

THE ROLE OF MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING IN ESTABLISHING SOCIAL AND POLITICAL HARMONY

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Abstract

This paper attempts to solve the problem why the virtue of mutual understanding is important in establishing social harmony and political changes.¹ In every form of building social and political harmony, mutual understanding is necessary. The spirit of mutual understanding is the foundation of social and political harmony of a society.² In human society there may be ideological differences concerning beliefs, ideas, cultures, religion and so on. The outcomes of mutual understanding can lead to positive steps and to right solutions for many problems. The essence of mutual understanding has a power to unite and mould a harmonized society.³ The descriptive and evaluative methods are used to solve the research problem of this paper.⁴ The principle of reciprocity is used as a research principle to show the necessity of mutual understanding in both social and political issues.⁵

Keywords: Mutual understanding, Social harmony, ideological differences, political changes

Introduction

There are many different varieties of belief, ways of thinking, social values and attitudes, but human beings share important common goals. They desire to live peacefully in a society that has social and political stability and this requires mutual respect and understanding. Irrespective of country, culture, religion or race everyone wishes to live without harm or danger. It is said that a human being is a political and social animal who is at the same time a rational and emotional being.

There are different views of human nature. Some say human nature is good. Others say human nature is totally evil. But there is also a view which holds that human nature is neither totally good nor totally bad. However, human beings are the only ones who can build a society that is stable and harmonious, bring about political development and conserve the environment and mitigate climate change. At the same time, human beings can do things that do not benefit his fellow beings and others. In the United State, Jabez L. M. Curry⁶ mentions that "A state to prosper must be built on foundations of a moral character, and this character is the principle element of its strength, and the only guaranty of its permanence and prosperity."⁷ Religious and ethical teachings play an important role in order to cultivate good human nature.

Philosophically, religion and morality are interconnected. Both are concerned with human values that is with the right, the good, and the desirable. Both emphasize the sharing of values in societies.

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¹ Research Problem

² Research Solution

³ Contribution

⁴ Research Method

⁵ Research Principle

⁶ Jabez L. M, Curry is the U.S. representative and educational rights

⁷ John Maxwell (2003). *Ethics*. New York: Center Street Hachette Book Group. p. 12.

Today, in the age of knowledge, there have been vast developments in technology, economy, living standard, entertainment, military facilities, transportations, medical treatments etc. On the other hand, we, human being, are facing many challenges such as terrorism, poverty, inequality, insecurity, injustice, exploitation, corruption, suicide, warfare and drugs abuse. Only human beings can make life better or worse. So, they are responsible. It is their responsibility to create good relations among themselves to establish a good society and this means they must make every effort to establish mutual understanding, trust and respect.

Mutual understanding, respect and co-operation implies a need for “empathy”. Some scholars define empathy as: the power of understanding and imaginatively entering into another person’s feeling.¹ The word empathy derives from the Greek words for *in* and *suffering*; when we empathize, we “suffer in” the situation of others (compassion, a word of similar meaning, derives from the Latin *com-passio*, or suffering with). Then, empathy is not merely a particular stage in the moral reasoning process, but is rather the commitment of the moral subject that inspires and energizes the process as a whole.²

Thus, empathy is a crucial element in the process of moral reasoning since without empathy we do not consider the situation with moral seriousness. It is the ability to feel and share another person’s emotions. Some believe that empathy involves being tenderhearted toward another person. Without empathy there can be no mutual understanding and respect among human beings. Empathy is the basic principle that unites reason and emotion, and self and others. It provides the foundation for a deep sense of connectedness to the world and for genuine acts of harmony. Empathy is a kind of consideration for others. Caring for other persons including all living beings and sharing their sorrows and happiness is the heart of the moral life and a morality of care leads to a refreshingly new picture of morality as centering on relationships, feelings, and connectedness rather than impartiality, justice and fairness. Empathy thus can be said to be the spirit of love.

The Purpose and Aim of this Paper

Firstly, the purpose of this paper is to show that mutual understanding is the core of moral concepts or virtue in every institution, culture, religion, political issue and value. And then it also intends to highlight the fact that where there is mutual understanding and respect, there is also peace, stability and harmony in society. A greater degree of mutual understanding, respect and of co-operation among people is essential in order to avoid social and political conflicts. If global thinking and cooperative living are to be encouraged, human beings need to know the ideals of peoples living under various cultural and religious systems.³

Secondly, the aim of this research is to highlight the facts that religious teachings are still valued in human society. And finally, it shows how mutual understanding can be a very powerful and valuable way to bring together people who have different thoughts, beliefs and values etc. By doing this, it can bring prosperity, joy, peace and love. However, if there is no mutual understanding and respect, there will be hatred, misery, instability, insecurity and violence.

¹ M. Govindarajan, S. Natarajan and V.S. Senthilkumar (2017). *Professional Ethics & Human Values*. Delhi: PHI Learning Private Limited. p-6.

² Robert Gascoigne. (2004). *Freedom and Purpose*. New Jersey: Paulist Press. p.201.

³ Titus H. Harold. (1947). *Ethics for Today*. 2nd Ed. New York: American Book Company. p. 532.

1. Some Religious Teachings are still Valued in Daily life

In this paper, the virtue of love as mutual understanding in religion will be highlighted for discussion. Since the concept of love prevents social conflicts and political disagreements in different societies it can be said that love has the power to reconcile and rebuild relations that have broken down between different societies. In other words, if there is mutual understanding and mutual respect among people, there will be harmony and stability in the society. Thus, love preserves harmony and unity. Theoretically, love is the source of all happiness and it is the central value in human life. The concept of love can contribute to mercy, kindness, meekness, humility, forbearance and forgiveness.

The word “love” means the best for others and the betterment of human life in all its dimensions. It also means living for others. The various philosophies and religions of the world speak of this value with a variety of emphases, aspects, and concepts, such as: loving-kindness, compassion, human heartedness or benevolence, *Ahimsā*, charity, and agape love.

The Buddhist way of achieving mutual understanding is through loving kindness and compassion in human relations. The Confucian way is through human – heartedness and benevolence while Hinduism maintains mutual understanding is achieved through *Ahimsā* (Nonviolence). Christianity on the other hand advocates agape or love and Islam holds brotherly love to be the key. Whatever the way or approach “love” is at its core – its essence. Love is the aspiration and hope of all human beings and the manifestation of the best in human nature, whether of the East or West.

1.1. The Teachings of Buddhism

In the 5th century BC, Siddhartha Gautama formed Buddhism, the philosophical system or religion, in India. Gautama Buddha (563 – 483 BC) is one who has undergone the profoundly transformative experience known as *Nibbāna*.¹ Buddhist ethics is based on the ethical teachings of the Buddha. Buddha always tried to enlighten human beings on the most important questions of suffering, its origin, its cessation and the path leading to its cessation. Buddhist thought also encourages the generation of loving kindness, compassion, the desire for the happiness and welfare of all beings.

In the Buddha’s teachings, *Mettā* (loving-kindness), *Karuṇā* (Compassion), *Muditā* (joy in another’s good fortune) and *Upekkhā* (equanimity) are called the four cardinal virtues, four sublime states or *Brahma vihara*. The practice of these virtues is directed towards oneself, then to one’s family, the local community, and eventually to all beings. The importance of *Mettā* (loving-kindness) is emphasized in *A Manual of Buddhism*, as follows:

He should not commit any slight wrong on account of which other wise men might censure him. May all beings be happy and secure, may their hearts be wholesome!²

A person must cultivate the sublime virtues to be virtuous. The Buddha also encouraged his followers to immerse themselves in the four immeasurable virtues and to extend these to all beings throughout the cosmos.

¹ Simon Blackburn. (2005). *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press. p. 48.

² Narada. (1995). *A Manual of Buddhism*. Malaysia: Publication of the Buddhist Missionary Society Malaysia Buddhist Vihara. p. 165.

Mettā means loving-kindness, benevolence, goodwill and compassionate love towards every living being without any discrimination. *Mettā* is a wholesome desire for the good of all beings. This love is unconditional. This is quite different from the common conceptions of love, which are often confused with attachment, sexual desire and self-interest. It is a desire, which is not associated with lust, sexual desire but a pure good intention for all beings to be happy and peaceful. In Buddhism, it refers to detachment and unselfish interest in the welfare of others. The importance of *Mettā* (loving-kindness) is stressed in *The Dhammapada*, as follows: -

Conquer the angry one by not getting angry (by loving-kindness); conquer the wicked by goodness; conquer the stingy by generosity; and the liar by speaking the truth.¹

Thus *Mettā* (loving-kindness) is ideally to be radiated to all beings. Loving-kindness is as strong as a mother's love for her only child. *Mettā* (loving-kindness) can be practiced in daily life by kindly actions, and by chanting the *Mettā Sutta* with full awareness of its meaning. It is one of the most common forms of meditation. In Buddhism, a more sustained meditation on loving-kindness is also practiced. A person who develops *Mettā* (loving-kindness) may reflect on the harm brought to himself by entertaining anger and hostility, when he is trying to overcome ill will. A man who gets angry is making himself suffer. Hence one has to remember that all beings have once been good to one. One must also reflect that the mind is ever changing, so that 'the person who annoyed him' is no longer precisely the same person.

In the Mahāyāna, *Karuṇā* (compassion) is emphasized as the necessary complement to wisdom and an essential ingredient in the perfection of the full enlightened. In Mahāyāna sources, Wisdom and Compassion are compared to two wings with which one flies to the island of enlightenment.² *Karuṇā* (compassion) is much emphasized as the root motivation of the *Bodhisattva*. In Eastern and Northern Buddhism, taking the *Bodhisattva* vows, often done after pledging of the moral precepts, is a solemn commitment which expresses the compassionate urge to aid all beings. This is to be done by constant practice of the 'perfections': generosity, virtue, patience, vigor, meditation and wisdom. In Southern Buddhism, there is a set of ten perfections (*Parami*), seen as noble qualities of aid in compassionately helping others through generosity, virtue, non-sensuality, wisdom, vigor, patience, truthfulness, determination, loving-kindness and equanimity. Though a *Bodhisattva* has to develop these to the highest degree, they are also seen as appropriate for all those who aspire for *Nibbāna*.³ Buddhist thought is concerned with laying down guidelines for human beings in order to lead a good life in which peace and harmony will prevail. Among the Four Cardinal Virtues preached by the Buddha, loving-kindness and compassion are prerequisites for a good life.

A person who generates such love is one who can create a good relationship in any society. The *Mettā* virtue is a most suitable value to guide man in his relationship with others. The second virtue *Karuṇā* means kindness, mercy and compassion which is radiated with sympathy to relieve grief and sorrow. Basically, *Karuṇā* is defined as the wish for others to be free of suffering. *Karuṇā* (Compassion) is a quality that the Buddha is believed to possess to the greatest possible degree, and that Buddhists should strive to cultivate it. This makes it clear that

¹ Daw Mya Tin (trans.). (2003). *The Dhammapada*. Yangon: Department for the Promotion and Propagation of Sasana. P. 88.

² John Bowker (1997). *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 537

³ Peter Harvey. (1990). *An Introduction to Buddhism*. New York: Cambridge University Press. pp. 209 – 210.

in Buddhist thought love is the motive as well as substance that can bring about mutual understanding and harmony in society. It is also complementary to wisdom, and is necessary for enlightenment.

1.2. The Teachings of Confucianism

Confucianism generally refers to the teaching of Confucius (551-479 BC). Confucius, founder of the *Ju* School was an educator, a reformer and was very influential in the Chinese empire of the time. He considered himself the inheritor and perpetuator of ancient civilization.

In Confucian thought, mutual affection is very important because it arises out of the family and is extended to the community. For Confucius, a moral situation requires an appropriate attitude of affection. The appropriate attitudes are kindness, filial piety, fraternity and fidelity for parents, children, brothers, sisters and married couples respectively. Confucius emphasized family affection, bonds, human relationships and a way of living harmoniously with one another, Chinese people of his time developed many institutions and customs for the preservation and perpetuation of their society.

Hsiao (filial piety) and *di* (fraternal duty) are other important attitudes in Confucian morality. Confucius advocated filial piety and fraternal duty because he thought that these were the roots of benevolence. Filial piety and fraternal duty were also fundamental to the achievement of benevolence. In Confucianism, filial piety and fraternal duty are the basic virtues.¹

In Confucian moral teachings, there are four important principles, which are *Jen*, *Yi*, *Li* and *Chih*. *Jen* is essential for the dignity of human life. It is a feeling of humanity towards others and self-esteem for oneself. Such feeling applies to all men. It is not just for one nation or race. Thus, *Jen* is the foundation of all human relationships. Fung Yu Lan, in his “*A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*” explains it as follows:

Confucius uses the word *Jen* not only to denote a special kind of virtue but also to denote all the virtues combined. So, the term “*Jen*” becomes synonymous with the man of all-round virtue. In such contexts, *Jen* can be translated as “perfect virtue”.²

Confucius developed the doctrine of *Jen* as the central thesis of his system. His ethics, his politics, his life ideal, all flow from *Jen*, which he regards as the supreme virtue. It expresses the Confucian ideal of cultivating human relations, developing human faculties, sublimating one’s personality, and upholding human rights. Confucius said that *Jen* should never be abandoned. *Jen* involves respect for oneself, compassion, charity, empathy and generosity in one’s dealing with others.

The word “*Jen*” is usually translated as human-heartedness. The term *Jen* is difficult to translate with a specific meaning. It is what makes a person truly human. *Jen* has a multiplicity of definitions. Many writers and translators acknowledge *Jen* as humanity, compassion, sympathy, humaneness, goodness, love, trueness, human-heartedness and benevolence.³ It negotiates what

¹ Chu Chai & Winberg Chai (trans.). (1965). *Essential Works of Confucianism*. New York: Bantam Books, Inc. p. 326.

² Fung Yu Lan. (1948). *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*. New York: The Free Press. p. 43.

³ Karyn L Lai. (2008). *An Introduction to Chinese Philosophy*. New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 22.

is lovable, loving and ethical in man. For Confucius, *Jen* is the greatest concept of virtue as well as goodness. It also means humanity or human-heartedness.

In *the Analects*, Confucius stated that

Virtue is more to man than either water or fire. I have seen men die through walking into water or fire, but I have never seen a man die through walking the path of virtue.¹

According to Confucius, people without benevolence were liable to commit misdeeds. *Jen* stresses human relations. It is a way which is proper for men to meet each other, leading to positive efforts for the good of others.² According to Confucius, its basis is to be found first in one's duties toward one's parents and brothers. For Confucius, *Jen* consists in loving others.

According to Confucius, *Jen* teaches one to have consideration for others. Because of what he desires for himself, he can be considerate to others and know what they desire. Because of what he does not desire, he can be considerate to others and know what they do not desire.³ Thus through his own desires, he comes to know what others desire and in wanting to become a solid man in society, he makes other men solid. In wanting success for himself, he makes others successful.

Confucius maintained that human relations should be based on the moral sentiment of *Jen*, leading to positive efforts for the good of others. Confucius regarded *Jen* not merely as a special kind of virtue, but as all the virtues combined.

For Confucius, the methods of acquiring love are primarily through human intellectual and social experiences. A man who really loves other is the one who is able to perform his duties in society. Hence, *Jen* is not only to be denoted as a kind of virtue but also to be denoted as all the virtues combined.

The idea of *Jen* is not only the fundamental virtue but also the inward expression for others.⁴ *Jen* is the virtue of perfectly fulfilling one's responsibilities toward others. According to the Confucian view, virtue is based upon harmony with other people.

The idea of *Jen* may be expressed in the conception of *hsiao* (filial piety), and *di* (fraternal duty). These two concepts express the same unselfish human feeling. Filial piety signifies a state of spiritual communion in the eternity of time and fraternal duty signifies a state of spiritual communion in the infinity of space.

1.3. The Teachings of Hinduism

Hinduism is the major continuing and connected religions of India, which have now spread throughout the world. Hinduism is a religion followed by about 70 percent of the roughly seven hundred million people of India.⁵ But unlike most major world religions, Hinduism has no historical founder. It originated in the Indian subcontinent and it has largely been confined to that part of the world.

¹ William Edward Soothill & Lady Hosie. (ed.). (1958). *The Analects (The Conversations of Confucius with His Disciples and Certain Others)*. London: Oxford University Press. p. 173.

² Jacques P. Thiroux. (1986). *Theory and Practice*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company. P.434.

³ Fung Yu Lan. (1962). *the Spirit of Chinese Philosophy*. Boston: Beacon Press. p.16.

⁴ Ibid., p.42.

⁵ John Bowker (1997). *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 430

Ahiṃsā means literally “lacking any desire to kill,” or avoiding injury to any sentient creature through act or thought. It is perhaps the central theme upon which Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist morality is built being a key precept in their ethical codes. However, the exact scope and extent of non-violence within these religions has been debated for thousands of years.

According to the Hindu view, *Ahiṃsā* is one of the marks of a genuine religion. Freedom from fear of death and suffering, harmony, balance, perfect agreement between body and soul, action and mind and *Ahiṃsā* or love are the marks of a genuine religion. *Ahiṃsā* is the Hindu principle of harmlessness, non-violence, toward all sentient creatures.¹ *Abhaya* or freedom from fear and *Ahiṃsā* (love), awareness and sympathy are the two features of religion. A person who has *Ahiṃsā* does not become angry and depressed. By love and understanding he can win those who oppose him.

In Jainism, *Ahiṃsā* is the standard by which all actions are judged. For a householder observing the small vows (*anuvrata*), the practice of *Ahiṃsā* requires not to kill any animal. However, for an ascetic observing the great vows (*mahavrata*), *Ahiṃsā* entails the greatest care to prevent him from knowingly or unknowingly being the cause of injury to any living soul (*jiva*). Thus, *Ahiṃsā* applies not only to human beings and to large animals but also to insects, plants, and microbes. Moreover, many common Jain practices such as not eating or drinking after dark or the wearing of cloth mouth covers (*mukhavastrika*) by monks are based on the principle of *Ahiṃsā*.²

Ahiṃsā (Non-violence) was turned into an important political principle in the twentieth century by Mahatma Gandhi (1869 – 1948), who saw its application to economics as possible through what he called 'bread labor', the participation of everyone in productive work, preferably involving the production of food. This brings out what is the positive side of non-violence for Gandhi, which is charity and love for all. It involves three vows, the vows of self-control, fearlessness and universal social equality, including the untouchables.

The concept of non-injury, coupled with self-control or self-restraint, was rich in many potential developments. It soon became the central ethical idea in most of the philosophies and religions of India. Indeed, in some communities *Ahiṃsā* was given paramount importance. The emphasis that Gandhi laid on *Ahiṃsā*, however, would have remained of no avail had it not been firmly rooted in an immemorial Indian tradition.

Elements of Gandhi's philosophy were rooted in the Indian religions of Jainism and Buddhism. Both of these advocate *Ahiṃsā* (non-violence), which is “absence of the desire to kill or harm.” The *Acaranga Sutra*, a text of Jainism, describes the fundamental need for non-violence:

All beings are fond of life; they like pleasure and hate pain, shun destruction and like to live, they long to live. To all, life is dear.³

¹ Peter Singer. (1994). *Ethics*. New York: Oxford University Press. p.219

² The editors of the Encyclopedia Britannica. (2013). *Ahimsa*. (<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/10041/ahimsa>). (10.1.2013)

³ <http://www.socialchangenow.ca/mypages/gandhi.htm>.

Ahimsā is a way of living and thinking which values life. Gandhi was both religious (he was Hindu) and open-minded, and saw the different religions as paths to the same goal. He was inspired by the teachings of Jesus, in particular the emphasis on love for everyone, even one's enemies, and the need to strive for justice.

For Gandhi, *Ahimsā* was the expression of the deepest love for all humans, including one's opponents. Therefore, non-violence included not only a lack of physical harm to the opponents, but also a lack of hatred or ill-will towards them. He used *Ahimsā* as both a moral and political weapon. In this way, Gandhi reinterprets an ancient Indian concept. In a world seemingly dominated by violence and hatred, Mahatma Gandhi reincarnated the ancient idea of *Ahimsā*, non-violence, as the only way of living in peace. His example influenced and inspired many later peaceful struggles, for example the civil rights movement of Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929 – 1968).

Gandhi's distinctive Hindu doctrine is an emphasis on social ethics which brought with it changes in concepts. *Ahimsā* is equated with Christian selfless love. Gandhi mentions that strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from a strong will. Therein he found his own strength, and there he exhorted others to look for theirs. This inner strength can be cultivated by the observance of *Ahimsā*. Violence checks this energy within and is ultimately disruptive in its consequences while *Ahimsā* properly understood is invincible.¹ To practice non-violence in mundane matters is to know its true value. It is to bring heaven upon earth.

1.4. The Teachings of Islam

Islam is the latest of the great religions and ethical systems to appear. Along with Christianity and Buddhism it is one of the three great universal religions. Islam is the second largest religion in the world with nearly 1.5 billion adherents. Islam is a monotheistic and Abrahamic religion. Islam is the religion of allegiance to God and to his prophet Muhammad, the religion which God always intended for his creation, but prophetic ministry of Muhammad (570 – 632 CE), from the revelation mediated through him, the Koran. According to the *Koran*, a book considered by its adherents to be the exact word of Allah and by the teachings of Mohammed. An adherent of Islam is called a *Muslim*. The verbal noun *islam* appears eight times in the Koran: derived from the same Semitic root as Hebrew shalom (peace). It means entering into a condition of peace and security with God through allegiance or surrender to him.² The term Islam, which refers to a creed and an ethical code is inseparable from the religious background.

Muslims believe that God is one and incomparable and the purpose of existence is to love and serve God. Love of neighbors is a cornerstone of Islam, but love of God is the foundation. Islam teaches that those who love God believe in God and do good deeds will receive rewards.

True love consists of right action towards one's neighbor, of taking care of others, and helping those in need. In verse after verse, *The Koran* enjoins believers to be charitable to orphans, widows, travelers, and the poor. According to *hafiz* who is the one who feeds the hungry and spreads peace among people whether he knows them or not.

¹ Metta Center of Nonviolence. (<http://mettacenter.org/definitions/gloss-concepts/ahimsa/>). (4.11.2013)

² John Bowker (1997). *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 479

Family is the basic unit of Islamic society. Islam defines the obligations and legal rights of family members.¹ The father is seen as financially responsible for his family, and is obliged to cater for their well-being. If you do not fear Allah, there is nothing that can stop you from committing crimes. Among the Muslims morality has a distinctively religious background. Ethical problems are dealt with as incidental to the spread of the faith. Wrongdoing is a breach of the law of Allah.

From a modern Western point of view Muslim ethics appears to a mixture of ancient and more modern standards. It encourages almsgiving, hospitality, truthfulness, and humanity to slaves, justice for orphans, and abstinence from the use of alcoholic beverages. There is legislation against suicide, inhumanity, robbery, gambling, slander, perjury, usury and the sale and consumption of intoxicating drink. Therefore, morality is the natural result of the fear of Allah, which keeps people disciplined. Those who do not believe in Allah, and those who do not fear him, can commit any sin.

1.5. The Teachings of Christianity

Historically, the origin of the Christianity lies in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. So, Christianity should begin with the person of Christ. Essentially Christianity is Christ. The person and work of Christ are the rock upon which the Christian religion is built. Christ and His teachings are the center thesis of Christianity.² Moreover, Christianity is a religion, which preaches that all human beings should live by the commandments of God in order to reach heaven where there is eternal bliss.

In Christianity, God is the sources and norm of Christian's moral life. The Christian ethic derives from a positive belief in the living, active, personal God, known to us as "Father, Son and Holy Spirit".³ A man cannot be moral who is sometimes filled with hatred and anger and who thinks only of his own needs and desires. Christianity maintains that human beings must learn to have "love" towards each other in order to be decent and good. Thus, Christian morality begins with love and Jesus Christ preached and taught a philosophy of love.

The conception of love advocated by Jesus Christ can be understood from the teachings of The Old and the New Testament. *The Old Testament* was written in Hebrew and *The New Testament* was written in Greek. *The New Testament* evolved from the Old. So, in this paper the various interpretations of love as found in the Hebrew writings of *The Old Testament* and the Greek writings of *The New Testament* will be discussed.

In the philosophical context, love is a moral virtue representing human kindness, compassion, and affection. In the religious context, love is not just a virtue, but also the basis for all beings (God is love), and the foundation for all divine law (the Golden Rule).

The Christian conception of love is not to be confused with feelings of sentiment. Love is something much deeper than superficial emotional attitudes. Thus, love can be used to positively describe instances of affection or acts of kindness. In *The New Testament*, there are many words for love.

¹ The Free Encyclopedia of Wikipedia. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All%C4%81h>). (10.11.2013)

² John R. W. Stott (1998). *Basic Christianity*. London: Intervarsity Press. p. 21.

³ David H. C. Read (1969). *Christian Ethics*. New York: Lippincott Company. pp. 28-29.

The word *Agape* can also be translated as understanding, or creative and redemptive goodwill for all human beings. The word *Agape* is used for the love of God or Christ and is of a new and entirely different quality. In *Agape*, men love others not because they like them, nor because their ways appeal to them, nor even because they possess some type of divine spark. One loves every man because God loves him. At this level, one loves the person who does an evil deed, although one hates the deed that he does.¹ Moreover, it is seen as the kind of love that Christians hope to have for one another. In *The New Testament*, it is mentioned in the *Galatians*,

You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another.²

Agape is the Christian tradition of forms of affection which is recognized as less focused, universal benevolence that pays little or no regard to reciprocity.

According to Christianity, all are of one family. So, all are brethren and should love as brethren. From the beginning, God has taught men that they should love one another. They should help one another in times of trial and difficulty. Such, mutual love would make life pleasant and happy. This mutual love which God requires is the kind of love which man must fulfill.

There is a lot of teachings about revenge in *The New Testament*. In *Matthew* and *Luke*. it is taught not to take revenge even to an evil person. Especially in the 1 Peter 3:9 mentioned that as follows

Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.³

In this way, Jesus shows the way of love is not to take revenge. Since, the Christian gospel is summed up in terms of love; no ethics can be called Christian that is not based on love of enemy. The relationship between love and moral norms is a major concern of the Bible and Christian tradition.

Jesus Christ meant when he said, "Love your enemies", that love is greater than like. When Jesus bids one to love one's enemies, he is speaking neither of *eros* nor of *philia*; he is speaking of *agape*, understanding and creative, redemptive goodwill for all men.

Martin Luther king Jr. (1929 – 1968) was an American Christian minister and activist who became the most visible spokesperson and leader in the Civil Rights movement from 1955 until his assassination in 1968. Once he said that

Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence, and toughness multiplies toughness in descending spiral destruction.⁴

So, when Jesus says "Love your enemies", he is setting forth a profound and ultimately inescapable admonition. Love is especially necessary for this imperfect world in which there is

¹ Harvey A Van. (1964), *A Handbook of Theological Terms*. New York: Collier Books, p. 14

² Philip Yancey & Tim Stafford (edt.). (1991). *The Student Bible "NIV"*. Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House. p. 1048. (NT).

³ Kenneth L. Barker, Mark L. Strauss & Ronald F. Youngblood (edt.). (2011). *Study Bible "NIV"*. Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House. p. 2107. (NT).

⁴ Martin Luther King. Jr. (1981). *Strength to Love*. USA, (Philadelphia): Fortress Press. p. 53.

tendency towards envy and jealousy and lacking in love and caring. Love towards one's neighbors is a duty of a person. It is also the moral obligation. The Christian conception of love which is expressed in one word is the essence of all divine law.

According to the Christian conception, all moral problems can be solved by love. All moral obligations can be fulfilled by love. In fact, through the power of love Abraham Lincoln transformed an enemy into a friend. In Christian ethics, there are many virtues such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control and justice etc. Among these love is supreme. Love is the golden chain of all virtues. It is all inclusive. It encompasses the family, the country and even everybody. It is genuine and it also unites. It controls freedom and truth whenever these are to be controlled. It encourages and strengthens forgiveness.

Conclusion

The teaching of the religions thus can bring mental peace and safety for human beings. The common ground of all religions is loving, caring and helping each other and sharing the burden life. Moreover, the guidance of religions can mould and cultivate a moderate mind not only for present but also for after life. The important thing is to encourage less greed, anger and hatred.

When we review the history of mankind, we find many causes that have led to destruction and death of living beings. However, the one most terrifying is war. War is hell whether just or unjust. We become separated from families and society collapses. On the other hand, if we have the sense to avoid war, society, nation and country can survive and prosper.

Albert Einstein (1879-1955) who was considered the wisest man in the 20th century said about war that "I do not know with what weapons World War III will be fought, but world war IV will be fought with sticks and stones." A human being is the most rational animal among the creatures. Human beings have created and handed down culture, education and moral norms generation to generation. Today however, we human beings are facing many challenges such as climate change, cyber war, poverty, discrimination, injustice and insecurity etc.

In the age of knowledge, information and technology has advanced and economies have become high developed, but morality is still essential; trustworthy and moral persons are still needed in organizations, institutions and in building society.

To strengthen society, a person's activities must be guided by moral and religious teachings. To build a society of peace and harmony a person needs empathy, love, co-operation and mutual understanding. With mutual understanding, a group or a family or a nation can build and run a better society, because mutual understanding is the master key that opens the gate to a harmonious society.

In order to reduce social and political conflicts, it is of great importance to follow the teachings of religions. Human beings must live according to certain principles which are capable to make them refined and humane. Human beings live together and are bound to each other not by mere instincts and impulses but by their rational application of moral and spiritual values. Men must be guided by conscience, a human conscience of social bonding. There must be social elements of duty and responsibility, between their families, their nations and the worldwide community. Men must also cultivate social relationship that can lead to a virtuous society.

Lastly, the most important moral, social and political issues of recent times have to do with the relationship of states or nations to one another. Practically no one today wants wars. Intelligent men of goodwill the world around are hoping and working for peace. The outcomes of mutual understanding can bring positive steps and it can also lead to right solutions for their recent problems. The essence of mutual understanding has a power to unite and mould a harmonized society. When there is peace in the individual, there will be peace in the family. In order to learn how to lead a peaceful life, self-esteem, calmness and freedom from anxieties are necessary and this can be brought about only through love and compassion, that all religions teach and nurture.

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