Objective question**
 - 17.5.2 Short Answer questions**
 - 17.5.3 Long Answer question**
- 17.6. Suggested Readings**

17.0 Objective

This Lesson aims at explaining the problem of evil. An attempt has also been made to state the various solutions given by the theists.

17.1 Introduction

Evil is something opposed to good. The appalling depth and extent of human suffering, together with selfishness and greed which produce so much of pain every day convince us of the reality of evils. The presence of evils in the world makes the idea of a loving creator seem implausible. The theists believe God to be omnipotent, omniscient and perfectly good. The existence of evil is a chal-

lenge to theism. The theists are under an obligation to show how the existence of evil is consistent with the nature of a good God who is both omnipotent and omniscient.

17.2 Main Theme

God is omnipotent; God is omniscient; God is wholly good; and Evil exists are essential to theism. The problem of evil can be stated in the form of a dilemma thus: If God is perfectly good and loving, God must wish to abolish all evil; and if God is all-powerful, God must be able to abolish all evil. But evil exists. Therefore, God cannot be both omnipotent and perfectly good and loving. The theists have to justify the existence of evils as well as the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient and perfectly good God. The theists must show that there are good reasons for any given evil and a good reason for God's permitting it to occur. The solution of the problem of evil lies in showing how God and evil are compatible. We shall be making an analysis of different solutions given by the theists in what follows.

17.2.1 Theistic solution of the problem of evil

(a) Evil is illusion : privation of good

One way of showing the compatibility of evil with God is to say that evil is an illusion perhaps because the whole world of temporal, changing things is an illusion and that what we call evil belongs only to this world. Some have held that what we call evil is merely privation of good; that evil in a positive sense, evil that would really be opposed to good, does not exist. Many in the same spirit argue that disorder is harmony not understood, that partial evil is universal good. The vedantins in Indian philosophy also believe the world to be illusory and so the evils pertaining to the world are illusions and not real. They have no existence from the higher point of view. Whether any of these views is true is, of course, another question. But each of them gives an adequate solution of the problem of evil in the sense that if you accept it, this problem does not arise for you, though you may have other problems to face.

(b) Evil is necessary as a counterpart to good :

It is sometimes suggested that evil is necessary as a counterpart to good, that if there were no evil, there could be no good either, and that this solves the problem of evil. It is true that it points to an answer to the question " Why should there be evil? " But it does so only by qualifying some of the propositions that constitute the problem. This solution sets a limit to what God can do, saying that God cannot create good without simultaneously creating evil and this means that God is not omnipotent in the sense that he can do anything, even absurd things. God's omnipotence never means the power to do what is logically impossible. In the present view existence of good without evil would be a logical impossibility.

(c) "Evil is necessary as a means to good"

It is sometimes suggested that evil is necessary for good not as a counterpart but as a means. In its simple form this has little plausibility as a solution of the problem of evil, since it obviously implies a severe restriction of God's power. If God has to introduce evil as a means to good, he must be subject to at least some causal laws. This certainly conflicts with what a theist normally means by omnipotence.

(d) The universe is better with some evil in it than it could be if there were no evil

Much more important is a solution which at first seems to be a mere variant of the previous one, that evil may contribute to the goodness of a whole in which it is found. The universe as a whole is better as it is, with some evils in it, than it would be if there were no evil. This solution may be developed in either of two ways. It may be supported by an aesthetic analogy by the fact that contrasts heighten beauty. In musical work, for example, there may occur discords which somehow add to the beauty of the work as a whole. Alternatively, it may be worked out in connection with the notion of progress. That the best possible organisation of the universe will be static but progressive, that the gradual overcoming of evil by good is really a finer thing than would be the eternal unchallenged supremacy of good.

In either case, this solution usually starts from the assumption that evil whose existence gives rise to the problem of evil, is primarily what is called physical evil, that is to say, pain. Hume while stating the problem of evil, stresses pain and disease. The reply given by the theists tantamounts to saying that the existence of pain and disease makes possible the existence of sympathy, benevolence, heroism, and the gradual successful struggle of scientists and doctors to overcome these evils lead to various inventions and discoveries. This is a particularly subtle attempt to solve the problem of evil. It defends God's goodness and omnipotence on the ground that this is the best of all logically possible worlds. Does this solution still hold that good and evil are opposed? Not clearly because good does not tend to eliminate evil in general. St. Augustine holds that the universe is good, that is to say, it is the creation of a good God for good purpose. According to him, there are higher and lower goods in abundance and immense variety. Everything that has a being is good in its own way and degree.

(e) " Evil is due to human free will."

Perhaps the most important proposed solution of the problem of evil is that evil is not to be ascribed to God at all but to the independent actions of human beings, supposed to have been endowed by God with freedom of the will. To be a person is to be a finite centre of freedom, a relatively self-directing agent responsible for one's own decisions. This involves being free to act wrongly as well as rightly. There can, therefore, be no certainty in advance that a genuinely free moral agent will never choose amiss. Consequently, according to the strong form of free-will defence, the possibility of wrongdoing is logically inseparable from the creation of finite persons. To say that

God should not have created beings who might sin, amounts to saying that God should not have created people. This thesis has been challenged by those who claim that no contradiction is involved in saying that God might have made people who would be genuinely free, but who could at the same time be guaranteed always to act rightly. God's failure to make beings who would act freely and always do the right, is inconsistent with His being omnipotent and wholly good. If by free actions, we mean actions that are not externally compelled but flow from the nature of agents as they react to circumstances in which they find themselves, then there is no contradiction between our being free and our actions being caused by God's given nature. There is a contradiction in saying that God is the cause of our acting as we do and that we are free beings specifically in relation to God. If our thoughts and actions are divinely predestined, than however free and responsible we may seem to be, we are not free and responsible in the sight of God . We are really God's puppets. Thus, it is suggested that while God could have created such beings who would never make a wrong choice ,who would always exercise his free choice in making the right choice according to God's wish, we would be puppets and not God's sons and daughters.

17.3 Summary

Theists believe God to be omnipotent, omniscient, infinite and wholly good and also that evils exist. The existence of evil in the world is against the nature if God as wholly good. How and why should God permit evil in his creation if God is unable to prevent evil in His creation?

He is not omnipotent. If he has permitted evils, he cannot be wholly good. This is the problem of evil and the theists have to justify the existence of evil as well as the omnipotence and omniscience of God and His wholly good nature. The theists have tried to solve the problem by showing that

- (a) evils have illusory existence owing to finite man's limited vision
- (b) evils are necessary counterpart of good
- (c) evils are means to good
- (d) the presence of some evils makes the universe better than one without any evil
- (e) existence of evil is due to man's free will. Man is responsible for the existence of evil, not God.

17.4 Key words

Counterpart : thing resembling another; corresponding part.

17.5 Questions for Exercise

17.5.1 Objective Questions

- (i) Evils exist because of
 - (a) man's wrong choice
 - (b) man's right choice
 - (c) man's indecision
 - (d) God's choice

Answer— (a)

17.5.2 Short Answer Questions

- (i) State how theists solve the problem of evil by making man responsible for evils and not God.
Answer— See 17.2.1(e)
- (ii) How can the theists justify the existence of evil along with good?
Answer— See 17.2.1 (b) (c) (d)

17.5.3 Long Answer Question

- (i) Show how theists try to solve the problem of evil.
Answer— See 17.2.1

17.6 Suggested Readings

1. H.J. McCloskey — "God and Evil" The Philosophical Quarterly vol.10, April 1960
2. J.L. Mackie — Evil and Omnipotence, Mind, April 1955
3. H.D. Aiken — God and Evil, Ethics, January 1958
4. Alvin Plantinga — The Free will Defence
5. Max Black (ed) — Philosophy in America
6. Mark Pontifex — The Question of Evil in I. Ramsay (ed), Prospects for Metaphysics

PROOFS FOR THE IMMORTALITY OF SOUL

Lesson Structure

- 18.0 Objective**
- 18.1 Introduction**
- 18.2 Main Theme**
 - 18.2.1 Proofs for Immortality of Soul: Metaphysical Arguments**
 - 18.2.2 Ethical Arguments**
 - 18.2.3 Scientific arguments**
 - 18.2.4 Other forms of Immortality**
- 18.3 Summary**
- 18.4 Key words**
- 18.5 Questions for Exercise**
 - 18.5.1 Objective Questions**
 - 18.5.2 Short answer Questions**
 - 18.5.3 Long answer Question**
- 18.6 Suggested Readings**

18.0 Objective

The objective of the present lesson is to explain what we mean by the immortality of the soul and to briefly study the different proofs given for immortality.

18.1 Introduction

Belief in the existence of God and the immortality of soul are the "twin foundations of a theistic religion. Immortality of soul is more widely believed in than God. William James says "Religion in fact for the great majority of our race means immortality and nothing else." Man is a social being. He wants that people should remember him even after his death. The desire to always remain present in

the world is the desire for immortality. Death is not the end-all of this life. Man lives in some form or other even after death is what we mean by immortality.

18.2 Main Theme

By immortality of soul we mean either a disembodied existence of the soul after death or a continued existence of the soul in some other body popularly known as reincarnation of the soul in some other existence. But how can we prove that the soul exists even after death? Religious thinkers have given several proofs for proving the immortality of soul. We must, however, be clear about what we mean by proof. If proof means conclusive evidence, then in the case of immortality, it is beyond our reach. Scientific truths rest on verification. We cannot verify soul's survival after death and so proof in the scientific sense is also not possible. But though we cannot prove the immortality of soul thus, we can hold immortality of soul as a reasonable faith. If existence has a meaning human life has to be conceived to extend beyond earthly life and soul to be immortal.

18.2.1 Proofs for immortality of soul

Some kind of distinction between physical body and immaterial soul seems to be as old as human culture. Anthropologists offer various conjectures about the origin of the distinction. It was suggested by memories of dead persons, by dreams of them and by meditation upon the significance of religious rites which grew up among the ancient people. Metaphysical proof for immortality of soul rests on such a distinction.

- (i) It was Plato who first systematically developed the body -mind dichotomy and attempts to prove the immortality of the soul. Plato argues that although the body belongs to the sensible world and shares the changing and impermanent nature, the intellect is related to the unchanging realities of which we are aware when we think not of particular good things but of Goodness itself, not of specific just acts but of Justice itself, and of other universal or eternal ideas by participation in which the physical things and events have their own specific characteristic. Being related to this higher and abiding realm, the soul is immortal. Another argument given by Plato is that nothing is destroyed except by malady or evil. The specific malady of the soul is injustice or wickedness. But the wicked is most alert and active. The malady has no tendency to put the soul to an end, we may conclude unending existence of soul.

Plato used the further argument that the only things that suffer destruction are those which are composite, since to destroy something means to disintegrate it into its constituent parts. All material bodies are composite; the soul, however, is simple and therefore, imperishable.

- (ii) This argument was adopted by Aquinas as is clear from the following passage by Jacques Maritain :

" A spiritual soul cannot be corrupted, since it possesses no matter, it cannot be disintegrated,

since it has no substantial parts; it cannot lose its individual unity, since it is self-subsisting, nor its internal energy, since it contains within itself all the sources of its energies. The human soul cannot die. Once it exists, it cannot disappear, it will necessarily exist for ever, endure without end." A great metaphysician like Thomas Aquinas is able to prove the immortality of the human soul in a demonstrative manner. Cartesian thinkers also tried to prove the immortality of soul on the basis of its nature as simple, immaterial and indestructible. According to Leibnitz too, monads are imperishable. McTaggart believes in self-identical and self-sufficient souls in which there is no room for change. They are immortal.

18.2.2 Ethical argument for immortality of soul

Kant argues in the critique of Practical Reason, that the immortality of the soul is a postulate of practical reason and a presupposition of morality. Speculative reason cannot prove immortality of the soul. But the problem raised by the concept of the highest good can be solved only on the assumption that the soul is immortal. We are commanded by the moral law to achieve the highest good possible in the world. But the complete assimilation of the will to the moral law is holiness, a state which is not attainable in the world of sense. A holy will, unlike a human will, cannot be tempted by inclination or appetite to disobey the moral law. Since, however, holiness is both required by the moral law and impossible in this physical existence, its possibility requires the possibility of a different, non-physical existence in which the moral development of a will can reach perfection. Thus the highest good is practically possible only on the supposition of the immortality of soul, and the latter, as inseparably bound to the moral law, is a postulate of practical reason.

Another argument in favour of immortality of soul is based on the fact that all mental activities such as thinking, remembering, imagining etc. are carried on beyond the limits of space and time. This suggests that self or soul has a life of its own beyond physical conditions. So, even on the death of physical body, the self or soul can survive and maintain its existence.

Relying on a distinction between body and soul, the Bhagvad Gita and the Sankhya philosophy argue that on death the physical body perishes but the soul survives. The soul is immortal.

The ethical law of Karma states that as you sow, so you reap. Indian thought believes in the Law of Karma as an ethical principle. Man must reap the consequences of his actions. The present life which man is living is a result of his actions done in the past life. Man will have to reap the consequences of actions done in this life in his future life. If we do good actions, we will be rewarded with a happy life and we will be punished for our evil deeds. The Law of Karma, therefore, presupposes our souls to be immortal.

18.2.3 Scientific arguments in favour of immortality of soul

Immortality of soul can also be proved by the scientific Law of Conservation of Energy. According to this law, the amount of energy in the world is constant. There can not be any loss of energy. There are two forms of energy—potential and Kinetic. There is transformation of potential energy into kinetic

energy. By analogy it can be said that as soul is also energy it always is. Its form may change but it exists all the same.

In the present scientific age, parapsychology also supports immortality of soul. Small children have disclosed events regarding their previous births which have been verified by respectable and trustworthy persons. Dr. Stevenson in his book. " Twenty Cases of the Incarnation" tries to prove cases of rebirth scientifically. Such researches prove the immortality of the soul. We have considered the proofs of immortality of soul in the sense of disembodied existence of the soul after the death of body, or reincarnation of the soul, that is, continued existence in some other body. Many religious thinkers think of immortality in the sense of absorption of soul into the Divine i.e loss of separateness and self-identity— a shift from the temporal existence to timeless mode of being. But in all these varied beliefs, the common belief is that the individual person continues to exist after dissolution of the present body.

18.2.4 Other forms of Immortality

Some people have felt that immortality is unattainable in any of the full- blooded form mentioned above. They have proposed that we should console ourselves with quasi-survival which undoubtedly is more real. Important forms of such survival are the following :-

- (i) Biological Immortality: We become immortal through our children following the fact that something of us survives in them. Bergson elaborates this theory.
- (ii) Social Immortality: We are immortal through our influence, our effects on succeeding generations through the remembrance of us that remains in the minds of men in the future.
- (iii) Ideal Immortality: This is a certain mode of existence which is atemporal in its distinctive character. A person enjoys this sort of experience whenever he is engaged in time-transcending spiritual activities like meditation or aesthetic contemplation, that is, whenever the objects of his attention are themselves timeless. The concept of Ideal Immortality has been beautifully expounded by George Santayana: "No man is wholly immortal as no philosophy is wholly true, no language is wholly intelligible, but only in so far as intelligible is a language, only in so far as time is a philosophy more than vent for cerebral humours and in so far a man is rational and immortal, is he a man and not sensorium."

18.3 Summary

Immortality is a belief in life that is not destroyed by the dissolution of body. On death, a person ceases to exist objectively but it is no guarantee that he also ceases to exist subjectively. And so it is not logically impossible to exist after death. There are three grounds for such a belief: (a) an appeal to alleged observable facts which prove the above case. Parapsychology is doing a great service by collecting instances of rebirth which prove immortality of soul, (b) an appeal to the metaphysical nature of soul and (c) an appeal to the requirements of morals. Metaphysical considerations prove that the rational self of a person in its intrinsic nature is indestructible. Plato points out that soul is

absolutely simple and so is indestructible and therefore immortal. Immortality of soul has to be assumed as a postulate of moral life. Kant's view is that unqualified and absolute reverence for the moral law does not permit a man to doubt the law. If we absolutely revere the moral law, we must believe that there is an endless future before us which can make unending advance. Belief in immortality of soul can be based on other grounds also.

18.4 Key words

- (a) Immortality of soul : disembodied existence of soul. At death the body perishes, but the soul survives.
- (b) Imperative : command

18.5 Questions for Exercise

18.5.1 Objective Questions

- (i) Immortality of soul means
- (a) continued existence of soul in some form
 - (b) disembodied existence of soul after death
 - (c) endless existence of soul
 - (d) all the above

Answer— (d)

18.5.2 Short Answer Questions

- (i) How does Plato prove immortality of the soul?

Answer— See 18.2.1

- (ii) How does Kant prove immortality of the soul?

Answer— See 18.2.2

18.5.3 Long Answer Question

- (i) Show your acquaintance with the various proofs given for immortality of the soul.

Answer— See 18.2

18.6 Suggested Readings

1. G. Mac Gregor — Introduction to Religious Philosophy
2. A. Seth Pringle Pattison — The Idea of Immortality,
3. I. T. Ramsey — Freedom and Immortality
4. Hibbert Journal, vol. 59. (1960-61) pp. 227 -235
E.L. Allen — The Immortality of the Soul

UNITY OF RELIGIONS

Lesson Structure

- 19.0 Objective**
- 19.1 Introduction**
- 19.2 Main Theme**
 - 19.2.1 Unity of Religions : Religions are identical**
 - 19.2.2 Unity of Religions : One Comprehensive Religion for all**
 - 19.2.3 Unity of Religions : Harmonious Relationship among Religions**
- 19.3 Summary**
- 19.4 Key words**
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 - 19.5.1 Objective Questions**
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19.0 Objective

There are many religions and every religion has its own distinctive character. But in spite of such differences, there is an underlying unity among religions. The object of this lesson is to ponder over this issue.

19.1 Introduction

Recent scientific discoveries have brought us closer to each other. We have entered into the computer age. Time and distance have really been conquered. It is high time that we rise above parochial considerations and shun our narrow outlook. We must rise above petty considerations of caste,

colour and religious prejudices and treat the universe as a big family. In this context it is very significant that we understand the various religions in true spirit and establish unity among religions.

19.2 Main Theme

The term Religion is composed of two words : 'Re' and 'Ligave'. "Re" means 'again' and the word 'Ligave' means to unite". Thus, the derivative meaning of 'Religion' is to unite again. The message of religions, thus, is "to unite again" with the divine. The presupposition is that we were one with the Divine but have now been separated from Him. Religion provides us the way, the means, to be united with the Supreme Reality again. There are so many religions in the world. Every religion has its own peculiarity, its idiosyncrasies because of which one religion is viewed as different from another. The Rg Vedic saying "Ekam sad viprah vahudha vadanti" is very true. 'Reality is one, the Wise speak of it in different ways'. In the same strain, we can say that Religion is one, but people approach it in different ways. There are many religions. They appear to be distinct and different because of their creeds, their dogmas and their peculiar ways of worship. But in spite of their apparent dissimilarities, they are one and the same in their essence. The main theme of this lesson is 'Unity of Religions.' The dictionary meaning of 'Unity' is 'oneness'; being one'; concord'. Unity of religions in the sense of oneness of religions may be interpreted to mean :

- (i) that the various religions are identical.
- (ii) in the sense of 'being one' the unity of religions may be taken to mean that the various religions ought to be united into one all-comprehensive religion.
- (iii) in the sense of concord, or harmonious relations, unity of religions may be taken to mean harmonious relationship among religions.

19.2.1 Unity of Religions : Religions are identical

Dr. Bhagwan Das was the foremost thinker to champion the cause of the essential unity of all religions. In his work 'The Essential unity of All Religions' he has quoted passages from different scriptures like the Bible, Quran, Upanishad and the Bhagvad Gita to show their similarity. So startling is this likeness at times, they suggest the idea that in many particulars, the different religions are just copies of one another. By analyzing the different religions, he arrives at the conclusion that in respect of essential principles all religions have identical views. The different religions differ in respect of non-essential beliefs, rituals and practices. We have to separate the essential truths from the non-essential elements like the grains from the husk. According to Dr. Bhagwan Das, none of the religions can be accepted as necessary. By comparing the different religions we can arrive at two findings:

Either

- (a) all the religions are false and therefore, they should be discarded outright or
- (b) all the religions should be accepted as partially true. Dr. Bhagwan Das finds both these alternatives to be unpractical. We should, therefore, concentrate on the essential points and ignore

the non-essential points. Only those elements ought to be regarded as basic which are explicitly found in every religion. There is unity among religions with respect to their essential elements. These elements are the essence of all religions. By analysing the common elements found in various religions, Dr. Das asserts that God is the centre of all religions. God of the Christians, 'Allah' of the Muslims and 'Isvara' of the Hindus signify the same reality. The same Supreme Being is worshipped by different names of 'Sandhya' 'Prayer' or 'Namaz'. There is difference with regard to the means but the end is the same. The end is the infinite god. All religions recognize the universal self and by realizing it alone man's lower self can be merged into the universal self. In the words of Dr. Bhagwan Das, "Whichever track we try, we always come round to the one and the only way of merging the small self in the Eternal self, the dewdrops in the sea."

Truth is all-pervasive. No tribe or race or religious teacher has absolute monopoly upon it. What is unreal is a product of time, space and specific circumstances. The abiding truth has been revealed by God in and through the various religious scriptures. Dr. Das wanted to establish unity among religions. His effort in this direction is noble and laudable. He tries to bring the essentials of religions at one place and shows that they all are basically one and the same. If we properly understand and appreciate the different religions, the simmering gulf between religions and between man and man can be bridged effectively and lasting peace among people professing different religions can be achieved.

19.2.2 Unity of Religions : One Comprehensive Religion for all

Unifying different religions into one all-comprehensive religion by considering their common features has been attempted. Akbar, the great Moghul Emperor made such an attempt. Common elements of different religions were collected by great scholars of the time and one common religion called "Din Illahi" was introduced for the entire humanity. History records the failure of such an attempt. Such a fusion of various religions into one is an unpractical suggestion was also the considered opinion of Dr. Bhagwan Das.

Instead of unifying different religions into one, some scholars parade one of the existing religions to be the universal religion, to be representing the unity of religions. For some Christianity is that model of unity of religions. For Radhakrishnan Hinduism has all the virtues of being universal religion. According to Hinduism all religions are true. It looks at every religion with respect. Hinduism is not associated with any one particular creed or scripture, it does not own its existence to one prophet or saint. It welcomes all the various new approaches to the truth. It is tolerant of every religion. It welcomes every form of light coming from any corner, it welcomes truth of every religion. It is elastic and flexible. "Hinduism absorbs everything that enters into it, magic or animism and raises it to a higher level." Although Hinduism regards all religions as one and the same, yet it cannot be taken as model of unity of religions because it will raise another controversy. Why can't Islam or Christian-

ity be taken to be representing the model of unity of religions ?

19.2.3 Unity of religions : Harmonious relationship among religions

Swami Vivekananda also repudiates the idea of one religion for the entire humanity. As he says, "The greatest misfortune to befall the world would be if all mankind were to recognize and accept but one religion, one universal form of worship, one standard of morality. This would be the death blow to all religions and spiritual progress." Variety is the sign of progress. According to him, variety is the first principle of life. He is confident that such a state can never come, for this would mean annihilation of the universe and life. Swami Vivekananda got the impetus from his master Ramkrishna Parmahansa who was known for his catholicity of outlook. As he says, " I learnt from my master the wonderful truth that the religions of the world are not contradictory or antagonistic." Vivekananda boldly maintains that religions are not contradictory but supplementary. From this it need not be inferred that he is for establishing a federation of religions where particular religions are to be tolerated. He calls such toleration 'blasphemy'. It is not that we oblige the particular religions by allowing them to live. To accept all religions as true means to accept them as such from head and heart, from intellect, emotion and will. Mahatma Gandhi also shares the same view when he says " I believe in the Gita, so I believe in the Bible. I accept all the great religions of the world as true as I believe my own religion to be true." Vivekananda also eloquently says, "I accept all religions that were in the past, and worship with them all, I worship God with every one of them, in whatever form they worship Him". One infinite Religion existed through all eternity and will every exist. This Religion is expressing it self in various countries in various ways. "It is in this light that we should be happy to have so many religions and so many prophets It is a most glorious dispensation of the Lord that there are so many religions in the world." God-realization is the goal of all religions. All roads lead to God and everybody has the freedom to choose his own road to God. If it be true that God is the centre of all religions, then each of us is moving towards Him along one of these radii and it is certain that all of us must reach the centre. And at that centre where all radii meet, all our differences will cease" This is the ideal unity of religions for Swami Vivekananda.

Dr. Radhakrishnan in his famous work 'Eastern Religion and Western Thought' has tried to show that all the religions are basically one and the same. He establishes this thesis in his chapter on Meetings of Religions. "The difference among religions seems prominent because we do not seem to know the basic truth of our own religions. There is a common element in all". The different religions are like partners in a quest for the same object. All religions expound the same truth. God is the central point of all religions. Every religion lays emphasis on worship, yet they are basically the same because they all attempt to worship god. The same truth is experienced in various forms of worship. ' All sincere religious worship is a worship of the Supreme who responds to every call to reach his unreachable heights. 'Every religion seeks the truth in some form or other. All religions are engaged in attaining the truth. This shows the unity of religions. Every religion must be respected.

No religion is great or small. All religions are dynamic and progressing towards the ultimate, final truth. As every religion is a living movement no one phase or form of it can lay claim to finality. The different religions are to be used as building stones for the development of a human culture in which adherents of different religions may be fraternally united as children of one Supreme Father. These ought to live in harmony with one other shedding their prejudices and misunderstanding about them.

19.3 Summary

Unity of Religions may be shown by showing the identity of various religions in their essentials. Dr. Bhagwan Das has very ably drawn our attention towards their agreement in essentials. They differ in their non-essential elements which should be discarded to arrive at essential unity of religions. Unity of Religions should not mean one religion for the entire humanity. Such an attempt at unity of religions is bound to be a failure. To make one of the existing liberal religions like Hinduism or Christianity as the model of unity of Religions also is not proper although Dr. Radhakrishnan argues in favour of Hindu religion to be paraded as Universal Religion for all. Variety is a sign of life and progress. It is a glorious dispensation of the Lord that there are so many religions. The One Truth has been expressed in various forms. A harmonious relationship between religions is the need of the hour. Unity of Religions means that harmonious relationship exists between them. Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda and Dr. Radhakrishnan also interpret unity of Religion in this sense.

19.4 Key words

- (a) **Essential Unity** : Agreement in fundamentals
 (b) **Unity of Religions** : Religions agreeing in fundamentals ; Concord between religions; Synthesis of religions

19.5 Questions for Exercise

19.5.1 Objective Questions

- (i) Unity of Religions means
 (a) agreement between religious worship (b) disagreement between religions
 (c) union of religions (d) agreement in essentials of religions.

19.5.2 Short Answer Questions

- (i) Briefly explain Dr. Bhagwan Das's conception of unity of religions.

Answer— See 19.2.1

- (ii) Explain Vivekananda and Radhakrishnan's view of unity of religions.

Answer— See 19.2.3

19.5.3 Long Answer Question

- (i) Explain the different standpoints about unity of Religions.

19.6 Suggested Readings

1. Dr. Bhagwan Das — Essential Unity of Religions
2. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan — Eastern Religions and Western Thought
3. " — Recovery of Faith
4. " — Religion and Society
5. " — East and West in Religion

Conversion And Secularism

Lesson Structure

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- 20.2 Main Theme
 - 20.2.1 Factors Leading to Conversion
 - 20.2.2 Types of Conversion
- 20.3 Summary
- 20A.0 Objective
- 20A.1 Introduction
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 - 20A.2.3 Secularism as Indifference to Religion
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20.0 Objective

The term 'Conversion' is very confusing term. It has been used in various senses. The objective of this lesson is to clarify the meaning of the term and to discuss the various senses in which the term is used and the co-related problems.

20.1 Introduction

The dictionary meaning of 'Conversion' is change from one state to another. It does not necessarily mean change of one's own religion by adopting another religion, although it is also one of the

senses in which the term 'Conversion' is used. Conversion may mean 'change of mind or heart'; 'transformation of life'; 'Change of outlook'. We have already seen that religion is natural to man. Every man seeks his perfection in and through his religion. When he realizes his ideal, there is transformation or conversion of his life. Gautam Buddha underwent such a life transformation when he was enlightened under the Bodhi tree. Maharshi Valmiki, St. Paul also had such transformation of their lives by attaining Divine Light.

20.2 Main Theme

Conversion may mean a rebirth, regeneration, a transformation from an unorganized to an organized integrated life, from indifference to heightened social life with the finding of new meaning and values. In the words of William James, "Conversion is that experience of assurance in which a hitherto divided and unhappy becomes unified with a firmer hold upon religious realities."

Man has freedom of will and he can choose his ideal using his free will. He is inspired by the Ideal and by his efforts, he succeeds in realizing this ideal. His disorganised life gets organized and he undergoes complete transformation of life. This is conversion. Conversion may be gradual or sudden. Conversion, therefore, also means proselytization or change of religions. Conversion, therefore, is a religious phenomenon. It is not the treasure of any particular religion. It can be found in any religion. It is universal. There are two important issues which must be understood in conversion. The first issue relates to the factors leading to conversion. And the second issue relates to the various types of conversion.

20.2.1 Factors Leading to Conversion

On the basis of several instances of conversion, we can enumerate the factors that contribute to Conversion.

- (i) Consciousness of limitation, finitude, sin and wretchedness. One who desires conversion must be convinced of his wretchedness, guilt, sin and his finitude. This awareness must be coupled with his earnest desire, a strong yearning to be relieved of his wretched state of affairs.
- (ii) Freedom from Egotism coupled with self-surrender : For conversion, self-surrender is essential. Unless one gives up his ego, his pride about his strength and realizes his helplessness and therefore surrenders himself completely, conversion cannot take place. By surrendering yourself completely to the will of God alone, you can realize Godhead.
- (iii) Presence of Unfailing Faith : The person who seeks Conversion must have a very strong faith in the Ideal. A faltering man can never be converted. One who has shaking faith cannot be converted. The person must be strong-willed in his intention and purpose.
- (iv) Need of Religious Instruction : Religious instructions and religious teachings do help Conversion. Religious teachings help man to develop his religious consciousness. Every man is religious by nature, but to awaken his religious emotions, feelings, some sort of edu-

cation is necessary. Such instructions hasten the process of Conversion.

20.2.2 Types of Conversion

There are two types of Conversion :

- (1) Volitional
- (2) Self-surrender

(1) Volitional is that form of Conversion in which the individual out of his own free will transforms himself and changes himself from his wretched, sinful state to a better state of life of virtue. The transformation is gradual in such a type of conversion. Man's will power has an important role to play in it.

(2) Self-surrender is that form of Conversion in which the individual surrenders himself completely to God or to some higher reality. There is no role of individual's will power in such a conversion. Personal will or reason has not any place in it. Man is wholly passive in such a conversion. He leaves himself at the mercy of the Supreme Being. In the former type of conversion man is active, but in this type of conversion man is passive. Emotion and feeling play the pivotal role in such a conversion.

(3) Besides these two types of Conversion, there is also a third type known as Proselytism which is change of religion. Proselytism is that type of Conversion in which man changes his faith from one's own religion to another. In this form of Conversion a Hindu or Muslim gives up his religion and accepts Christianity or any other religion. Man is free to accept any religion he likes. This type of Conversion has not been allowed in all religions.

In such a conversion the free will of man has not always been the motive. Greed often determines such a conversion. Owing to exploitation of the higher castes, the lower caste people become easy victims of monetary or other considerations offered by the propagators of other religions.

20.3 Summary

Conversion is a religious phenomenon. A man is free to choose any religion he likes and become a convert to the religion of his choice. This is Proselytism. But there are other forms of conversion also. A sinner on realising his wretchedness may repent and be cleansed, restored and forgiven. He becomes a 'new man' in the sense that his whole being is transformed and 'renewed' by the grace of God. This is conversion. Conversion may be gradual or sudden. A shock may lead to sudden conversion. Tulsidas became a convert suddenly when he was instructed by his wife. Conversion may be voluntary as well as by self-surrender.

20 A - Secularism

20A.0 Objective

The object of this lesson is to explain the different senses in which the term 'Secularism' is used.

We will also discuss if it is anti-religious or indifferent to religion.

20A.1 Introduction

The tremendous progress of science and technology in the modern world has made religion and religious concepts out-dated. When there is flood or earthquake, we do not blame God but seek some natural cause for explaining such events. This trend to explain every event in terms of the natural and not supernatural is called 'Secularism'. The term 'Secularism' comes from the Latin word "Seculum" meaning this temporal world. The term is often used in contradistinction to the other world, the divine, the supernatural, the sacred. Secularism, a philosophy of life developed by Holyoake in England as a substitute for religion, is essentially atheistic and anti-religion in tone. Secularism is this-worldly and religion is other-worldly. Secularism in the west means cultivation of a scientific attitude in life. It is not anti-religious but quite indifferent to religion.

20A.1 Main Theme

The term 'Secularism' is used in three senses. In the first sense, it means 'this-worldliness' and in the second sense it means 'Co-existence of all religions' or 'equal respect for all religions'. In the third sense it means "neutrality' or "indifference' to religion". The westerners take 'Secularism' in the sense of this-worldliness. Secularism is the result of the process of secularisation. Secularisation is the process whereby religious thinking, practice and institutions lose social significance. The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics describes Secularism as "a movement, intentionally ethical, negatively religious with political and philosophical antecedents". All such statements make out that Secularism is the result of a long process of scientific developments influencing the Westerners. Secularism is used in India in the sense of either indifference to religion or equal respect to all religions.

20A.1 Secularism as This-worldliness

Secularism in this sense is the gift of science and technology influencing man's life and his way of living. Prof. Flint while discussing secularism says that science is the providence of man and that absolute spiritual dependence may involve material destruction. The ancient man felt himself helpless but with the progress of science, he has become self-dependent and applies technological and scientific devices to enhance material comforts. This type of secularism lays great emphasis on intellect. It is against all superstition and irrational and meaningless beliefs.

The old values have been replaced by materialistic ideals and man has become important. In Humanism man is the centre. Secularism in this sense is humanistic; God has become redundant. Prof. Flint finds close relationship between Secularism and Positivism. As he puts it, "These two theories are nearly related in nature. They are manifestations of the same principles and tendencies. They may almost be said to be the two halves of the same whole."

The highest end of life is to do good to man and the society. It is humanistic, naturalistic and

opposed to spiritualism and other-worldliness. Cox and Wilson have also mentioned 'pragmatic outlook,' 'scientific and technological viewpoint', and tolerance as the characteristic feature of such a secularism.

20A.2.2 Secularism meaning Co-existence of all Religions

Secularism in the preamble of Indian Constitution means 'Co-existence of all religions' or 'equal respect of all religions'. Gandhiji has adopted such a meaning of Secularism, when he says, "I believe in the Bible as I believe in the Gita. I regard all the great faith of the world as equally true with my own. It hurts me to see any one of them caricatured as they are today by their own followers". Thus in India Secularism is a religious concept. Mahatma Gandhi had recorded his idea of religion in 'Harijan': "This religion transcends Hinduism, Islam, Christianity etc. It does not supersede them. It harmonises them and gives them reality." (10.2.1940) Indian politicians failed to appreciate the very special meaning of religion which Gandhiji had in his mind. They hoped that Hindus and Muslims are religious people and their feelings for religion have to be respected. But the partition of India was followed by a good deal of Hindu-Muslim riots. The result of this interpretation of secularism as equal respect for all religions has made Muslims more fundamentalist and Hindus intolerant. Equal respect for all religions has worked well for the Congress winning votes for their party.

20A.2.3 Secularism as Indifference to Religion

In such a form of Secularism, the key concept is toleration. Toleration means refraining from persecuting the followers of religion other than one's own. It means intellectual breadth and charity which comes not only from humanitarian consideration but also from the realization that every form of religion is relative. As such we should try to learn from other religions and deepen our own religious sensitivity by appropriating something and some insight valuable in other religions. Here indifference is not completely neutral attitude to religion. Every man is free to pursue his own religion in the best possible manner. None should interfere with other's religion. One can and one ought to understand other's religion. Academic and scholarly study and research will end in better understanding of different faiths and will promote brotherly affection and love.

20A.3 Summary

Secularism has been interpreted as implying 'this worldliness' in the West and as 'coexistence of all religions' and 'equal respect for all religions' and as 'indifference to religion' in India. Secularism in the West has been a result of the tremendous progress made by science and technology. The aim of secularism is to live a comfortable materialistic life. Humanitarian ideals, humanistic goals, philanthropy and doing good to society and human beings have been the characteristic feature of such a secularism. Ethical ideals have been retained and spiritualistic and religious ideals have been

sacrificed. The Indian counterpart has not accepted the scientific and technological progress to be determining their goal of life. Religion still hangs heavy on them. The Indian constitution has adopted Secularism as its ideal in the Preamble but restricted its meaning to co-existence of religions and equal respect for each.

20.4 Key words

Conversion : Change of religion; change of heart, change from irreligious to a holy life.

20.5 Questions for Exercise

20.5.1 Objective Questions

- (i) Conversion is a
- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| (a) logical process | (b) geometrical process |
| (c) change of name | (d) religious phenomenon |

Answer— (d)

- (ii) Secularism is
- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| (a) co-existence of religions | (b) equal respect for all religions |
| (c) this worldliness | (d) all the above |

Answer— (d)

20.5.2 Short Answer Questions

- (i) What are the factors leading to Conversion?
 Answer— See 20.2.1
- (ii) Show your acquaintance with different types of Conversion.
 Answer— See 20.2.2
- (iii) Explain Secularism as 'this worldliness'.
 Answer— See 20A.2.1
- (iv) Explain Secularism as 'Co-existence of all religions' and 'equal respect for all religions'.
 Answer— See 20A.2.2

20.5.3 Long Answer Questions

- (i) What do you understand by Conversion? Explain the different types of Conversion. What are the factors responsible for Conversion?

Answer— See 20.2

- (ii) What is Secularism? Is it 'this worldliness'? Explain Secularism defined in the constitution of India.

Answer— See 20A.2

20.6 Suggested Readings

1. William James — The Varieties of Religious Experience
2. Hastings — Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics
3. Flint — Anti-Theistic Theories
4. B. Wilson — Religion in Secular Society
5. Varnon Pratt — Religion and Secularization
6. J.B. Pratt — The Religious Consciousness
7. Y. Masih — Dharma Aur Aihikta published in Darshan Sameeksha, Rajasthan Hindi Granth Academy, December 1971.