



## "The Efforts of Indian leaders who fought for human dignity and Humanism, a Historical perspective"

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### KEYWORDS :

The present day world scenario reveals the cruelty, atrocities, killing fellow brethren in the name of religion, cast, race, region, sect and gender. It's the need of hour to inculcate in the minds of the human beings the value of life as human being.

Prior to analyze the efforts of the Indian leaders towards the human dignity and humanism I tried to emphasize the meaning and the definition. International humanist and ethical union's believes that, Humanism is a democratic and ethical life stance which affirms that human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape to their own lives. It stands for the building of a more human society through an ethic based on human and natural values in the spirit of reason and free enquiry through human capabilities. It is not theist and it does not accept super natural view of reality.

Non-religious people believe that the life in this world is the only life we have, they don't believe in the other world after death of a man or women, they believe the universe is a natural phenomenon with no super natural side. They stressed that we can live ethical and fulfilling the lives on the basis of reason and humanity. They trust in the scientific method, evidence and search for the truth about the universe and gave top priority to the human welfare and happiness at the center of their ethical decision making. The people who share these beliefs and values are called humanists and this combination of the attitudes is called humanism.

The word Humanism defined in very longer and shorter versions. Concise Routledge Encyclopedia of philosophy defined "a commitment to the perspective, interests and centrality of human persons: a belief in reason and autonomy as foundational aspects of human existence: a belief that reason, skepticism and the scientific method are the only appropriate instruments for the discovering truth and structuring the human community: a belief that the foundations for the ethics and society are to be found in autonomy and moral equality" Oxford companion to Philosophy "defined "humanism is an appeal to reason in contrast to religious authority as a means of finding out about the natural world and destiny of man, and also giving a ground for morality. Humanistic ethics is also distinguished by placing the end of moral action in the welfare of human rather than in fulfilling the will of god." Cambridge Dictionary of philosophy, defined that "Believing that it is possible to live confidently without religious certainty and that all opinions are open to revision and correction, human flourishing as dependent on open communication, discussion, criticism, and unforced consensus. Collins concise dictionary defines "rejection of religion in favor of the advancement of humanity by its own efforts". Oxford dictionary defines "A non religious philosophy, based on liberal human values".

The above definitions express that men should show respect to, irrespective of cast, race or creed, religion, sect, region, or any kind of discrimination was the fundamental to the humanist attitude to life. The fundamental moral principles for the humanism were search for freedom, justice, tolerance and happiness, and the peoples can live an honest and meaningful life without following a formal religious creed.

In view of the above meaning and definitions of humanism the

Indian national leaders found that the humanistic values in Indian society were in a shameful shape and there were several disparities among the people in the name of religion and cast and creed and gender. They tried to discard these in humanistic religious dogmas and tried to improve the values of human life. In search of these personalities Raja Ram Mohan Roy occupies first place in reforming the religious dogma or the evil i.e., sati Practice. He fought against this evil and sacrificed his life and energy and succeeded by pursuing the British official the severity of this practice and successfully eradicate this evil practice by the promulgation of sati abolition act of 1829 by the then governor general William Bentinck. He established a society called Brahma samaj for awakening the youth of this country to liberate from the social evils.

During the hundred years from the middle of nineteenth century and middle of twentieth century many great men born who influenced the whole world with their ideology and their deeds but none of them made greater influence than Gandhi in the social ideology thinking and actions which left greater impact on the contemporary world. His ideas and actions greatly influenced the entire human society. Gandhi through his deeds proved the contemporary world he was greatest humanist in the modern age. He was not a great philosopher his ideas can't belong to any school of thought. He was a practical idealist always advocates philosophy of actions who had tremendous faith in the goodness of men and human nature. He strongly believes in human love, cooperation and general welfare of the fellow human beings which played vital role in the over ride the selfishness, violence and greed.

Gandhi began his career as an ordinary man how he became such a successful man in the modern world. Gandhi emphasized in his biography some of the incidences that were influenced him. From his childhood he observed why people were discriminated on the basis of cast and creeds. He could not understand the instructions of his mother touching untouchable was a sin. In the same manner he could not understand the why there was discrimination on the basis of color. In addition to these his personal humiliation by the white men and sufferings alert his mind to fight against all kinds of injustice.

His humanistic approach was first time noticed in 1906 when he decided to fight against the discriminatory laws and Asiatic Registration act in South Africa. Then onwards he worked with a motive to service the needy people irrespective of any discrimination. He staunchly believes in the principle of equality and felt all are equal from his childhood. He never hesitates to escape from the help who were in need. In this contest I mentioned two incidences while he was at South Africa he organized an ambulance corps during the time of Boers war.

Which is praise worthy, another thing I mentioned here he service to the patients every day in a small hospital. Through which he laid the foundations for his philosophy of practicability and to the experience in the results of services of humanity. Soon after he returned to India from South Africa he continued his humanistic services that were in a dire need. Gandhi strongly believes in the two western principles i.e., justice and liberty. He tried to

emphasize this principle on the basis of Indian context. He pointed that justice means devotion to cause of oppressed and outcast.

He emphasized the word liberty 'It is nothing but the realization of his own duties and dedication to it. All his activities lead for the good of humanity. Which reflects in the words of great political philosopher F.R. Morales words "posterity, in assessing the place of Gandhi, will rank him higher as a humanist than as a politician".

Gandhi believe in religion, according to him the aim of religion was to face god. He considered it identical with truth. He tried to see god through the service to the humanity service to god. Gandhi expresses that the nearest way to reach god or truth was through love and affection towards mankind. He took love in the sense of non violence. Every one of us must identify oneself with other human beings because god is within us. Truth and love are the instruments which binds us to one another and to god.

Gandhi was a great humanist because his everlasting love of humanity recognized no limitations of race, no barriers of country. During his last days he had to bear the tremendous strain of communal tension in the country. For which he undertook fasts. On October 3, 1947, in his post prayer address in his message if love could not affect the people, it would be best god took him way.

Gandhi through his principle of Truth and love he wanted to establish to create a social order devoid of classes and casts. Gandhi's humanistic treatment of the problem of Untouchability which led him to fight for their religious, economic and political rights. He refuses to take them as a separate class apart from Hindus. On this issue he argued with the Hindus in the simple statement "do not create men with the badge of superiority or inferiority, and no scripture which labels a human being as inferior or untouchable because of his or her birth can command our allegiance.

Gandhi fought against the cast system as it was practiced in India. He regarded men and women equally as brothers and sisters, treating them as equals in every act of life.

Gandhi consider all men as children of one human family, like branches of the same tree. He refused to social distinctions on the basis of casts. He expressed his opinion to establish an ideal state "he said 'my conviction is that an ideal social order will only be evolved when the implications of this laws are fully understood and given effect to".

Gandhi was a staunch believer in truth and justice he laid stress on the equality of women with men, he recognized the need of women as equal to men.

He wanted to bring social revolution in India by not using any force. He wanted to abolish untouchability, conflict among different casts and other social evils by changing the heart of people. Gandhi considered communalism as a worst social evil in India he meant that fight between people of different faiths for their respective supremacy. He was secular in his outlook. In order to help both Hindus and Muslims to live peacefully together Gandhi emphasized the ideal of a secular state to the congress.

Though Gandhi sacrificed his life for the cause of liberty equality justice, it is regretful that India had paid only lip sympathy to the ideals of the Mahatma during this long years of independence Indian society is badly divided into casts and sub casts and the ideal of social equality is yet to be realized in practice.