

QUINTESSENCE
OF
MAHATMA GANDHI'S
POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

DR. RAM RATTAN

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DR. RAM RATTAN

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Zakir Husain Post-Graduate Evening College
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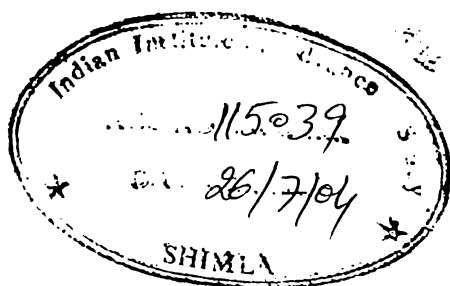
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DEDICATED TO

My Friend, Philosopher & Guide

*Professor Thomas A. Shipka
Chair,*

*Department of Philosophy & Religious Studies
Youngstown State University
Youngstown, Ohio, U.S.A.*

FOREWORD

Legacy of Gandhi is universal. Gandhi is as relevant for humanity today as he was during his life time. Taking advantage of Richard Attenborough's film 'Gandhi', which had renewed peoples' interest in Gandhi's Thought & Action the world over, the D.A.V. College Managing Committee and the D.A.V. Educational & Humanitarian Society of America nationally selected Dr. Ram Rattan, an eminent scholar of Gandhian and Kingian Studies, to acquaint the Graduate students of American Universities and Colleges with the quintessence of Mahatma Gandhi's Political Philosophy. And, I am proud to record that Dr. Rattan was acknowledged by his colleagues and students at the Youngstown State University, Youngstown, Ohio, where he taught this special Course last year under our sponsorship, as a dedicated, diligent and conscientious teacher who enriched their lives so much that they have indicated their willingness to update this Course next year as a Two Quarter Course.

The present work considers Gandhi's political philosophy in its totality, highlighting the quintessence of his basic concepts of Human Nature, *Swaraj*, *Ramrajya*, Democracy, Secularism, Federalism, Republicanism, *Panchayat Raj*, *Sarvodaya*, Political Obligation and Rights, Non-Violence, *Satyagraha*, *Dandaniti*, *Swadeshi*, Trusteeship, Bread-Labour and the Wardha Scheme of Education. It also brings home Gandhi's re-interpretation of the traditional Hindu concepts of *Dharma*, *Varna*, *Ashrama*, *Nishkama-Karma*, *Jivodaya*, and *Punarjanma*, besides focussing on Gandhi's understanding of the intricate relationship between Ends & Means and Ethics & Politics. It also underlines Gandhi's indelible impact on the Political Philosophy and Strategy of the American Gandhi, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Keeping in view the comprehensiveness and quality of this Study, I recommend it to the Graduate and Post-Graduate students of Indian as well as foreign Universities and Colleges.

10.6.1990

Veda Vyasa
President
DAV College Managing Committee
New Delhi

PREFACE

Gandhi had comprehended human life in all its manifestations. He was not only an excellent student of human history, but was also amply conversant with the social and political maladies which had degenerated human life and activities in the continents of Asia, Africa and Europe. As a staunch political agitator by profession, he had come face to face with a variety of social and political evils and had fought against them for over five decades so as to improve the quality of life of the generations to come.

During his struggles against apartheid in South Africa and alien British rule and feudal princely rule in India, he had met millions of people and had a rare opportunity to study and reflect on human nature in all its manifestations. Out of these struggles emerged his concepts of Swaraj, Democracy, Federalism, Secularism, Political Obligation, Rights, Dandaniti, Ahimsa and Satyagraha. His work for the emancipation of women and untouchables and his study of Western and Eastern scriptures and classics helped him evolve his concept of Sarvodaya as the theory of the purpose and functions of the State, and his theory of education, better known as the Wardha Scheme of Education.

Despite the fact that Gandhi's focus of attention was man's political life and activities, he also saw a number of social, religious, educational and economic evils and evolved his own ideas to rid the society of these deformities.

His jail experiences enabled him to look at criminals as mental patients and jails as reformatories to help them overcome their mental ailments. These also helped him evolve his unique theory of Punishment.

The format of the present work takes up for evaluation each of these concepts and theories that Gandhi had so meticulously evolved in the course of his five decade long public career which, otherwise, was so overcrowded with peoples and problems.

Though Gandhi did not have the good fortune of living in a democracy of his conception and prove the relevance of his

satyagraha therein, he had prophesized that the same would be proved someday by an American Negro. And, his prophecy did come true eight years after his cruel and communal assassination, when Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. initiated his Non-violent Direct Action in Montgomery, Alabama, to raise his voice against extreme racial discrimination and segregation and during his thirteen year long struggle was able not only to adopt and adapt but also enrich Gandhi's strategy of Non-violent Direct Action.

The present volume is designed to cover the Graduate and Post-Graduate Courses of study in Gandhi's Thought and Action in a number of Indian Universities. It, however, aims only at familiarizing the students with the quintessence of Gandhi's political philosophy and is not intended to be a detailed study of his concepts and ideas.

The course has also been designed to make American audiences conversant with the political philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi – the philosophy which, in part, strikes a synthesis of the basic ideas of Abraham Lincoln, Henry David Thoreau and Martin Luther King Jr. and which, as such, has been a subject of sustained interest to American scholars and masses alike. Like Lincoln, Gandhi subscribed to democratic institutions capable of providing widest participation to the people and ensuring their legitimate rights and freedoms. Like Thoreau, he highlighted peoples' duty to disobey, resist and noncooperate with the Government whose acts are unjust or discriminatory. And, in our times, it was Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who proved to his fellow countrymen the efficacy of Gandhian methods of nonviolence for resolving social and political conflicts and erasing the blot of racial discrimination from the fabric of American society. Richard Attenborough's film 'Gandhi' has further strengthened American interest in Gandhi's political philosophy and his unique technique of nonviolent direct action.

The course points out the negative features of modern Western civilization and examines the relevance of Gandhi's Eastern alternative. It takes note of the Eastern and Western influences on Gandhi to underline the metaphysical foundations of his thought which are strikingly scientific and secular.

It would acquaint the American scholars with Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolent social change and transformation which is designed to free society of all its dubious distinctions (whether of religion, region, race, descent, caste, colour, sex, economic status or occupation) and rebuild it as an ideal society in which

everyone would have equal opportunity to be at his best self. It would make them familiar with a social set up which would atonce be democratic and secular.

American audiences were specially indoctrinated in the concept and technique of Gandhi's nonviolent direct action by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who, while acknowledging his inspiration from Gandhi, adopted and adapted his Satyagraha techniques in the course of his Civil Rights Campaigns for the eradication of racial discrimination and the eventual social integration of the Blacks with the Whites. Nonviolent techniques like Freedom Rides, Sit Ins, Stand Ins, Wade Ins and Kneel Ins became household words and lessons on their meaning, significance and efficacy would only be too refreshing for both American scholars and masses. The use of such methods has been witnessed firsthand in the recent past and may again be relevant, should the Blacks decide to launch yet another nonviolent struggle to check indirect resegregation in the form of community schools and bussing. These methods have been used allthrough the United States rather liberally and may be resorted to curb a variety of social and economic evils with which the society continues to suffer.

The course in Gandhi's Thought and Action should enable the American scholars as well as masses not only to assess Gandhi's impact on the Black American Civil Rights Movement of Dr. King but also that of the latter towards increasing social integration of the Blacks and the Whites so that both the communities are able to live up together to the expectations of their own philosophers – Lincoln, Thoreau and Dr. King – and determine for themselves their place in recent American history. The legacy of Lincoln, Thoreau, Gandhi and King is the legacy for the world, the legacy of which both Indians and Americans have reasons to be proud.

In the preparation of this script, I have heavily relied on the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, the works of Dr. King and the leading commentaries on Gandhi's & King's Thought & Action. I have also based the present work on my own extensive research in the area of Gandhian and Kingian Studies. I have, however, refrained from giving footnote references as, I thought, that might make the task of Graduate students and lay readers a little difficult. I have, nevertheless, appended towards the end of the Study a Select Bibliography on the Political Philosophy of both Mahatma Gandhi and Rev. King.

I have taught this course not only at the University of Delhi,

but had also opportunities to teach it as a Visiting Professor to the Atlanta University, Atlanta, Georgia (1974–75), Boston University (1975), McMaster University at Hamilton, Ontario (1975), State University of New York at Geneseo (1987) and in the Departments of Philosophy & Religious Studies and Political Science & Social Science of the Youngstown State University, Youngstown, Ohio (1989).

In the development of this course, I had the inspiration of my colleagues and friends Professors R.B. Jain, Mahendra Kumar, Satish Chandra and Subrata Mukherjee of the Department of Political Science of the University of Delhi. And, in designing and teaching it at the Youngstown State University, I had the benefit of mature advice and guidance of Professor Thomas A. Shipka and Professor William C. Binning. Professor Tom Shipka took special care to co-ordinate my teaching at the Y.S.U. and proved to be my Friend, Philosopher & Guide and, as a token of my gratitude, I have dedicated the present volume to him. My visit to the Y.S.U. was sponsored by the D.A.V. Educational & Humanitarian Society of America and special efforts were put in by Professor Veda Vyasa, Shri Darbari Lal, Dr. N.K. Uberoi, Dr. Hira Lal Khanna, Dr. Ahilya Krishnan & Dr. Gopal Nigam. To all these senior colleagues and friends, I owe my special debt of gratitude. I am additionally grateful to Professor Veda Vyasa for agreeing to write a Foreword to this study.

I owe my debt of gratitude to Professor Salman Hashmi, the additional Principal of my College, for his encouragement, guidance and co-operation.

I owe special thanks to my wife, Kaushalaya, daughter Ruchi and sister Pushpa Goel for their co-operation and encouragement.

I am also grateful to Shri Arun Raj Malhotra and Shri Satish Aggarwal for publishing this volume on a priority basis.

I need hardly add that suggestions from colleagues, friends and students are welcome, as these would help me improve the quality of the present work.

C-4/2, Rana Pratap Bagh
Delhi-110007, India.
June 1, 1990

— Ram Rattan

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I

GANDHI: A POLITICAL THINKER

Gandhi was not a political thinker in the traditional sense in which Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hegel, Hobbes or Marx were thinkers. He was not a system builder or model builder in Philosophy. He was not given to systematic academic writing. His views were largely situational and scattered through 60 years of public life and covered by over 65,000 pages of 90 volumes of *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* published by the Government of India. And, this is his contribution, despite the fact that he was not given to systematic writing by aptitude, training and experience.

He was essentially a POLITICAL AGITATOR and a SOCIAL REFORMER, fighting a variety of social, economic and political evils, e.g., apartheid, alien rule, feudalism, poverty, casteism, communalism, religious fanaticism, illiteracy, poverty and unemployment.

He made statements in response to the situations he faced in South Africa and in India. However, when we piece together his statements and writings systematically on various aspects of our social and political life, we do find that he preached and practiced a definite and coherent system of life. And, that most certainly makes him a political thinker.

Gandhi did undertake some systematic writing on specified subjects and issues like *Hind Swaraj* (Indian Home Rule); *Sarvodaya* (Good of All); *Satyagraha* (Non-violent Direct Action) in South Africa; Non-violence; Communal Unity; and Constructive Programme. And, all of these writings indicate that he had a coherent view of man's life which, if followed consistently, would make him better for himself and his society.

He combined the qualities of a LIBERAL, an IDEALIST, a MAN OF ACTION and a REVOLUTIONARY.

Like the Western Liberals, Gandhi believed in: (i) Individual Liberty; & (ii) Representative Democracy. However, he was only for that liberty which enables the individual to realize his self, to be at his best self. Self Realization was, thus, the goal of individual liberty. And, in his defense of Representative Democracy, his emphasis was more on the moral character of those who would man them.

As an idealist, he synthesized the majoritarianism of Bentham and Mill with the Minoritarianism of John Ruskin, the 'Greatest Happiness/Good of the Greatest Number' with the Good of the last man/the neglected minority; the *Antyodaya* (welfare of the last man) with *Sarvodaya* (all around welfare of all). And, if and when the goal of World Government is realized, *Sarvodaya* would be an international, in fact, a worldwide ideal.

Gandhi was a MAN OF ACTION, a practical man. His ideal could not be realized 100%, but towards its attainment one could always work, one could approximate it increasingly.

He was not an abstract thinker. He first practiced what he preached. All his ideals were POSSIBLE. He talked of what was possible.

He was a REVOLUTIONARY, though NOT A MAN OF VIOLENCE. He said 'NO' to violence, but 'YES' to fighting. His war was A WAR WITHOUT VIOLENCE.

He was a believer in the possibility of CHANGE, though essentially a PEACEFUL CHANGE. Yet, he could be ruthless in thought, word and action, e.g., in South Africa, he asked the people to burn their registration certificates and in India he asked them to burn the foreign cloth, loot the onion crops, fell or cut down palm trees which were, then, a major source of revenue to the alien Government. He wanted to cut their life line. He also gave revolutionary slogans like SWARAJ IN ONE YEAR (in 1921); NOW OR NEVER (in 1931); and DO OR DIE (in 1942).

Yet, he had a democratic bent of mind. Like a BANIA (grocer), he could sit down with his opponent and negotiate with him. He had the remarkable ability to change/convert the heart of the wrong doer/his opponent, i.e., to make him act according to the voice of his reason and conscience.

He undertook SUFFERING, rather than inflict it on his opponent. Suffering or violence was there in Gandhi, but the parties were changed. Violence shifted from the person of the

opponent to the goods of the opponent, and from the person of the opponent to himself.

Essentially, he was the **PHILOSOPHER OF THE POLITICS OF PEACEFUL PROTEST**, for he focussed attention on the narrower aspect of individual's resistance to constituted authority as such and related it to the wider context, not only of his political life, but also to his nature as a moral being, striving to realize his divinity (divine self) through the service of those who are nearest and dearest (best known) to us.

He provided a guide to the means whereby political conflicts, rather any conflict, can be resolved effectively and peacefully. His pre-occupation with the question of means for the resolution of conflicts led him to reverse Machiavelli's dictum: **END JUSTIFIES THE MEANS**. Gandhi would rather say: **MEANS JUSTIFY THE END. NOBLE ENDS DEMAND NOBLE MEANS**. In fact, to him, the end is nothing but the last process of the processes of means.

His concepts of *Swaraj* (self government); *Sarvodaya* (All round Good of All) and *Satyagraha* (Non-violent Direct Action) are his unique contributions to political philosophy. *Swaraj* is the best definition of the nature of State and State Sovereignty; *Sarvodaya* the best exposition of the purpose of State and *Satyagraha* the best and the most effective mode of peaceful active resistance and conflict resolution.

Thus, Gandhi was a political thinker, though not given to systematic or consistent writing or system building or model building.

However, at places, he is a bundle of contradictions and inconsistencies, but he is more uncertain than inconsistent.

Some call Gandhi a politician and some call him a saint. There are also those who call him a saint among politicians and a politician among saints. A.H. West, Gandhi's colleague and coworker in South Africa, told me that Gandhi was, in fact, the most shrewd politician of our times.

Gandhi is also considered a **DRAMATIST OF THE ART OF LIFE**. The drama of Satyagraha Gandhi played for over a decade and a half in South Africa and for nearly three decades in India made him emerge as a political agitator par excellence. Tagore and RADHAKRISHNAN called him a Mahatma. And, that was due to his deep religious and moral conviction, believing that man is essentially **GOOD & DIVINE**.

II

CONCEPT OF HUMAN NATURE

To Gandhi, man's inheritance is distinctly twofold:

- i) SOMATIC (BIOLOGICAL) – MAN AS AN ANIMAL; &
- ii) EXTRA-SOMATIC (CULTURAL) – MAN AS A BEARER OF CULTURE.

Gandhi's main concern is the Extra-Somatic or cultural nature of man, though he parenthetically expresses his views on man's somatic or biological nature as well.

SOMATIC NATURE OF MAN

It must be stated at the very outset that Gandhi's understanding of human anatomy was never more than that of a lay man, despite the fact that he made efforts to philosophically and rationally justify his views.

In the first place, subscribing to the Hindu doctrine of REBIRTH, Gandhi believed that:

- i) Man continues to be born again and again until he attains salvation or Moksha, until, he is able to so cultivate his SOUL as to completely identify himself with God;
- ii) Human body depicts man's distance with God;
- iii) Human body is a filthy mass of flesh, bones and blood;
- iv) It is the result of our un-godly or sinful deeds in the past and, as such, a perishable force, a devilish force;
- v) Yet, by keeping it clean and pure, inside and outside, i.e., by thinking good of others and doing good to others, one may meet and recognize God in this very body. All that he has to do is to make his body the abode of God.

Man is by nature a vegetarian, in fact, a fruitarian, and not a non-vegetarian or a meat-eating animal, as:

- i) Nature did not give man big and sharp jaws and claws, like those of lions, and did not intend him to kill the lower animals and eat them up;
- ii) Nature, instead, made man qualitatively and culturally superior to other animals. Man's supremacy over the lower animals requires him to protect the lower animals and to have compassion for all living beings. And, that is the essence of Gandhi's concept of *JIVADAYA* (Compassion for all living beings);
- iii) On medical grounds, Gandhi asked for the rejection of non-vegetarian diet, assuming it to be highly spicy. Non-vegetarian food is relatively more hot than the vegetarian food. Excessive use of spices generates a variety of health problems. As such, all condiments and spices be rejected as far as possible and, without spices and condiments it would not be tasteful. Rejection of spices and condiments would lead to the rejection of non-vegetarian diet;
- iv) Vegetarianism, in contradistinction to non-vegetarianism, is also considered a cure for drunkenness;
- v) In comparison to vegetarian animals, our body structure resembles not a buffalo, a cow, a horse, a camel or an elephant, it essentially resembles an ape whose staple diet is fruit;
- vi) Vegetarian, especially fruitarian, diet is richer than the non-vegetarian diet.

On these grounds, Gandhi, the vegetarian, became a fruitarian by choice and recommended fruits, dry fruits, milk and milk products as a diet which people could profitably adopt.

Gandhi was also of the view that nature has not given wings to man. Nature has restricted our locomotive ambition as far as our hands and feet would take us. Hence, we can, at best, serve only those who are near us, with whose needs and aspirations we are familiar and who would like us to help them, i.e. – we can serve only the ones who are “nearest and dearest” to us. If everyone serves his neighbour, there would emerge an unending chain of neighbours serving one another. That, he thought, would be the only practical way to have the dream of “service of humanity” realized someday.

EXTRA-SOMATIC (CULTURAL) INHERITANCE

Extra-Somatic or cultural inheritance of man is Gandhi's

primary concern. In this respect, Gandhi regarded man as a consciously-divine, rational and social being.

MAN IS CONSCIOUSLY – DIVINE

Gandhi regarded man as “a creature of God striving to realize his divinity.”

Metaphysically, man possesses the spark of God or *PARMATA* – (eternal consciousness) in the form of his soul or *Atman* which he variously described as the voice of God, the voice of Truth, the voice of conscience, the voice of justice, the voice of benevolence, the voice of mercy, the voice of harmony, the voice of love, the voice of morality or the inner voice.

He was fond of quoting the Mohammedan saying:

“Adam Khuda nahin, Lekin Khuda Ke Nur se Adam ZUDA NAHIN”. “Man is not God, but neither is he different from the light of God.”

Gandhi was of the view that man was born brute strength, but he was born to realize God who dwells in us in the form of our soul.

Gandhi's Concept of God

Gandhi derived his concepts of God and soul from his study of:

- i) the Vaishnava-Hindu religion of his family;
- ii) the Hindu religious scriptures like the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Vedanta-sutras, and the Gita;
- iii) Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and Jainism; and
- iv) The writings of Leo Tolstoy, especially his celebrated essay “The Kingdom of God is within you.”

From these exceedingly rich sources, Gandhi was able to arrive at a comprehensive conception of God. To him, God possessed all the auspicious qualities and was an undefinable mysterious power, an ultimate reality that pervades everything.

He variously described God as: Truth, Conscience and Bliss (*Sachchidananda*); Love, Beauty, and Harmony; Ethics, Morality, Law and Law Giver; Justice, Goodness, Benevolence and Mercy; the Greatest Democrat who enables people to choose good, not evil. The Omnipresent, the Omnipotent, the eternal Creator of the world and yet unknown.

Gandhi evolved his concept of God from “God as an historical person”, from Rama – an incarnation of God, to God as an “all-pervading moral force.” Yet he did not give up the earlier description as it enabled him to sway the hearts of millions of his compatriots of all faiths.

To him, God was 'internal' as well as 'external'. Living within us in the form of our 'soul', God is internal. And, as a force responsible for creating & regulating this universe, He is external.

Subscribing to MONISTIC THEISM, Gandhi believed in the oneness of God. He proclaimed: "God is one, without a second." And, as such, God is the possessor not only of all the good and benign qualities, but is also described to represent "terror, tyranny and atheism." And, in that comprehensive description of God, Gandhi comes closer to Alfred North Whitehead who, too, has likewise described God in his celebrated treatise "Process and Reality." Since God is ONE & only ONE, it is inevitable that He would represent not only what is good but also all that is considered bad. In Him not only good but also bad lives, moves and has its home. However, Gandhi would say that evil consists in deviation from the path of goodness and is thus an exception thereto.

Gandhi also moved from "God is Truth" to "Truth is God" for:

- i) Pursuit of Truth is common to both the rational theist and the rational atheist;
- ii) Existence of God may be and has, at times, been questioned, but never that of Truth;
- iii) Hence, it is more appropriate to say "Truth is God," rather than saying "God is Truth." Gandhi equated God with absolute Truth and declared the God of Truth to be the ultimate reality.

Man possesses the spark of this God of Truth or *Parmatma* in the form of his *Atman* or soul. However, this God of Truth is formless. As such, soul too is formless. Soul is not the name of any human organ. It is the moral force, the divine spirit which regulates our body. It is the voice of God, the voice of Truth within us.

To Gandhi, the basic difference between man and other animals is not that the former has a soul and the latter do not. If it were so, there would be one creator of man and another of the lower animals. To him, every living being has a soul, the same divine soul. The difference between man and other animals is that while man not only possesses this moral force, he is also conscious of having this force or energy, while in the lower animals, this force lies dormant. They are not conscious of possessing this supreme power. Hence, the difference between

man and lower animals is with respect to the consciousness of possessing this force, i.e., conscious divinity and not divinity as such. And, this is Gandhi's unique contribution to moral philosophy.

Man is conscious of his divinity, of possessing the divine soul. He is expected to govern all his actions in accordance therewith. That is why, Gandhi says: "Man was born brute strength, but was born to realize God who dwells in him."

Gandhi's belief in the divine unity between God and man, between *Paramatma* and *Atma*, led him to describe the relationship between man and man as also divine. He subscribed to the "brotherhood" and "sisterhood" of God. He said: "We are all children of the same God and that, therefore, potentially human nature is the same everywhere."

Using the metaphor of a tree, he said: "We are all leaves of a majestic tree whose trunk can never be shaken off its roots which are deep down in the bowels of the earth" and, using the metaphor of an ocean, he said: "We are drops in that limitless ocean of mercy."

His belief in the Divine Equality of Man led him to proclaim: "VOX POPULI VOX DEI" – voice of the people is the voice of God. God dwells in people and speaks through them. And, that makes Gandhi's God of Truth a social phenomenon.

In the offshoots of man's divinity, Gandhi included the virtues of moral-progression, non-violence and benevolence.

He believed that Human Nature is 'dynamic' and not 'static.' God is already perfect. On the other hand, in the beast the soul lies ever dormant. Hence, there is no question for progression for either. Progress is, therefore, man's distinction alone. Man alone can cultivate his extra-somatic or cultural nature and it is his duty to do so.

Secondly, man as an animal is violent, but as spirit he is nonviolent. It is the consciousness of his divine nature that motivates him to have compassion for all living beings and to refrain from the use of violence in thought, word and deed.

Man is also a benevolent creature. Man is essentially good. There is something good, some element of divinity, in every man. By cultivating the habit of listening and acting according to his conscience, man can avoid evil and be good to one and all.

Man is rational or political

While other beings are simply 'feeling' beings, able to feel pain

and pleasure, man alone is a 'thinking' being. The Hindu religious scriptures have described a human being thus: "*Manan Karoti Iti Manushyah*" – That is, he who thinks is a thinking or human being. Man has reason which enables him to 'think,' i.e., to differentiate between or among the available alternatives and distinguish good from evil, right from wrong, justice from injustice and to choose the path of goodness, righteousness and justice and govern or regulate his actions and those of his society and state in accordance therewith.

Man is Social or Sociable

To Gandhi, man, unlike other animals, is also a social being. He alone is capable of willing submission to social restraints in so far as these are for the good and well being of the society as a whole. And, that is what enriches both the individual and the society of which he is a member.

To Gandhi, conscious-divinity, rationality and sociability, thus, culturally distinguish man from all other animals.

Manifestations of Human Nature

In the course of his six decade long public life, Gandhi had innumerable opportunities to study and discover as to how human nature expresses itself in day-to-day life.

He was disturbed to discover that there is an apparent gulf between God and man, between Parmatma and *Atma*, between theory and practice of man's distinct cultural nature, owing to man's failure to cultivate his cultural nature and act accordingly.

He found that notwithstanding his consciously-divine, rational and social nature, in actual day-to-day life, man takes in vice far more easily than virtue. He is often selfish, untrustworthy, capable of self-deception, listless, lustful and power-hungry. He had seen enough of the darker side of man's nature.

However, the difference between one man and another is only of a degree, and not of kind. Some are more good, and some more bad. There is no one who is wholly good or wholly bad.

And, this made him believe that man is fallible. It is possible for him to make mistakes and deviate from the path of goodness, righteousness and justice.

However, man is not only fallible, but also corrigible. Man can not only make mistakes, but has also the capacity to discover his mistakes and to correct them.

Gandhi also came across the purely moral expressions of

human nature. He found that however bitter a man might be, he is sure to come around, if we bestow upon him pure love in thought, word and deed. In course of time, people do forgive one another.

CULTIVATION OF HUMAN NATURE

Man is not only fallible, but also corrigible. There are chords in every human heart. If we only know how to strike the right cord, we bring out the music. Thus, a wrong-doer is not an evil man, is not the one who can not be changed or reformed.

In this direction, Gandhi ceaselessly tried to determine the extent of the role that God's will, man's efforts and force of circumstances play in moulding man's nature or destiny. He, however, kept on shifting or oscillating places within a sort of triangle of God's will, man's efforts and force of circumstances, and only towards the end of his life came to a remote conclusion that God's will overrides the other two factors.

Purpose of cultivating Human Nature: Concept of Salvation or Moksha.

To Gandhi, man must strive to cultivate his primary virtues of conscious-Divinity, rationality and sociability, for then alone would he be able to act in accordance therewith and realize his cultural self. The natural course of man's evolution is from beast, through man to God.

The state of self-realization, of acting according to one's soul is described as the state of Brahma *Nirvana*, of being one with God. And, only when one is able to cultivate his divine self completely that he is able to attain the stage of liberation from all that is evil. Only when one is able to awaken his soul fully and in all respects that he is able to identify himself wholly with his creator, the God of Truth. And that is the stage which is described in religious scriptures as the stage of *Nirvana*, *Moksha* or Salvation.

Even Gandhi's contemporary, poet Iqbal had asked people to awaken their soul or *Khudi* to such an extent that a stage may be reached when the God of Truth or *Khuda* may himself start consulting man before issuing his writs. Gandhi not only preached self-realization to be the aim of man's life, he himself strove to realize it.

However, unlike the sages of India's great past who had suggested the path of withdrawal from the struggles of social life, Gandhi suggested that the only way man could realize himself or

his *Atman* is by involving himself in the struggles of social life. Man can realize the God of Truth who dwells in the souls of his creation only through the service of his creation, starting with the nearest and the dearest. Man would, then, become a co-worker with God to serve the poor and the needy.

Gandhi's argument was that we may not know God, but we most certainly know his creation. Service of his creation is, thus, the service of God. Our locomotive ambition being limited, we can only serve only that part of God's creation which is nearest and best known to us.

Cultivation of the inherent virtues of mankind being possible, Gandhi would urge everyone to strive to cultivate them, as their proper cultivation alone would enable the one who strives (the *Sadhak*) to attain the ultimate state of self-realization, *nirvana*, *moksha* or salvation.

III

CONCEPT OF SWARAJ

(Theory of The Nature & Form of The State)

The last three decades of India's struggle for freedom were dominated by Gandhi's non-violent direct action or *satyagrah*. It was due to his efforts and those of his associates that the freedom struggle culminated in the British declaration of India's freedom on August 15, 1947.

Gandhi synthesized the Moderate and the Extremist traditions of India's struggle for freedom in his philosophy and strategy of *satyagraha* or non-violent direct action. His concept of *swaraj* or self government is born out of his struggle for India's *swaraj* or freedom.

THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

Gandhi's concept of *swaraj* or self-government is based on certain basic assumptions that he had about the nature of man. Gandhi distinguishes man from all other animals first by calling him 'consciously-divine'. Gandhi's argument is that since every creature in this world is the creation of God, all of them possess the spark of their creator, the God, in the form of their soul or *atman* which is a part of *Parmatma* or God. As Gandhi said: "God dwells within us". The difference between man and other animals is that the former is conscious of possessing divine soul, the latter are not. In the latter, the soul lies dormant. Since man is aware of his soul force, he is able to act according to its voice. *Swaraj*, therefore, means freedom and opportunity to act according to the voice of one's soul which impels man to act for the good of all and restrains him from being selfish or evil.

The second distinguishing feature of man's nature is that he is by nature social. Man can not live without society. Society is

natural to man. It also means his voluntary and willing submission to social restrictions, insofar as these are compatible with our soul.

Man is also by nature political or rational. And, as such, he has a unique capability to govern himself. Since man has the capacity to govern himself, he must have the right and the opportunity to govern himself. Nations are aggregates of people, each one of whom has the capacity to govern himself. Therefore, just as every human being has the capacity to govern himself, every nation must also have the opportunity to govern itself. Self-government or swaraj is, thus, natural to man. That is why, Gandhi rejected alien rule as "alien to the nature of man".

Gandhi's concept of human nature, thus, provides a theoretical background to the question as to why man should struggle for his freedom from alien rule and fight for attaining self-rule or swaraj.

NEGATIVE ASPECT OF SWARAJ

Gandhi's concept of swaraj simply implies self-government. In so far as its negative aspect is concerned, swaraj or self-government implies *absence of alien rule*. Gandhi fought for freedom from alien British rule for undivided India, i.e., for India as a whole. Left to himself, he was against the partition of the country. He called Pakistan a sin.

Gandhi, in fact, asked for *freedom from alien rule as such*, whether British or Japanese or another. He also asked for *freedom from feudal rule, freedom from military rule, freedom from the rule of invaders or aggressors*, i.e. freedom from any kind of rule other than self-rule.

POSITIVE ASPECT OF SWARAJ

The positive aspect of Gandhi's swaraj implies *freedom of self-government*. Once the British withdraw their alien rule from India, the people should be able to frame their own constitution and determine the type of Government they would like to have. The ideal state of Gandhi's conception would be the one in which each individual would have *maximum freedom to govern himself*, including *the freedom to challenge and change the Government when it goes wrong*, so that a citizen does not remain a periodic voter, he becomes an active and frequent participant in the process of his governance.

Gandhi, like Thoreau, considered State as an evil, an

embodiment of violence. He, therefore, accepted Thoreau's dictum that "*that Government is the best which governs the least*", i.e., that Government is the best whose interference with people's liberties and rights is minimum. The Government should allow the people maximum opportunity to do all those things which they think are worth doing and should deter them from doing those things which are not worth doing, i.e. the ones which are injurious or harmful to the interest of the society as a whole, and that is what T.H. Green had stipulated by defining freedom as "*the freedom to do those things which are worth doing*".

FORM OF STATE

In his *Hind Swaraj* or Indian Home Rule, as elsewhere, Gandhi has given us a view of what kind of an ideal state he was aspiring for. Gandhi asks for a State which is at once Sovereign, Federal and Secular.

SOVEREIGN STATE

In the first place, Gandhi would like the State to be sovereign, i.e., *absolutely free from foreign rule*, domination, control or interference. He would also like the State to be *free from the rule of feudal lords, military dictators, invaders or aggressors*. On the other hand, he asked for the *freedom of self-government*, a democratic government, i.e., to use Abraham Lincoln's oft quoted phrase, "*Government of the people, by the people, for the people*", i.e., a government which provides the people frequent and meaningful participation and which can translate into action their ideals and aspirations.

FEDERAL STATE

Gandhi looked at State as a power structure, an embodiment of political power. He was against concentration and centralization of political power, for he thought that power corrupts its possessor and absolute power corrupts absolutely. He was against any one person or organ or level of government possessing entire political power. He was, thus, *not in favour of a unitary state*. He wanted that in order to minimize the corrupting influence of power, *power should be decentralized to the maximum possible extent*. In his order of things, *the State would essentially be Federal*. Gandhi's federal set up would allow the central government to have power only on those matters which are of national or international importance. District Councils will have

power on matters of District importance. Block Councils will have power on matters of block importance. And, the residuary (remaining) powers would remain vested in the village councils which would wield maximum power as every adult citizen would be a real and frequent participant in the process of government at this level. Gandhi was of the view that maximum power should be at the place or level where maximum people are involved and, since maximum people are able to participate in their government at the village level, maximum power would remain vested in the councils at the village level. Gandhi's concept of swaraj, or self-government, is thus essentially *the concept of village government*, as the concept of *Gram Raj*, as the bulk of political power would vest with the general body of adult voters at this primary level of governance, the level which is nearest to the people.

SECULAR STATE

Gandhi considered religion as a personal matter, i.e., a matter entirely between man and his maker, the God. *The State should not interfere with religious matters*, for no State can force the people to be good or bad. People would be good or bad according to their own choice or circumstances, their own likes and dislikes, and not according to the dictates of the Government. The State according to their own conception of goodness should, therefore, refrain from interfering with religious matters, *just as religious groups and organizations should keep away from political matters. The State should treat all religions at par. It must not recognize any religion as the state religion. It should not be a theocratic state.*

The secular state should *grant freedom of conscience and the right to freely practice, preach, profess and propagate the religion of one's choice*. The state should be a garden allowing the flowers of all religions to bloom, without let or hindrance.

FORM OF GOVERNMENT: DEMOCRATIC

Gandhi's swaraj or self-government means Government by the consent and participation of the people. Gandhi agreed with Abraham Lincoln that a truly democratic government would be the Government of the people, by the people, for the people.

He, however, regarded direct or plebiscitary democracy to be impossible in a large country like India with such an enormous population. If everyone was to govern himself the way he deemed fit, there would be anarchy. He, therefore, *preferred a*

representative or parliamentary form of Government. He followed the Westminster (British) model, but adapted it to suit India's needs and circumstances. He did not want political power to be arranged in a pyramid, with the center at its apex. He wanted power to be arranged in concentric oceanic circles, beginning with the individual at the center, the village councils as the first circle, block councils as the second circle, district councils as the third circle, provincial councils as the fourth circle, national government as the fifth circle and the world government, as and when it is formed, as the sixth circle. When power is arranged in a circular form, then every circle works for the welfare of the individual, keeping or rather upholding the ideal of the welfare of all at every level in view.

Gandhi compared Government with an umbrella, which is selected and bought by an individual according to his choice, though it is used by him sparingly in hot sun or rainy season, and which is rejected and discarded once it becomes torn or useless. Likewise, the people should have opportunity to choose the type of Government they want, as they would pay for its working in the form of taxes. And, they should be expected to tolerate it so long as it is useful to them. They should be able to reject and overthrow it the moment it becomes useless or oppressive, as easily as they would throw away or discard a useless umbrella.

ORGANS OF GOVERNMENT

The democratic government would have its three regular branches, the legislature which will make the law, the executive which will execute the laws and judiciary which will interpret the laws and decide cases and disputes according to law. Insofar as the legislature is concerned, *Gandhi preferred a Unicameral Legislature*, because he thought that a poor country like India would not be able to bear the financial burden of a bicameral legislature, which would be too expensive.

So far as the executive is concerned, he wanted that both at the centre and in the provinces there should be a separation between the formal and the actual heads of the executive. The formal head of the State at the centre should be the President and in the provinces the Governor. The Governor would be elected by the people of the provinces and the President by the people of India. That would make India fully *Republic*. These formal heads would, however, be only nominal. They would not interfere with the normal day-to-day functioning of their Councils of Ministers.

Gandhi wanted *the President* or the formal head of the State to be *the symbol of the nation*. Various sections of society should be reflected in and through him. Looking at the political, social and economic conditions prevailing in India in his lifetime, he wanted that the President *should represent*: (i) *the rural people*, the villagers, *the peasantry*, who constituted 70% of India's population; (ii) *the illiterates who constituted the bulk of India*; (iii) *the women*, who had for long suffered at the hands of men; (iv) *the Harijans or the untouchables*, the people belonging to the lowest caste of Hindus who had suffered indignities and discrimination at the hands of the high-caste Hindus; (v) *the Muslims*, the religious minority which did not trust the Hindu majority to do justice to them; and (vi) *the Youth* beginning at the age of 18 years, for youth alone can provide dynamism to the government. Accordingly, he selected GULNAR, the daughter of Maulana Mohammad Ali, as his choice as the first President of the Republic of India, and as his own successor to lead the freedom struggle.

The Council of Ministers headed by the Prime Minister would, however, *be the real executive*. It would be a part of the Parliament and directly and collectively accountable to it. The Council of Ministers would be subordinate to the Parliament, executing its laws faithfully. In his order of things, the Executive will not dominate the legislature. The legislature will dominate the executive. The legislature should not surrender before the whims and fancies of a prime minister, as he thought it does in case of Britain, where the Parliament surrenders as a 'prostitute' before any and every Prime Minister and is dictated by him. The legislature should be supreme and its members should endeavour to fulfill the assurances given voluntarily to the people at the time of elections.

The judiciary should be impartial. It should *be independent of both the legislature and the executive* and the salary and term of office of the judges should be fixed and unalterable, so that they may *act impartially, without fear or favour*.

HOLDERS OF POLITICAL AUTHORITY

Gandhi's emphasis was not so much on the political structure, but on the people who would be elected to man or run it. He, therefore, laid stress on the quality of men who would be elected or selected on merit to constitute the legislatures, executives, judiciary, administrative services, police and military. All the

branches of Government would be manned by the most qualified, the most suited for the job. He regarded the wielder of power as a 'trustee' of the people, and he wanted each one of them to *exercise his authority* by the ultimate standard of right and wrong, on the basis of what is in the interest of the people. He should, therefore, act as a *genuine servant of the people*, watchful of their interest and ever eager to fulfill his obligations to the best of his ability. *The entire structure of Government should run in a manner that it results in the achievement of GOOD OF ALL THE PEOPLE IN ALL THE FIELDS OF HUMAN ACTIVITY.* Only when such a system is established, Gandhi's swaraj would have been realized.

Such a political system, Gandhi thought, would provide maximum initiative and opportunity to the people to govern themselves the way they deem appropriate. The more frequent and active the peoples' participation in their governance, the less would be the need of a government to impose its will on the people. Such a devolution of political power from the Government to the people themselves would *minimize occasions for the state to compel obedience and extract co-operation.* Once the people get used to render willing obedience and voluntary co-operation, *the State as an embodiment of physical force or organized violence would no longer be needed; it would disappear, leaving the people free to approximate to a sort of stateless society, a state of nature, a state of God on earth, a state in which Gandhi, like Rousseau, thought people might have once lived. Gandhi's ideal state is, thus, not an end in itself, but only an effective and an appropriate means to the realization of a stateless society, which would allow each individual an unrestricted opportunity to govern himself in strict accordance with the voice of his conscience and reason and contribute his share in improving the quality of life.*

IV

CONCEPT OF SARVODAYA

(Theory of the Purpose and Functions of the State)

Sarvodaya is Gandhi's theory of the purpose of State. The term *Sarvodaya* is a combination of two words *Sarv* plus *Uday* – meaning welfare, good or upliftment of all.

Gandhi was well conversant with *the Western Utilitarian theories of the purpose of state*, especially with the views of *Jeremy Bentham* and *John Stuart Mill*. For *Bentham*, the real purpose of the State was the "*greatest happiness of the greatest number*", i.e., economic or material welfare of the majority of the people. Bentham thought it to be essential for the very survival of the Government. A democratic government is based on the consent and participation of the majority. If the Government loses confidence of the majority, it would no longer be in power.

John Stuart Mill improved upon Bentham's theory by declaring that the purpose of the state should actually be "*the greatest good of the greatest number*", i.e., the all around welfare of the majority of the people. The Government should strive to achieve not merely the economic welfare of the majority, it should rather work for the welfare of the majority in all fields of human activity, whether political, social, economic, educational or any other.

Both Bentham and Mill thus represent the majoritarian theory of the purpose of state. Gandhi was aware of the viewpoint of both Bentham and Mill and found himself unable to accept these theories on two grounds: first, the *welfare or upliftment of the majority* would inevitably be *at the cost of* the corresponding *minority* and, therefore, is *ethically unsound*. The good of one should never be at the cost of the good of another. His second objection to Bentham's theory was that if the welfare of the

majority is sought only in the economic field, then it would be worse, as it would result *not only in the neglect of the minority, but also neglect in all other fields of human activity*. Gandhi was also of the view that, in pursuing the majoritarian ideal, the Government would not be performing any benevolent function, as *the welfare or upliftment of the majority is inevitably for the Government to keep itself in power*, and, as such, a self-sufficing objective which hardly aims at the welfare of the people as such.

Gandhi had also studied John Ruskin's *UNTO THIS LAST*, meaning *upliftment of the last man or the neglected minority*. Gandhi was deeply impressed by this work and translated it into Gujarati as *Antyodaya, the welfare of the last man or the neglected minority*. Gandhi appreciated the argument that if the Government adopts *antyodaya* as its philosophy, then the traditionally neglected sections of the people, those who are left out by every Government, would be taken care of by the Government. However, *if the government only serves the minority, howsoever neglected, it would be serving them at the cost of the majority which it needs to keep itself in power*. Gandhi's objection was again on ethical grounds. If the welfare of majority should not be sought at the cost of the minority, the *upliftment of the minority should certainly not be sought at the cost of the huge majority which too needs the attention of the Government, and which, in turn, the Government needs for keeping itself in power*.

Gandhi did not reject either the majoritarian or the minoritarian point of view, nor could he accept either of them on the face of them. He, rather, synthesized the majoritarianism of Bentham and Mill with the minoritarianism of Ruskin, and evolved a new theory of the purpose of state and named it *Sarvodaya*, i.e., *the welfare, good or upliftment of all in all walks of life*. This ideal would be *ethically sound as in its pursuit the Government would not be seeking welfare of one at the cost of another, neither of the majority at the cost of minority nor of the minority at the cost of majority*. It would be working for the all around welfare of all. *This would remain an ideal, for no Government would ever be able to achieve it one hundred percent*. It is only such an ideal which the State should keep before itself, so that it always has an ideal to work for. *It should never be left in a vacuum where the ideal it sets before itself is one hundred percent achieved and there is nothing left to achieve*. In that case if there is no scope for progression towards some ideal, it would inevitably

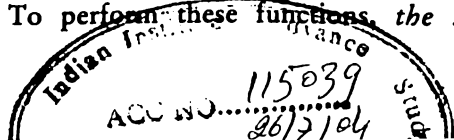
lead to retrogression, for human nature is not static, it is dynamic. If it cannot go upward, it would start degenerating. Therefore, this is an ideal which cannot be attained fully, but towards its attainment the state can continuously strive to work. It is never left without an ideal to achieve. Sarvodaya is, therefore, Gandhi's unique contribution to political philosophy. It is the theory of the purpose of state which is not only politically acceptable but also ethically sound.

Functions of the State

The state would be able to achieve the ideal of Sarvodaya only if, and to the extent it *performs the functions which conform to this ideal and refrains from performing those functions which would come in the way or obstruct the achievement of this ideal.* Keeping this overall view before him, Gandhi, from time to time, expressed his views as to what the state ought to do and what it must not do. The ideas he expressed on this subject were the result of the extraordinary situations created by the context of apartheid in South Africa and alien British Rule in India. Gandhi desired Swaraj, or freedom of self-government, but he did not have opportunity to live in a state of his description. He was assassinated within six months of India's freedom and during that period he was preoccupied with the restoration of communal harmony and the problems created by the exchange of population between India and Pakistan. *Some of the functions he considered absolute for the state in that context may not be relevant in a democratic set up, free from apartheid and alien rule.* His views should, therefore, be considered in the context of the state which he sought to achieve, but which he could not realize during his lifetime. However, the variety of functions Gandhi suggested from time to time can be systematically put into a number of categories.

However, in assigning these functions to the state, Gandhi did not want the state to impose itself on the people. He wanted it only to create conditions in which people would be free to act according to their conscience. Service of all is possible only if the Government joins hands with the people and seeks their collaboration to serve all those who need to be served.

Protective Functions: The first obligation of the Government is *to protect the poor, the needy and the oppressed against not only the wrong doers (the criminals), but also from epidemics and natural calamities.* To perform these functions, the state is



allowed the use of armed forces and the police and train them for all eventualities and keep them satisfied and happy so that they remain loyal to it. Armed forces would be needed only during wars, aggressions, revolts and rebellions and police would be needed when the criminals strike against the peace – loving majority. When these occasions are not in sight, then the police and armed forces are not to sit idle. After all, *they would be paid out of the taxes levied on the common man. Their services must, therefore, be utilized for some constructive work, when these abnormal situations are not there.* Their services should be utilized as a body of reformers rendering social service. In normal circumstances, the police and the military would be *the messengers of peace and non-violence.* They would *make the people disciplined and restore peoples' self-confidence.* They would *work in fields.* In the cities, they would *sweep the streets and clean the latrines and bathrooms* and would be ever-ready to live up to the message of which they would be embodiment, i.e. *"May I Help You"*, so that people can seek their help, assistance, cooperation, guidance whenever they are in need of it. It would be *a body of reformers and social workers ever-ready to serve the people, even at the cost of their own life.*

Prohibitive Functions: Gandhi, like T.H. Green, believed that the primary duty of the state is to *"hinder the hindrances"*, i.e. *to remove obstacles in the way of each individual seeking to achieve his welfare in common with everyone else.* Gandhi would like the state to perform a number of prohibitive functions, i.e. for keeping the people away from the things which are not good for them. The state would indirectly help the people by *removing the obstacles in the way of seeking good life.* In this area, Gandhi would like the state to perform a variety of functions, such as the following:

- i) *To convert the liquor dens, pubs and bars into restaurants supplying nutritive refreshment, instructive literature and recreational facilities to wean the addicts away from the lure of intoxicants;*
- ii) *To prohibit, by law, the manufacture and sale of cigarettes, cigars, etc.;*
- iii) *To prohibit, by law, use of intoxicants, especially by women and children;*
- iv) *To ban, by law, all literature which is obscene or which is intended to promote fanaticism, ill will or hatred between individuals, classes or races;*
- v) *To ban, by law, all evil customs and practices like the evils of*

untouchability, race prejudice, colour distinctions and the institution of Dev Dasis (lady entertainers of God).

Economic Functions: In this field, the state will have to effectively deal with the problem of *starvation, nakedness, disease, illiteracy and lack of communication*. In the context of the abnormal conditions created by famine, mass unemployment and communal riots, following the partition of India, Gandhi suggested the following economic functions to be performed by the Government.

- i) To *ensure employment to all unemployed persons* so as to enable them to secure the basic necessities of life through the sweat of one's brow. He termed it *bread-labour*.
- ii) In order to enable *the state* to provide employment to one and all, he would permit it *to own and manage the industries, and public utility services like transport and communication*.
- iii) He would allow the state to *own and cooperatively cultivate land* so that the articles of universal consumption, like salt, are made available to all. Gandhi was a socialist, for he would not only allow the state to nationalize the key industries and public utility services, but also allow it to have the ownership of land. Gandhi had a unique ability to give old phrases new meaning. Gandhi had come across in Hindu Literature a phrase "*SABHI BHOO MI GOPAL KI*", which literally means *all land belongs to God*. Gandhi *substituted the word state for God*. Since the state was to provide employment to all, it must have the ownership of all land and major economic resources, without which no state would be able to *create employment opportunities for all*.
- iv) It would allow *the state to regulate currency, customs and international trade* as this must not be left in private hands.
- v) It is said that Gandhi was against machinery. *Gandhi was not against machinery as such. He was against only the power-driven machinery which results in unemployment*. In a country where majority of the people are unemployed, Gandhi could not allow the use of machinery to create further unemployment. For instance, he was not against textile factories or factories for grinding wheat or preserving oil seeds, as these industries would generate employment and not unemployment.
- vi) *Gandhi would concede the state the right to impose taxes*. It

is only with the support of the taxes of the people that the machinery of the Government can function. Government should, however, follow a policy of *graded taxation*, i.e. it should *tax each category of people according to its capacity to pay the taxes*. There should be only two criteria for the Government to levy and collect taxes: first, *the people who are being taxed are able to pay the tax* and secondly, *the money collected by way of taxation is utilized for the general benefit of the society*. He would, however, impose two specific restrictions on the Government's power to impose taxes: a) *articles of universal consumption, i.e. articles which the poor use in common with the rich, like the salt, should not be taxed*; b) *the state, being secular, should not impose any religious tax*.

Educational Functions: Compelled by the context of mass illiteracy in India, Gandhi asked the State to *provide seven year free and compulsory primary vocational education to all the children between the age group of 7-14 years*. At this stage, *the education would not only be free but also compulsory*. That was the only way to remove illiteracy from the face of India.

In so far as higher education is concerned, Gandhi followed the principle that out of the taxes paid by the people, in common with one another, *the Government should pay only for that education which is necessary to make the people literate and train them for some vocation, so that they can either take up a job or are able to have self-employment*. Beyond this, responsibility of the state for higher education is only for those people whom the state would need to run the administration. *The state has no responsibility for training the people for private sector*. In this respect, Gandhi evolved a formula: *"he who needs the expertise pays for its training too"*. If the private sector needs experts, they should pay for the higher education and training of the experts needed by them.

Political Functions: In the political field, Gandhi wanted the Government to perform the following functions:

- i) *To take care of its citizens, befriend them and be kind to them;*
- ii) *To work for the upliftment of the down-trodden;*
- iii) *To redress the legitimate grievances of the people;*
- iv) *To ascertain public opinion, before passing a law, order, policy or program;*
- v) *To promote unity amongst various castes, classes and religious groups;*

- vi) Legislature should make the *law for peoples' welfare on its own*, without waiting for the people to struggle for it;
- vii) The executive should so execute the laws as to maximize peoples' welfare; and
- viii) *Judiciary should ensure inexpensive & expeditious justice to all.*

International Functions: Gandhi believed in the possibility of World Government. He thought the U.N. would one day lead to the establishment of World Government in which the States would give up their false notion of sovereignty. For this purpose, he wanted the state to perform the following functions:

- i) *To cooperate with and strengthen international associations and organizations, like the U.N.;*
- ii) *To promote international cooperation, peace and security;*
- iii) *To protect the rights and interests of citizens abroad;*
- iv) *To work for physical disarmament and moral rearmament;*
- v) *Not to wage war or commit an act of aggression on any country;*
- vi) *To help neighbouring states in need of help; and*
- vii) *To support the people of all nations clamouring for peace, freedom and democracy.*

Things that are not Caesar's: Gandhi was, however, of the view that the state should not interfere with peoples' freedom, their thoughts and their conscience. He was in agreement with *Henry David Thoreau* who wrote his famous essay "STONE WALLS DO NOT A PRISON MAKE". It means that if you disobey the state, it can deprive you of your wealth and imprison your body, but no state can imprison your soul. Like Thoreau, Gandhi was also of the view that *men cannot be made good or virtuous by acts of parliament. The state cannot impose morality.* It can neither compel the people to be good nor force them to become bad. People would be good or bad of their own choice and according to their own perceptions and circumstances. Secondly, *the state cannot and should not interfere with peoples' religion, for religion is a personal matter exclusively between God and man.*

The state should imprison only the criminals who violate the laws of the state. It must never imprison or punish its best and wisest citizens or the freedom fighters. They have no personal stake, no self-interest. They work for the freedom of their country and they win ultimately. They are not and should not be considered as enemies of the state, even though they seem to violate law. In fact, they only focus on the deficiencies of laws.

They are not criminals or enemies of the state. *They are the friends, well wishers and benefactors of the state. The state should be proud of them*, rather than punish or imprison them. Thus, Gandhi was against the punishment or imprisonment of freedom fighters, like himself.

Justification of the State: Actions of the state are to be judged in terms of the functions it performs. So long as and to the extent it performs the functions which lead to the good, welfare or upliftment of all in all fields of human activity, the existence of the state and the acts of its government are justified. On the other hand, if it indulges in those acts which take it away from the ideal of sarvodaya or the all around welfare of all, to that extent its actions cannot be justified or defended. In short, *the functions of the Government must always be in full accordance with its ideal of Sarvodaya.*

V

CONCEPT OF POLITICAL OBLIGATION

The problem of political obligation in Gandhi's political thought is essentially the problem of ruler – ruled relationship, i.e., the relationship between the citizens and the state, or to use the modern phraseology, a problem of the relationship between **political obligors** and **political obligees** whose positions are interchangeable. In short, it is a problem of reciprocal relationship between the political obligors and the political obligees.

Political obligors are essentially the people, the human beings who are distinguished by Gandhi by the attributes of conscious-divinity, rationality and sociability and who strive for self-realization through the service of the nearest and the dearest. On the other hand, political obligee is essentially the State which, to Gandhi, must be a *Sovereign Federal Secular Democratic Republic*, aiming at *Sarvodaya*, i.e., the welfare of all in all fields of human activity, by not only hindering the hindrances from the way of individual's attainment of good life but also by simultaneously creating positive conditions conducive to self-realization.

The breach of political obligation is visited by punishment. That is, if an individual citizen, or a group thereof, is found guilty of violating a law, he may be legally punished. On the other hand, if the State does not fulfill its obligation towards the citizens, they may disobey it, non-cooperate with it, or even vote it out of office.

Meaning of Political Obligation

Gandhi defines the term **political obligation** on the pattern of

T.H. Green and goes on to modify and expand its scope. To Gandhi, the term political obligation includes:

- i) Obligations of the citizens towards the State;
- ii) Obligations of the State towards the citizens;
- iii) Obligations of the citizens *inter se*;
- iv) Supplementary or additional obligations of criminals and civil resisters towards the jail authorities who are obligated to reform the criminals so that when they come out of the jail they are better suited for the society;
- v) Obligations of jail authorities towards the prisoners; and
- vi) Obligations of the prisoners *inter se*.

Gandhi improved upon Green's definition by incorporating the supplementary obligations of the criminals or law breakers towards the jail authorities, of the latter towards the former and of the prisoners *inter se*. However, he would not accept Green's inclusion of slave's loyalty to the State as political obligation. He was of the view that slave's loyalty is not willing or voluntary and therefore no loyalty. A slave is loyal because he has no choice or alternative. He serves only under duress. His loyalty cannot, therefore, be treated as political obligation.

Nature of Political Obligation

Gandhi's rejection of slave's loyalty as political obligation was based on his assumption that political obligation is essentially 'willing' or 'voluntary'. The law-abiding instinct of man does not involve acceptance of any law, as such, especially a law which is distasteful. Like Thoreau, Gandhi too said: "True loyalty does not consist in saying 'yes' to everything. It means acting according to one's conscience and reason." A citizen obeys laws voluntarily and never under compulsion or for fear of punishment prescribed for their breach. Obedience under compulsion or for fear of punishment is no obedience. He was of the view that a law, order or decision should be capable of being accepted willingly. A citizen must be free to obey or disobey a law 'on merit'. If the law serves his interest and that of the society of which he is a member, he can reasonably justify his obedience. On the other hand, if a law violates his basic rights or freedoms or comes in the way of his progress, then he has a right to disobey it. Obedience is, thus, 'optional', 'voluntary', 'willing' and is to be exercised in one's own discretion.

At the same time, willingness to obey is related to the obligor's capacity to perform the obligation. If, for instance, a person is

asked to pay a tax beyond his capacity to pay, he would not be able to pay it because he cannot. Similarly, if a citizen is asked to work for 12 hours a day to earn his livelihood, it would be beyond his capacity to work for such a long duration and he would not be able to conform to this requirement, as it would be beyond his capacity to work for that long.

Moreover, Gandhi was of the considered view that citizen's loyalty to the State is subordinate to his loyalty to God, the Creator. A person can reasonably be expected to obey the law of the state only insofar as it is in accordance with his conscience, which is the spark of the God of Truth. In case, however, the law requires a citizen to perform certain acts which are contrary to his conscience, he would feel duty bound to obey his conscience rather than the law. In that event, he would voluntarily invite the penalty prescribed for the violation of law. For example, whenever Gandhi thought he should go to a particular place to help the people overcome their difficulties and the state imposed a ban on his entry into that area, Gandhi obeyed his conscience and visited that area rather than obey the instructions not to visit that area. By way of illustration, when Gandhi was conducting, on behalf of the Congress, an enquiry into the causes, circumstances and consequences of the JALIANWALA BAGH MASSACRE, he visited Punjab to ascertain the facts himself. He preferred to accept the penalty of disobedience rather than obey an instruction or order which was contrary to his conscience.

However, citizen's loyalty to the State is first, vis-a-vis his loyalty to other associations. As a social being, man is a member of a number of associations like family, school, church or club, just as he is a member of the State. If a person is asked by his church to participate in a procession and the state stops or prohibits the procession, then he is expected to obey the state rather than the church. This is because his membership of the state is compulsory and that of all other associations voluntary. Moreover, state is not only a human association, but the first among all the associations of man. Since state is first among all his associations, State's claim to citizens' obedience is also the first. However, different citizens may have different priorities and may opt to suffer the penalty of disobedience to the State rather than compromise their conscience.

Grounds of Political Obedience

Thomas Hobbes and John Plamenatz have gone on record to

explain why a citizen should obey the state. Gandhi synthesizes the viewpoints of Hobbes and Plamenatz with that of T.H. Green in laying down the following grounds on the basis of which a citizen may justify his obedience to the laws of the state:

- i) Citizens ought to obey the law, if in some sense they have consented to laws or can consider themselves as their author. A citizen is obligated to the law if it is "an authorized act of an authorized agent". In doing so, he is obeying the law of his own making. Obedience to the law of one's making is always spontaneous, willing, voluntary, reasoned and without compulsion.
- ii) Citizens also ought to obey the laws to the extent these help them realize their ethical self, insofar as they help him realize his ideal of *Sarvodaya*, the welfare of all. In other words, citizens would be justified in obeying the laws insofar as these contribute to the welfare of all. In that sense also, their obedience would be willing, voluntary and reasoned.

Gandhi would rather put the two arguments together and say that a citizen should obey those laws which are not only of his own making but also essentially in the interest and for the benefit of the society. In the absence of either of these two conditions, a citizen would, likewise, be justified in disobeying the law.

Acceptance of the second ground had led Green to proclaim: "will, not force, is the basis of state". Gandhi would elaborate it further and say: "active, non-violent, free, intelligent will of the people is the basis of state, and that physical force is not". One should never obey a law which he is forced to obey. He should obey it only if he thinks that a law deserves to be obeyed. He would say "Right is Might", not "Might is Right".

Commentators like Austin and Garner would like us to believe that the basis of man's obedience is his 'habit'. Gandhi would reject such a presumption. He would argue that if it was man's habit to obey the law, then all laws would always have been obeyed by everyone and there would never have been any revolution, rebellion or war. Rebellion or war takes place due to someone's decision not to obey the law. The recorded history of mankind is, however, a history of wars, a history of conflicts, and these have been there because some people sometimes decided to defy the laws, either because they were not of their own making or because they were not in their interest. Hence, the argument that man obeys the law because it is his habit to do so is at least historically untrue.

Another argument is that man obeys the law for 'fear of punishment'. If this were so, then again, nobody would ever have defied a law. Freedom fighters in all countries preferred to suffer humiliation, indignity and oppression. They preferred to undergo sufferings than give up their fight for the liberation of their motherland or for the protection of their own basic rights. That was precisely the case both in South Africa and India. In South Africa, under Gandhi's leadership, the coloured people underwent suffering rather than accept laws which were oppressive and discriminative. In India, too, people suffered imprisonments, fines and other hardships, but refused to obey the inhuman laws of an alien imperialistic ruler. Hence, fear of punishment for disobedience is not the ground for an intelligent citizen to obey a law. Similarly, if a law is bad, no 'incentive' whatsoever can ever force a conscientious citizen to obey it. The British Government offered incentives in the form of high decorations, titles and offices to prominent freedom fighters if they would support actions of the British Government and keep away from the freedom struggle. The latter, by and large, preferred to fight for their freedom rather than accept medals, awards, decorations, fat pay packets or even high political offices from the alien British rulers.

Political Obligations of the Citizens towards the State

In his list of political obligations of the citizens towards the State, Gandhi would include the following:

- i) To willingly obey the laws insofar as they are of their own making and are for the benefit, or in the interest, of the society as such;
- ii) To co-operate with the State in nation-building activities;
- iii) To pay taxes according to their capacity to pay;
- iv) To help the State in times of war, aggression, lawlessness, famine or natural calamities, i.e., in all situations in which the State needs their active co-operation;
- v) To maintain public order;
- vi) To demand and fight for freedom, i.e., to get their well deserved rights, the basic freedoms without which they will not be able to act as active members of the society;
- vii) To assure the government, on appropriate occasions, of their loyal co-operation; and
- viii) To warn, to challenge, to disobey and to non-co-operate with the government which is alien, feudal, unjust, oppressive or insensitive.

Obligations of the State towards the Citizens

In Gandhi's order of things, it is not only the citizens who are expected to obey the State, the State is also duty-bound to work for the welfare of the people. It should make laws for the welfare of its people and grant them their rights and freedoms on its own, unasked. *Sarvodaya*, welfare of all, being the purpose of the State, it is charged to perform a number of social, economic, educational and political functions and obligations towards the citizens. The special obligations of the State are to remove illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, communalism, casteism and regionalism. It should, on the other hand, create maximum opportunities for the benefit of all and should remove obstacles and hindrances from the way of the people so that each one may attain the height of which he is capable. By obligations of the State, we generally mean the whole variety of functions it is reasonably expected to perform.

Political Obligations of the Citizens Inter Se

Gandhi would like the citizens not only to perform certain obligations towards the state, but also a number of obligations towards one another, a variety of social, economic, educational, moral and religious obligations. A few of the obligations that Gandhi mentioned in this category may, by way of stray illustrations, be highlighted as follows:

- i) *Social Obligations*: Obligations in this category would include citizens' obligations to do away with provincialism, casteism, communalism and fanaticism; To cultivate enlightened public opinion; and To keep a watch on the newspapers.
- ii) *Economic Obligations*: These would include the obligation to work and to earn one's livelihood by the sweat of one's brow; and to contribute one's share towards the economic development of the society, the kind of nation-building activities.
- iii) *Educational Obligations*: These include the obligation to undergo a 7-year, primary, free and compulsory vocational education. Special obligation to provide education to women, *Harijans* (the so-called untouchables), and illiterate adults to attain and help others attain some minimum standard of education.
- iv) *Moral and Religious Obligations*: These would include obligations to act according to one's conscience, to insist on

Truth; and to observe the vows of non-violence, non-stealing, non-possession, *Brahmacharya* (abstinence), body-labour, fearlessness, equal respect for all religions, *Swadeshi* (love of indigenous things) and universal brotherhood.

Gandhi's basic argument was that if people obey laws willingly, voluntarily, cheerfully and in advance, the corresponding rights would follow almost as automatically as spring follows winter.

VI

THEORY OF EARNED RIGHTS

In consonance with his views on the cultural inheritance of man, Gandhi subscribes to the traditional theory of "natural rights" which he describes variously as "birth rights", "primary rights" or "inherent rights". These rights are natural in the sense in which these are described by T.H. Green as arising out of and being necessary for "the fulfillment of a moral capacity, without which a man would not be a man". In other words, these rights are natural in the sense of being innate.

Gandhi's novel contribution to political philosophy is, however, his belief that obligations and rights are inter-connected and inter-dependent. In fact, to him, obligations are the true source of rights. He equates obligations with the roots of a tree and the rights with the fruits thereof.

Obligations precede rights. If one performs his obligations voluntarily, willingly and in advance, he is sure to get his rights sooner or later. Gandhi's emphasis on the performance of duties and obligations was so intense that when H.G. Wells asked him to suggest the rights he would like him to include in the Charter of Human Rights, he characteristically replied: "Begin with a Charter of Duties of man, and I promise the rights will follow as spring follows winter". Here, Gandhi is putting a premium on the duties of man.

Gandhi also upheld *Gita* gospel of *NISHKAMA KARMA* (selfless action), by giving it a fresh interpretation. He would like the people to perform their duties and obligations willingly, voluntarily and cheerfully, without an eye on the corresponding rights. They would do better to perform their duties and render their obligations for the sake of doing so. Rights would surely accrue to them, sooner or later, almost automatically.

Yet, he was aware of the fact that often willing and voluntary performance of one's obligation is not enough to secure the corresponding rights. This may just be the first step. One may also have to shout, strive and be ready for utmost sacrifice. Rights are secured through a long process of struggle and sacrifice. These are wrested rather than conceded. Gandhi would, thus, expect people to secure their rights not merely by performing their corresponding obligations in advance, but also by supplementing their endeavour by non-violent direct action. Struggle and sacrifice become necessary as governments are not often liberal, generous or responsive. Gandhi compared the insensitive alien British government in India to a mother who does not even feed her children unless they cry for her milk. How could Indians expect such a government to grant them their rights without their ceaseless struggle and countless sacrifices. One has, therefore, not only to earn his rights by performing the corresponding obligations in advance, but has also to carry on a peaceful struggle involving sacrifices of all sorts.

In the course of his six decade long political career, Gandhi suggested a variety of rights which the consciously-Divine, rational and sociable citizens could reasonably secure from the government by following the path suggested by him. For systematic discussion, these rights may be studied under the following broad categories, the contents whereof are illustrative and suggestive, rather than exhaustive.

POLITICAL RIGHTS

- i) *Right (of every literate citizen within the age group of 18-50 years) to vote;*
- ii) *Right (of every literate citizen within the age group of 18-50 years) to participate in law-making as an ex-officio member of the assembly at the local, village, city or country level;*
- iii) *Right (of every literate citizen within the age group of 18-50 years) to contest elections to political offices for their respective terms;*
- iv) *Right to disobey laws and orders which are unjust, oppressive or contrary to one's conscience;*
- v) *Right to complain and seek redressal of grievances;*
- vi) *Right to peaceful protest and agitation;*
- vii) *Right to warn, refuse allegiance, non-cooperate with and even remove the Government which is unjust, inert or oppressive;*

- viii) *Right to recall elected representatives;*
- ix) *Right of complete disobedience and total non-cooperation vis-a-vis the Government by foreigners, feudal princes and monarchs, military dictators, invaders and aggressors; and*
- x) *Right to Political Asylum.*

CIVIL RIGHTS

- i) *Right of Citizenship;*
- ii) *Right to Equality before law and equal protection of laws;*
- iii) *Right against discrimination on grounds only of caste, creed, colour, sex, religion, property qualification or place of birth;*
- iv) *Right to the freedom of speech and expression, including the Freedom of Press;*
- v) *Right to form associations and unions, including political parties;*
- vi) *Right to hold meetings, demonstrations and carry out processions;*
- vii) *Right to the Freedom of Movement;*
- viii) *Right to reside in any part of the territory of the state;*
- ix) *Right to the unrestricted use of public places and services like schools, hospitals, places of public resort or entertainment, wells, tanks, roads and pavements maintained out of state funds or dedicated to the use of general public; and*
- x) *Right to Constitutional Remedies, i.e. the right to get one's rights enforced through the courts of law.*

RELIGIOUS RIGHTS

- i) *Right to the freedom of conscience;*
- ii) *Right to the liberty of belief, faith and worship;*
- iii) *Right to study, interpret, accept or reject the tenets of any religion;*
- iv) *Right to practice, preach, profess and propagate any religion; and*
- v) *Right to intelligent conversion, i.e. voluntary change of belief and faith.*

EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS

- i) *Right to a seven-year free and compulsory vocational primary education;*
- ii) *Right to free higher education, on the principle: "He who needs the expertise, shall pay for its training too";*

- iii) *Right of women and educationally backward classes to special treatment in matters of education; and*
- iv) *Right to preserve and develop one's own script, language and culture.*

ECONOMIC RIGHTS

- i) *Right of every able-bodied citizen to work, in accordance with one's physical ability, mental aptitude and personal choice;*
- ii) *Right to limited hours of work;*
- iii) *Right to just and adequate wages;*
- iv) *Right to rest and leisure;*
- v) *Right to acquire, hold and dispose of property one earns; and*
- vi) *Right of the old, infirm and disabled to maintenance by the State.*

These are the rights which individuals enjoy in common with one another, and not against one another. These are the rights which should be available to citizens of all nations. These rights are the common property of mankind. No nation should deny or withhold them.

The State should not impose unreasonable restrictions on the enjoyment of these rights by the people in common with one another. However, Gandhi would allow the State to impose reasonable restrictions on the enjoyment of these rights in the general interest of the society. After all, liberty is not a license to do anything. It implies the freedom to do things worth doing and the freedom to enjoy things worth enjoying. Gandhi, thus, lives the philosophy of T.H. Green.

VII

THEORY OF PUNISHMENT

(Dandaniti)

Gandhi, like Thoreau, was a “*philosopher of the politics of peaceful protest*.” In fact, wherever there was injustice, there was Gandhi. He launched his *Satyagraha* (Nonviolent Direct Action) Movement against apartheid in South Africa and alien British Rule in India. And, in the course of his protest movements, he was *sentenced to jail ten times over*. In South Africa, he was locked up in Johannesburg, Volksrust and Palmford jails for four months and eight days. In India, he was in Yervada Central Prison and Aga Khan Palace Prison for six years and sixteen days. During these incarcerations, Gandhi had firsthand experience of the inhuman treatment to which prisoners were usually subjected by the jail authorities. Lamenting this obnoxious treatment, he observed in *Young India* of May 1924:

The jails have, therefore, become hot-beds of vice and degradation. The prisoners do not become better for their life in them. In most cases, they become worse than before... A convicted man is lost to society. The atmosphere in prison inures him to the position of inferiority.

Thoreau's celebrated “Essay on Civil Disobedience” was a source of deep and constant inspiration to Gandhi. He found confirmation of his views in Thoreau's own jail experience which he reproduced in his *Indian Opinion* (September, 1907) for the guidance of his co-workers as follows:

... as I stood considering the walls of solid stone, two or three feet thick, the door of wood and iron, a foot thick, and the grating which strained the light, I could not help being struck with the foolishness of that institution which treated me as if I were flesh and blood and bones, to be locked up... I could not

but smile to see how industriously they locked the doors on my meditations, which followed them out again without let or hindrance, and they were really all that was dangerous. As they could not reach me, they had resolved to punish my body, just as boys, if they cannot come to some person against whom they have a spite, will abuse his dog. I saw that the state was half-witted... that it did not know its friends from its foes, and I lost all my remaining respect for it, and pitted it.

CRIMES & CRIMINALS

Gandhi regarded crime as *an exception to the law-abiding instinct of man*. He looked at crime as a 'lapse'. To him, crime was the *manifestation of 'mental disease' or disorder*.

Accordingly, a criminal is a 'mental patient' who deserves to be treated sympathetically, with lots of love, affection and kindness which, in all probability, he has missed. In no case should he be subjected to humiliation, harassment or torture.

As a matter of fact, if the social, economic and political conditions were healthy and conducive to a decent standard of living, not very many people would have violated a law and committed a crime. Rather, *the healthier the socio-political climate, the lower would be the crime rate*. With this strong presumption, Gandhi tried, time and again, to identify the factors which often impel a person to violate a law and commit a crime. He found that the following factors were responsible for most of the crimes: (i) Illiteracy; (ii) Ignorance of law; (iii) lack of appreciation of one's obligations and rights; (iv) poverty; (v) unemployment; (vi) unhealthy social conditions; and (vii) unfavourable political conditions.

Deliberating on the subject, Gandhi recorded his views in *Young India* (June 12, 1924) as follows:

Mental diseases are regarded as a crime and, therefore, punishable; physical diseases are regarded as unforeseen visitations of nature to be indulgently treated. As a matter of fact, there is no reason for any such distinction... If every disease, mental or physical, were regarded as a lapse, but every patient or prisoner were to be treated kindly and sympathetically, not severely or indulgently, both jails and hospitals would show a tendency to decrease... *Every patient and every prisoner should come out of his hospital or jail as a missionary to preach the gospel of mental and physical health*.

PUNISHMENT & ITS PURPOSE

Gandhi, as an apostle of Truth and nonviolence, would not even think of punishing anyone, if the conditions and circumstances were so ideally suitable. He would not punish even those who indulge in violence, even those who commit murders. Left to himself, he would not allow anyone to be imprisoned. He would even discharge all prisoners and restore them their freedom.

As an idealist, Gandhi would require the State to pursue towards the criminals *the policy of "forget and forgive"*, for he believed that *forgiveness was in consonance with man's nature as a moral and rational being*. However, as a practical idealist, he would admit *punishment as a necessary evil*, as an unfortunate necessity. He would allow the State to imprison the criminals. He thought that confinement is in itself a kind of punishment. And, as such, *mere detention should be enough*. He would, however, not allow the state to imprison the criminals indefinitely. They would rather be detained until they are cured of their evil traits or until someone offers himself to stand surety for their good behaviour.

Gandhi was strongly *averse to all inhuman forms of punishment*. For instance, he would not allow the state to abjure its own responsibility of punishing the criminals and instead expose them to "mob fury."

In no case would he allow the state to award punishment to death. As a deeply religious man, Gandhi subscribed to the view that *"God alone can take life, as He alone gives it."* God Almighty is the creator of everything in this world. No state or society should ever arrogate to itself the power that does not belong to it. Even on purely practical consideration, he would ask the state to desist from sentencing anyone to *death for it is a punishment which is beyond reparation and recall*. In sentencing a criminal to death, the state would be arrogating to itself the status of infallibility.

Gandhi was of the considered view that the *purpose of punishment was only to seek correction of wrongs and conversion of criminals*. It is the duty of the state to *reform the criminals* so that they are transformed into law-abiding citizens, so that they are enabled to regulate their actions in accordance with the voice of their reason and soul. If the state is able, and insofar as it is able, to reform the criminals, it would be discharging its political and moral obligation to protect the society. To Gandhi, that alone

would be the state's justification of its system of punishment.

At the same time, Gandhi would *not* allow the state to follow the policy of *vengeance or retaliation* towards the criminals, for he was of the view that "it is man's natural law not to retaliate." *Violence is to be returned by non-violence, hatred by love.* That was the lesson Gandhi had learnt from Christianity and from the philosophical writings of Tolstoy.

PRISONS & PRISONERS

Since the purpose of punishment would be to nurse and reform the patient-criminal and since confinement would be the most convenient form of state punishment, Gandhi, as an experienced political prisoner himself, proceeds to delineate the features of the prisons he would like the state to maintain. In his order of things, prisons would *no longer* be managed as places of punishment, as places of *harassment, humiliation, intimidation and torture.*

Gandhi would like the state to turn its prisons into *hospitals and reformatories for treating criminals as if they were mentally diseased* and socially and economically disadvantaged persons. The state would procure the *services of nurses and psychiatrists* to take care of the patient-criminals so that they have love and affection in abundance to make up their psychological and mental deficiencies and shortcomings.

He would like the jail authorities to return their violence by non-violence and their hatred by love. It is *only when evil is matched by good that evil dies for want of nutrition.* That alone is the way, he thought, for transforming a criminal into a peace-loving person. The so-called enemies of the state can be turned into its friends and philanthropists only this way. And, to follow this path is the quality that, he thought, distinguishes man from the brute.

In order to treat the patient-criminals as human beings, the jail authorities should first *scientifically classify the prisoners in accordance with their social background, human requirements and moral standards.* They should be given the companionship of their equals in thought, manners and customs. They should be placed in sanitary conditions and be provided with clean and sufficient food and clothing, medical facilities, education and training that would help them to improve the quality of their life. They should be allowed to meet their friends and relatives. Their religious beliefs, dignity and privacy should be duly respected. They should have the right to correspond with whomever they would like to. They

should also have access to newspapers and books, including the religious scriptures to provide them enough food for their soul and reason.

Gandhi would not like the state to isolate any prisoner and place him in solitary confinement, since he is already isolated from the outside world. The jails should not be suffocating and uncomfortable for the patient-criminals. Nor should the jail authorities maintain secrecy about the treatment of prisoners. This would help the prisoners, their friends, relatives and well wishers know the state of affairs in jail. In fact, it would be necessary to save jail authorities from unwarranted criticism. Gandhi would like the jail authorities to act as guardians of prisoners under their charge.

Gandhi would not, on the other hand, like the jail authorities to be violent towards prisoners in thought, word and deed. He would like the jail authorities not to use foul language while coming into contact with the prisoners. The latter should not be addressed by insulting and degrading terms like bastard, bitch, dog, sammy or banana. Nor should they be required to stand naked before the jailor and in presence of one another. In no case should the rod or the lash be used to torture them physically. The prison authorities should also not feed them forcibly as that would be taking undue liberty with the human body which, he thought, was too sacred to be trifled with, even though it belongs to a prisoner.

The prisoners, too, in their turn, should make an open confession of their guilt and take the vow never to commit the same or similar offense again. That would be the purest type of repentance. They should willingly, voluntarily and cheerfully be ready to submit to merited punishment. They should obey all jail regulations insofar as they are not inconsistent with their own conception of morality, and their own religious convictions. Such a conduct on the part of criminals would, Gandhi thought, strengthen their minds and souls.

Such a reciprocal relationship between the prisoners and prison authorities would so transform the prisoners that they would come out of jail as "missionaries to preach the gospel of mental health." They would not only have transformed themselves but would also improve the quality of their society and state.

TREATMENT WITH POLITICAL PRISONERS

Gandhi, a jail bird, would require the state to treat political

prisoners as its friends and philanthropists. These are the people who fight for the removal of wrongs. They struggle for conscience's sake which makes them "pure, truthful and brave." They awaken the people to fight for securing their legitimate rights. They do deserve a better treatment as they seek justice for their people.

The jail authorities should "put the political prisoners in a separate division and give them a treatment in keeping with their antecedents." They should neither be placed in unwholesome surroundings, nor subjected to harrassment, humiliation or torture.

On the other hand, Gandhi would require the political prisoners, who violate the law for conscience's sake to confess their guilt, take a vow never to commit it again and ask for the highest penalty prescribed by law. By confessing his guilt openly and by asking the court to award him the highest penalty, Gandhi set a personal example for all prisoners to follow. This he thought was the only way for seeking correction of wrongs and conversion of wrong doers. In *Young India* (August 22, 1908), he recorded his political philosophy as follows: "*I would pass the whole of my lifetime in gaol, and... be perfectly happy, than see my fellow-countrymen subjected to indignity.*"

VIII

CONCEPT OF AHIMSA

(Non-Violence)

Gandhi derived his concept of *Ahimsa* or non-violence from a variety of sources like: (1) *His family*, especially his mother Puttlibai and his wife Kasturba; (2) *Hindu literature*, especially the powerful plays of Raja Harishchandra and Bhakta Prahlad; (3) *Religious scriptures* of Hinduism, Jainism and Christianity; and (4) the *Philosophical writings* of Leo Tolstoy. He learnt from the combination of these sources that: (1) Truth is the ultimate Reality; (2) Truth is not the monopoly of anyone; (3) Everyone is the creature of the God of Truth; (4) Everyone has an equal right to live; (5) Self-suffering is higher and better than inflicting suffering on others; and (6) Return good for evil and love for hatred.

A POSITIVE CONCEPT

Gandhi used the term 'non-violence' as the nearest English translation of the Hindu concept of *Ahimsa*. He employed this term for want of a better and a more appropriate term. However, he was of the considered view that non-violence, *despite the particle 'non'* is not a negative term.

It is a positive concept as it means unadulterated love for all living beings. It implies goodwill towards all. It means returning good for evil, love for hatred. It commands: Live and let others live. It says NO to inequality and discrimination.

A COMPREHENSIVE CONCEPT

Non-violence is not simply non-violence in action. It is not merely non-injury or non-killing. It is essentially a creed. It means *non-violence in thought, word and deed*. It implies: (i) Do

not think ill of anyone; (ii) *Do not speak ill of and to anyone*; and (iii) *Do not cause ill to anyone*. That is what the Hindu scriptures meant by “*AHIMSA MANSA VACHA KARMNA*” – non-violence in thought, word and deed.

A UNIVERSAL CONCEPT

Gandhi was of the considered view that non-violence can be adopted in thought, word and deed *not only by saints, philosophers and other highly enlightened persons, it can be employed by ordinary human beings*. Men and women, old and young, educated and illiterate, rich and poor, believers and atheists can cling to it, each according to his capacity. Likewise, it can be employed *not only towards human beings but towards all living beings*. It can be used *not only towards friends and well wishers but more so towards opponents, criminals and enemies*. Anyone can employ it towards anyone.

SYMBOL OF NON-VIOLENCE

Gandhi adopted the Japanese “Triple Monkey” Toy as the symbol of non-violence and always kept it on his desk. It shows three monkeys sitting together: (i) one shutting his eyes with his hands – signifying the duty *not to speak ill of others*; (ii) one shutting his ears with his hands – signifying the duty *not to hear ill of others*; and (iii) one shutting his mouth with his hands – signifying the duty *not to speak ill of others*. This toy represented part of what Gandhi understood by non-violence. Since it came closest to his concept of non-violence, he adopted as its symbol.

NON-VIOLENCE: A DUTY

Subscribing to the philosophy of Jainism, Gandhi accepted “*Ahimsa Parmo Dharmah*” (Non-violence is the supreme duty) as the guiding principle of human behaviour, as the supreme law of our life. It is the *only means for the realization of truth*. It is the essence of *fraternity and brotherhood*. It is the cornerstone of *democracy*, ensuring *Liberty, Equality, Justice and Peace* to all. It is the only means for the realization of the goal of *world peace*. Moreover, to Gandhi, the *history of mankind has essentially been the history of increasing victory of non-violence over violence*. It is the pre-requisite of peaceful existence.

IMPLIES COURAGE OF THE HIGHEST ORDER

Violence refers to the will and ability to strike or attack. Only

he can be non-violent who can be violent. *Non-violence, therefore, implies having the will and ability to strike, but refraining from the use of violence, for violence only multiplies violence, for it is a destructive force which comes in the way of progress and development. Non-violence is a step higher than that of violence.* Only he can be non-violent who possesses the ability to strike or attack, the one who has a strong body, mind and soul, the one who acts according to the voice of his reason and conscience. On the other hand, *refusal to strike owing to inability to strike is cowardice.* It is the voice of the weak and the timid. It implies helpless submission to the will of the oppressor. Cowardice is a step even lower than violence. Gandhi would expect people to be non-violent, for it is human to have the ability to strike but not having recourse to strike for a higher end. Violence according to one's capacity to attack is beastly. *Helpless submission is neither violence nor non-violence. It is cowardice pure and simple. Gandhi would ask the people to act as beasts if they cannot act as human beings, but never to stoop down to the level of a coward.* Gandhi was the soldier of immense moral strength and believed that everyone is capable of cultivating his moral strength by acting according to the voice of his conscience. He consistently urged the people not to project themselves as cowards, whatever be their conditions and circumstances.

NON-VIOLENCE AIMS AT THE CONVERSION OF HEARTS

All through his political career in South Africa and India, Gandhi adopted the path of non-violence for the *correction of wrongs and conversion of wrong-doers.* In South Africa, he discovered and employed the methods of non-violent direct action for the *annihilation of apartheid and in India for the termination of alien British rule and the autocratic feudal rule of Indian princes.*

To him, non-violence meant returning good for evil, love for hatred. All through his political career, Gandhi did not hate anyone, not even his worst opponents. He only appealed to their reason and conscience and prayed to God Almighty to show them the path of justice and righteousness. In fact, all his religious congregations-cum-protest meetings started with the prayer to God to grant 'SANMATTI', the wisdom to do what is morally right, to him as well as to his opponents. He had civility and gentleness in abundance for everyone, especially his opponents.

That is why he was able to set examples of converting the hearts of his opponents, of transforming them *from enemies into friends*. Did he not convert his arch enemy General Smuts into a friend?

He believed that violence lives on violence. That is how violence multiplies violence. If violence is not met by violence, it dies of want of nutrition. The only way, therefore, to check violence is to return it by its opposite force, non-violence.

MAN OF NON-VIOLENCE

Starting with the premise that it is possible for every human being to avoid violence, to refrain from the use of violence in thought, word and deed, he desired them to *cultivate the habit of non-violence*. This, he thought, they can do by: (i) acting according to the voice of their soul; (ii) remaining God fearing; (iii) realizing that Truth is not their monopoly; (iv) conceding that the opponent is not ipso facto wrong; (v) having faith in their capacity to transform their enemies into friends; (vi) preparing themselves for utmost sacrifice; and (vii) having faith in the efficacy of non-violence. The more of these qualities one has, the greater would be the possibility of his refraining from the use of violence. He would, in fact, be returning the hatred of his opponents by love and winning them over as his friends and well-wishers.

NON-VIOLENCE AS A PRACTICAL IDEAL

Gandhi *subscribed to the concept of SAMPOORNA AHIMSA or total non-violence as the ideal of man's life*. He thought that the ideal course of man's development is from beast through man to God. As a practical idealist, however, he conceded that *God alone is wholly non-violent. Complete non-violence is His attribute alone. So long as men live physically in flesh and blood, it would be impossible for them to become completely non-violent in thought, word and deed. Even the survival of human beings as human beings entails some violence, howsoever insignificant it might be. Though no human being can be cent per cent non-violent, it is possible for everyone to avoid violence in thought, word and deed.* And, if a person cultivates the habit of refraining from the use of violence, if he makes an honest effort to minimize violence, and returns good for evil and love for hatred, he would be able to raise the level of his non-violence to an ever-increasing degree. Non-violence for Gandhi is, therefore, an ideal which cannot entirely be attained by any human being, but towards the

attainment of which one can make steady progress. One can go on coming nearer to this ideal, go on approximating this moral ideal higher and higher by raising the level of his own reasoning and consciousness and by depicting both self-restraint and compassion. All one needs to do is to make an honest effort. To him:

A votary of Ahimsa, therefore, remains true to his faith if the spring of all his actions is compassion, if he shuns to the best of his ability, the destruction of the tiniest creature, tries to save it and, thus, incessantly strives to be free from the deadly coil of himsa. He will be constantly growing in self-reliance and compassion but he can never become entirely free from outward himsa.

EXCEPTIONS OWING TO HUMAN IMPERFECTIONS

To Gandhi, the law of non-violence was *absolute, perfect, eternal and all-pervading*. It was *not liable to any exception whatsoever*. Though the principle of non-violence is perfect, *the human beings who are called upon to practice this law are imperfect. Hence, as a concession not to the imperfection of the principle of non-violence, but to that of the man who is called upon to cling to this principle, Gandhi did conceive of certain practical situations in which the use of violence would be permissible*. These situations would broadly be like the following:

- i) *For sustaining our body*, minimizing violence by eating fruits and vegetables to save the life of lower animals;
- ii) *For preserving our health*, killing of mosquitos, insects and the like;
- iii) *For protecting the society from the acts of a lunatic who runs amuck on a killing spree;*
- iv) *In cases where the use of violence is in the interest of the person against whom it is used, e.g. mercy killing, e.g.:*
 - (a) *Poisoning a person or an animal in order to save him of the unbearable agony of an incurable disease; or*
 - (b) *The use of a surgical knife by a surgeon to save the life of his patient.*

These are the illustrations of the situations in which **the use of violence may be allowed as an unfortunate and unavoidable necessity**. In such cases, too, *the use of violence or torture should be the bare minimum and only as a last resort*. For what matters in such cases is not only the motive or intention of the person resorting to violence but also the degree and nature of his violence. Intention and action are significant determinants.

Gandhi would not, however, allow the use of violence in self defense, short of helpless submission to the anger or lust of the opponent. Violence is, thus, allowed *only in rarest of the rare situations*, and only as a last resort, as a concession to the imperfections of our own nature and not to that of the eternal law of non-violence which enables man to travel from the beast through man to God.

IX

CONCEPT & STRATEGY OF SATYAGRAHA

(Non-Violent Direct Action)

Gandhi is essentially a philosopher of the politics of peaceful protest. He focuses attention on the narrower aspect of individual's resistance to constituted authority and relates it to the wider context not only of his political life, but also to his nature as a moral being, striving to realize his divine self through the service of humanity. His basic dilemma is: how should a law-abiding citizen, or a group thereof, resist constituted authority, once he finds himself impelled to do so? He provides a definite guide to the means whereby conflicts, especially political, can be resolved effectively and peacefully. And, in his preoccupation with the question of means of conflict-resolution, he reverses Machiavelli's proposition: "end justifies the means." Gandhi's position is: means justify the end: noble ends demand noble means.

Gandhi seeks an alternative to the way of violence (both in its organized and unorganized forms) which, he thinks, has failed, through the whole course of human history, to provide a lasting solution to human conflicts, political, social or economic. He is convinced that fighting violence with violence only aggravates violence. Violence is to be fought by its opposite, non-violence. The alternative Gandhi offers is a "war without violence."

Gandhi's mode of conflict-resolution by peaceful means does not, however, imply passivity, weakness, helplessness or expediency. It stands for the greatest courage man is capable of. It is a weapon of the morally vigilant and the active. As Simone Panter-Brick puts it, Gandhi says "No" to violence but "Yes" to fighting.

MEANING OF SATYAGRAHA

The moral weapon to fight untruth by Truth and violence by Non-violence is described by Gandhi as *satyagraha*. In its origin, the term *satyagraha* is a compound sanskrit word formed by *satya* and *agraha*. *Satya* means Truth and *agraha* means holding fast, firmness, adherence, or insistence. The compound word *satyagraha* means clinging to Truth, holding fast to Truth, insistence on Truth, or firm adherence to Truth.

Satyagrahi begins with the negotiating table. Granting that the opponent, too, is endowed with the faculties of reason and conscience, and that he has the right to co-exist and hold his own position, the Satyagrahi enters into the process of reason and discussion with his opponent. Having entered into a dialogue with his opponent, he accepts from his viewpoint whatever he can and thus paves the way for the opponent to respond. In most cases, Gandhi thought the problem would be solved and conflict resolved through negotiation, even if it is prolonged. Should, however, reason and discussion not result in the resolution of conflict, the Satyagrahi would undertake suffering in order to appeal to his opponents' conscience and elicit public opinion rather than inflict suffering on his opponent.

When we put together Gandhi's statements on the varied dimensions of *satyagraha*, we find that he conceives it as *essentially an attitude of mind and a way of life based on the firm desire of vindicating just causes, correcting wrongs and converting wrong-doers by reason, discussion and self-suffering and by patient and active use of the means which are non-violent and intrinsically just*. James Luther Adams elaborates the meaning of Gandhi's *satyagraha* by describing it as: (1) *a non-violent*, (2) *public violation*, (3) *of a specific law or of laws, or of a policy of government having the effect of law*, (4) *which expresses a sense of justice in a civil society of co-operation among equals*, and (5) *which is generally undertaken in the name of presumed higher authority than the law in question*, (6) *as a last resort*, (7) *for the purpose of changing a law and* (8) *with the intention of accepting the penalty which the law imposes*. Gandhi's *satyagraha*, thus, harmonizes the cause, the end and the means.

The opposite of satyagraha is duragraha. Joan Bondurant clearly distinguishes Gandhi's *satyagraha* from its obverse the *duragraha*. She discovers that, in contradistinction to the former, the latter means stubborn resistance of the *opponent's* policy or action, "*pre-judged*" as *ipso-facto* wrong. The *duragrahi* regards

truth, justice, and righteousness his monopoly and does not allow the possibility of the opponent also being in the right.

In duragraha, the opponent is regarded as an embodiment of evil, an enemy to be destroyed and defeated. He is, therefore, blackmailed, harassed and humiliated. He is not allowed to explain his standpoint. There is no meeting ground between the duragrahi and his adversary. Satyagraha, on the other hand, enables the opponent to prove his point and allows a fair chance of its acceptance. He is shown an alternative which may be acceptable to him and which may enable him to shift his position from an enemy into a friend. And, this is what Gandhi probably meant by "Conversion of the wrongdoers."

PURPOSE OF SATYAGRAHA

Satyagraha amounts to the assertion of a moral right which the state law should recognize, but it denies. It is to make up the deficiencies of the law, and not for the defiance of law itself, that a law-abiding citizen may resort to satyagraha. In other words, it is a way which the law-abiding citizens can adopt for seeking redress of their grievances and for solving conflicts and deadlocks on a durable basis. As such, satyagraha is a para-legal method of registering peaceful protest against the laws, the customs, and the practices which one finds contrary to the dictates of one's conscience.

In South Africa, Gandhi used satyagraha against the apartheid policy of the government. In India, he offered it for seeking redress of particular grievances, and for the wider purpose of attaining India's independence from alien British rule and feudal rule of over seven hundred princes. His recurrent satyagraha movements proved that satyagraha can be used for the vindication of a just, clear, unequivocal and impersonal public cause or issue. It can also be employed as an instrument of self-education and self-perfection. Commenting on the nature of Gandhi's satyagraha movements, Harry Prosch points out that Gandhi's satyagraha was an available and sometimes an effective means for securing a desired social change.

Gandhi's satyagraha clearly distinguishes between the action and its author, the deed and the doer. It shifts the emphasis from the doer to the deed so that both the satyagrahi and his opponent may address themselves to the solution of the problem rather than seek destruction of each other. Gandhi aims at the destruction of the evil not through the destruction of the evil-doer, but by

changing his mentality, by appealing to his conscience, so that he is *enabled to appreciate righteousness*. Like Tolstoy, he hates the sin, not the sinner. In *Harijan* he observes:

The idea underlying satyagraha is to *convert the wrongdoer, to awaken the sense of justice in him*, to show him also that without the co-operation, direct or indirect, of the wronged, the wrong-doer cannot do the wrong intended by him.

Satyagraha also invariably *transforms the civil-resisters and ennobles them*. Gandhi's satyagraha movements proved that *even the dumb and the illiterate participants became politically conscious and acquired a better sense of distinction between justice and injustice, right and wrong*. On the conclusion of the South African Satyagraha Struggle, Gandhi himself was a transformed person. To quote G. Ramachandran:

Deep within him (Gandhi) there stirred the first awareness of a great mission and we witness the rebirth of the man Gandhi into Gandhi the Mahatma. Mahatma literally means the great soul. That was an apt title which Dr. Annie Beasant and poet Rabindranath Tagore combined to confer on the transformed man from South Africa.

By precept and example, Gandhi proves that Satyagraha can tear tyranny and injustice to pieces and, yet, *"redeem alike the tyrant and his victim."*

Satyagraha also *quicken the conscience of the onlookers* and enables them to understand the respective positions of conflicting parties. It helps them to take a decision based on the proper understanding of the merits and demerits of the claims of the conflicting parties, which, in turn, facilitates an early and intelligent resolution of the conflict. Satyagraha is, thus, a process of conflict-resolution by mutual understanding and by educating public opinion through reason, discussion and self-suffering. To use Richard Gregg's oft repeated phrase, satyagraha *provides to all the parties to a conflict (the satyagrahi, the opponent and the on-lookers) a sort of "Mirror" in which every person sees himself as others see him*.

RANGE OF SATYAGRAHA

Gandhi's concept of satyagraha is comprehensive and universal. It can be employed by any man or woman who possesses the following qualifications or follows the leader who possesses them:

- a) He must be an actual sufferer or a *bona fide* invitee of the actual sufferers;

- b) He must be a man of Truth and Non-violence;
- c) He must be a *sthitpragya* – a man of steady wisdom;
- d) He must be a law-abiding citizen;
- e) He must be vigilant, disciplined and trained for the job;
- f) He must possess virtues like compassion and civility (internal and external) and abjure lust, anger, greed, infatuation, pride and falsehood;
- g) He must strive through reason, discussion and self-suffering to arrive at a solution which is agreeable to all;
- h) He must allow his cards to be examined and reexamined at all times and make reparation if any error is discovered; and
- i) He must refrain from taking illegitimate advantage of the opponent's weak point, or any step not warranted by the principles and circumstances of satyagraha.

Gandhi desires every satyagrahi to possess all these and similar qualifications. However, he does not debar others from participating, directly or indirectly, in various satyagraha activities so long as there is an expert to supervise and guide continuously and vigilantly these men of integrity, character and discipline.

Satyagraha can be practiced by a single individual or by a group. *Minority can offer it against majority and vice-versa.* It is essentially a collective act, as it is undertaken on behalf of a group or section of the society that feels aggrieved. *Most of Gandhi's satyagraha movements were collective,* except his Individual Satyagraha of 1940-41 and the fasts that he undertook as many as seventeen times.

About the persons or agencies against whom satyagraha can be employed, Gandhi has an open mind. He is of the view that satyagraha can be directed against any person or body of persons including the ones who are nearest and dearest to the prospective satyagrahi. In the latter case, satyagraha is of greater advantage to the satyagrahi, as the adversary is likely to be more eager to arrive at an agreement than loose a relation, friend or neighbour.

Satyagraha can be practiced *not only against the government but also against society as a whole,* as the latter may happen to be as wrong as the former. Gandhi does not, however, visualize the possibility of the opponent also being a satyagrahi as he did not come across a satyagrahi amongst his opponents. Consequently, he regards *counter-satyagraha an impossibility.*

Gandhi's satyagraha can be offered only on impersonal issues, *as selfishness and satyagraha can never go together.* He requires

the satyagrahis to offer satyagraha in the spirit of promoting a common cause, without even being conscious of their selfish interests.

It can, moreover, be employed only in those situations in which the satyagrahi is required to do something which looks *prima facie* unjust. Simone Panter-Brick confirms that in Gandhi's satyagraha struggles, "Action always followed the provocation of the government." Gandhi's decision to undertake satyagraha was every time justified by the opponent's offensive.

Satyagraha was conceived by Gandhi in an abnormal situation. It was born in South Africa in the context of extreme racialism and was nurtured in India in that of alien and feudal rule. He employed it during his five decade long public life as an anti-thesis to racialism, imperialism, feudalism and various other forms of tyranny and injustice. He justified its validity under these abnormal situations on the grounds that the democratic methods of agitation were not open to the people for fighting these instances of injustice. Racialism, feudalism and imperialism do not stand for truth and justice. Satyagraha is, therefore, a legitimate alternative for fighting injustice under these regimes.

Obversely, democracy stands for truth and justice; it implies self and good government and ensures to the people the right to challengee and even change the government. Satyagraha, too, stands for truth and justice and enables the people to challenge and change the government, if it is inefficient, incompetent, tyrannical or unjust. *The aims of democracy and satyagraha being the same*, should the conscientious-objectors be allowed to violate laws even under democracy? If so, how often? These questions have bothered, and even shocked the conscience of the people in the post-Gandhi era.

In reply to such questions, it may be said that *satyagraha is not conceived nor can it be used as an anti-thesis to democracy.* Nor, again, can it be treated as a substitute for the institutional framework of democracy, since it is only a mode of fighting injustice and not a means of instituting a government. Even as it is, it relies more on individual leaders than on governmental institutions. And, there too, it imposes exceptional burdens on the satyagrahi and demands unusual moral courage on his part. *Gandhi's own record as a satyagrahi is deeply impressive.* In fact, it seems that Gandhi's description of an ideal satyagrahi is a description of himself.

This, however, is not to deny satyagraha a place in

parliamentary democracy whose laws do, ordinarily, enjoy confidence and acceptance of the majority. Parliamentary democracy, after all, is no perfect system of government. It has its own weaknesses and drawbacks. A conscientious-objector may not always find the constitutional method of agitation as sufficient. Satyagraha, in such a situation, should be resorted to only if and when constitutionalism finally fails the individual's aspirations. Except, that it must be used sparingly and with utmost caution so that it does not result in violence or loss of peoples' respect for the duly constituted authority or its laws. This caution is essential despite the fact that the civil-disobedient's voluntary acceptance of punishment enhances, rather than erodes, peoples' respect for law. The very purpose of satyagraha is to substitute willing obedience for forced obedience and voluntary co-operation for involuntary co-operation. It is not aimed at replacing democracy by anarchy which it, ultimately, would if it is not properly used. Thus, as a supplement to constitutionalism and not as its antithesis or substitute, satyagraha has a definite place in democracy too.

SATYAGRAHA PRELIMINARIES

Satyagraha is conceived by Gandhi as an alternative to violence and cowardice but not of constitutionalism. A satyagrahi *must*, therefore, *exhaust the constitutional means available to him before launching on direct satyagraha action*. To exhaust constitutional means of redress, before causing an infringement of law, is a rule of prudence as well as of justice. It is a saviour of democracy. Through precept and example, Gandhi thus suggests that the following constitutional devices be exhausted before having recourse to satyagraha:

(i) **WAIT AND WATCH:** Gandhi believes that "patience and perseverance overcome mountains." His basic conviction is that everything comes right for those who watch, wait and pray.

(ii) **ASSESSMENT OF FACTS BY PUBLIC ENQUIRY:** A prudent satyagrahi must ascertain full facts of the case before launching on direct action. He should examine, sift, collate and analyze the grievances of the group on whose behalf the satyagraha is to be offered. He should also take into account the merits and demerits of the opponent's case.

(iii) **TOURS (INCLUDING WALKING-TOURS – PADYATRA):** A tour of the affected areas enables the satyagrahi to establish mass contact and to educate or create public opinion

in favor of peace and amity. Gandhi frequently undertook tours for educating masses about the evils of untouchability and communal frenzy.

(iv) **NEGOTIATIONS:** Those who feel aggrieved should appeal to the good sense of the opponent and simultaneously evoke public opinion in favor of justice and tranquility. He was of the considered view that negotiations backed by the imminent threat of satyagraha enable the concerned parties to give serious thought to the problem, which is the first requisite of an honourable settlement.

(v) **ARBITRATION:** Gandhi admits that *differences we shall always have. It is human*. What is important is that we must learn to settle them all, whether religious or others, by arbitration.

(vi) **PROMOTION OF COMMUNAL HARMONY:** Having realized that under the British system of government one has to show some strength before expecting justice, he puts premium on the strength that comes from unity and harmony among the people. He, thus, put Hindu-Muslim unity as a pre-condition to the attainment of Swaraj of self-government.

(vii) **FORMATION OF POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS:** Realizing the necessity and importance of the peoples' united effort for the redress of grievances, Gandhi not only established the Natal Indian Congress (1894), the South-African British Indian Committee (1906), and the Satyagraha Sabha (1919), but also actively participated in the activities of the Gujarat Sabha through which he conducted his Kheda Satyagraha (1918) and the Indian National Congress through which he conducted five of his mass satyagraha movements for securing India's freedom from alien British rule. Through Satyagraha Sabha, he had raised a corps of satyagrahis through whose active assistance he conducted India's struggle for freedom.

(viii) **PROTEST MEETINGS AND PROCESSIONS:** Gandhi is modern enough to recognize the importance of informing public-opinion through the media of mass meetings and street processions. What is necessary is the clearer understanding by the opponent of the essential points of the satyagrahi's cause and struggle. *The better your opponent understands your conduct and your cause, the less likely is he to use violent means.*

(ix) **SATYAGRAHA PREPAREDNESS:** Gandhi had realized that to exhaust the available constitutional means is not enough for launching on direct satyagraha action. It is equally

important to create a band of volunteers who would be permitted to offer satyagraha after they have undergone a sort of *training in the use of non-violent methods*. They should be taught about the *attitude* they should adopt *towards the opposite party*. They are to be told not only to *abstain from the use of violence* but also to stop the inadvertent occurrence of violence in any form and at any stage of satyagraha. All this necessitates a sort of regular education and training of all those who volunteer themselves for satyagraha. Gandhi, thus, recognizes the necessity of arranging training camps for the prospective satyagrahis. They are to be especially trained in the art of curbing lawlessness, controlling large crowds, and restoring order.

(x) **SATYAGRAHA PLEDGE:** Gandhi also gives *satyagraha-pledge* a definite place in his satyagraha preliminaries. He thinks that taking of vows is a sign of strength for it enables the people to undergo greater suffering for the sake of the cause they are pledged to serve. It strengthens the satyagrahis' will-power and befits them for the task they wish to embark on. All of Gandhi's collective satyagraha movements started with the participating volunteers solemnly and uniformly resolving:

- a) *not to submit to injustice;*
- b) *to refrain from violence to opponent's life, person and property; and*
- c) *to cheerfully suffer the consequences.*

(xi) **PRAYER TO GOD:** Prayer to God for self-purification is also an integral part of Gandhi's satyagraha preparedness. He believes that "prayer from the heart can achieve what nothing else can in this world". He maintains that it is through prayer to God *that the conscience of the opponent can be stirred* to make him see the rightness of the claims of those who invite suffering for conscience's sake.

(xii) **THE ULTIMATUM:** *The declaration and despatch of ultimatum marks the dividing line between the constitutional and the satyagraha methods.* Ultimatum is the satyagrahis' statement of minimum demands which the addressee is required to fulfill, within the specific time, and the non-fulfillment of which entails the threat of direct action.

SATYAGRAHA METHODS

Gandhi's main contribution to the theory of politics is his recommendation of a *modus operandi* for the conscientious-objectors. In the course of his non-violent struggles in South

Africa and India, he worked out a number of methods for correction of wrongs and conversion of wrong-doers. The methods one adopts must be in full consonance with the ends to be achieved. These must also be non-violent and in tune with time and circumstances.

During his long public career extending over a period of more than half a century, Gandhi employed and recommended the following methods for offering Satyagraha:

(i) **BANNED MEETINGS, DEMONSTRATIONS AND PROCESSIONS:** Holding of banned meetings, demonstrations and processions occupies a definite place in Gandhi's mass satyagraha movements. These are organized not only to register protest against the misdeeds of the opponent, but also to educate public opinion against injustice.

(ii) **CEREMONIAL MARCH:** Undertaking a ceremonial March in defiance of the prohibitory orders and, thereby, courting imprisonment is a very potent and drastic method of offering satyagraha. It dramatizes the issue and attracts more and more people for resisting injustice and tyranny. Gandhi adopted this method for the first time in the course of his South-African Satyagraha Movement by leading a ceremonial March on 6th November, 1913, from Charlestown to Dandee in Transvaal, without requisite entry permits. The second occasion arose during the Salt Satyagraha of 1930, when he started his *Dandi March* from Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi on the sea coast on 12th March, 1930.

(iii) **NATIONAL 'DAYS' AND 'WEEKS':** Observing of National 'Days' and 'Weeks' is to *record the nation's protest* against the reign of terror, to seek redress of public grievances, and to urge the government to fulfill its assurances.

(iv) **PAMPHLETS AND VIEWS-PAPERS:** Publication of pamphlets and views-papers is another important method of seeking redress of grievances, defying unwarranted restrictions on the freedom of press and challenging the government to suppress the civil resisters. This method is also employed *for removing causes of misunderstanding between the rulers and the ruled, promoting communal amity, seeking upliftment of backward classes, and mobilizing public opinion to bring home the deeper implications of satyagraha.* Gandhi's first pamphlet was popularly known as the *Green Pamphlet* and was formally entitled as *The Grievances of the British Indians in South Africa – An Appeal To The Indian Public.* This was followed by his

famous booklet, *Hind Swaraj*. In addition to these occasional leaflets, pamphlets, booklets and bulletins, he edited and sponsored three English weeklies, namely, *Indian Opinion* (1903–1914), *Young India* (1919–1931), and *Harijan* (1933–1948).

(v) **HARTALS:** Hartal means voluntary closure of shops and suspension of business usually for a symbolic period of 24 hours. Hartal is an outward expression of the community's disapproval of unwarranted laws and arbitrary orders.

(vi) **STRIKES:** Strike is the labour's instrument for seeking betterment of service conditions conducive to a desired standard of living. It was specifically this object that promoted Gandhi during his Ahmedabad Satyagraha to administer to the mill-workers an oath on 26th February, 1918, not to resume work until their grievances were redressed. Gandhi is, however, against strikes in public-utility services like railways, police, civil-services, post offices etc. Strike in such services puts the community, or at least a substantial section of it, to loss, harassment or inconvenience. Dislocation of these services dislocates public life.

(vii) **CIVIL-DISOBEDIENCE:** Civil Disobedience can be undertaken for *the deliberate breach of certain unmoral statutory enactments*, or as the symbolic non-violent revolt against the State. In either case, it does not reflect want of respect for the constituted authority. This underlying objective alone can make the satyagrahis adhere to their inner-voice. Thus conceived, civil-disobedience was offered by Gandhi and his co-workers in South Africa by *refusing to submit to compulsory re-registration*, by boycotting and picketing the permit offices, by *refusing to give finger-prints or thumb impressions*, by *hawking without licenses* or by declining to produce them when demanded, by trading without licenses and by *crossing into neighbouring provinces without registration certificates*. In India, civil disobedience was offered by him and his co-satyagrahis by violating laws regarding publication of prohibited literature, by *distilling salt from sea-water*, by *violating unjust orders of all sorts*, and by *cutting palm trees which were a source of revenue to the government*.

(viii) **NON-VIOLENT NON-CO-OPERATION:** The technique of non-violent non-co-operation is *an alternative to anarchy*. It is conceived by Gandhi as a positive force in as much as it means co-operation with all that is good. Gandhi's Non-violent Non-co-operation with the alien British Government was a total non-co-operation. The use of this

method in respect of a democratic government would necessarily be limited, for self-government is essentially based on the consent of majority. If a democratic government goes wrong, partial non-co-operation with it, is permissible, as total non-co-operation would destroy democratic institutions themselves.

(ix) **NO-TAX CAMPAIGN:** The Satyagrahis may try to *cut the very life line of the Government* by refusing to pay the taxes. The entire administration would come to a standstill for want of finances. This extreme method should, however, be resorted to only when no other way is left open and the only choice is between complete annihilation and total reformation. No-Tax campaign should, therefore, be launched only if and when the people have been psychologically prepared to undergo the sufferings and sacrifices which their refusal to pay taxes may involve.

(x) **COURTING IMPRISONMENT:** Inviting imprisonment by the deliberate breach of laws contrary to one's conscience is an effective mode of registering protest with the adversary. When people suffer for conscience's sake, their voluntary suffering creates public opinion unfavorable to the misdeeds of the oppressor and often forces his hands to grant justice.

Courting imprisonment became a frequent occurrence during Gandhi's Satyagraha Movements. He not only advised his co-satyagrahis and others to adopt this method, he himself courted imprisonment four times during his South African Satyagraha Movements and six times in the course of his Satyagraha campaigns in India, spending in various prisons a total period of 6 years, 4 months and 24 days.

(xi) **BOYCOTT:** Boycott is a sort of punishment and is conceived in a vindictive spirit. The object of the boycott of commodities, titles, persons and institutions is not only to lodge protest against but to *put pressure on the opposite party* in order ultimately to seek redress of grievances. It also puts *economic pressure* on the opponent in order to enable him to grant justice expeditiously.

(xii) **PEACEFUL PICKETING:** The purpose of peaceful picketing is also to put socio-politico-economic pressure on the government and simultaneously to create political consciousness and the swadeshi spirit amongst the masses. The picket's attitude even towards the alleged wrong-doers or "black-legs" is essentially non-violent. The picket is only to dissuade them from doing the intended wrong. He is not to coerce, insult or intimidate them.

(xiii) **PEACEFUL RAIDS:** Method of Peaceful Raids is an advance stage of boycott and peaceful picketing. The satyagrahi adopting this method is vindictive and in order to bring economic pressure and the pressure of public opinion on his opponent causes maximum harm to the latter's goods, though not to his person. It is peaceful in the sense that no injury is done to the person of the opponent. During Salt Satyagraha (1930), Peaceful Raids were made on various salt depots and raiders took away thousands of mounds of salt under showers of clubs and bullets.

(xiv) **PROTEST RESIGNATIONS:** To resign from an Assembly or Council as a mark of protest against the official policy is another method which found itself manifested during a number of satyagraha movements.

(xv) **FASTING (EVEN UNTO DEATH):** Fasting is perhaps the greatest and the most effective weapon in the satyagraha armoury. It is to be undertaken either for *self-purification* or *self-restraint* or for *appealing to the better nature of the opposite party* in order to make him reconsider his stand and realize his wrong. It may be undertaken to *check acts of violence*, to *remove bitterness* or even to purify political atmosphere. It, however, is to be employed only as "a species of tyaga", and never as a method of exercising undue pressure on the opposite party.

Fasting should, moreover, be undertaken only by an "expert" and by him, too, only according to his capacity to fast. It should be undertaken only on rare occasions, only as a last resort and only in obedience to the call of one's conscience. Conceived as such, fasting was undertaken by Gandhi on as many as seventeen different occasions, fasting for a total period of 138 days.

(xvi) **CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME:** The purpose of constructive programme is to *achieve economic self-sufficiency* and inculcation of swadeshi spirit amongst the masses. It can be employed also for the promotion of communal harmony and removal of social evils like untouchability, unemployment, and illiteracy. As a species of total non-co-operation with the alien British Rule in India, it was employed also to replace governmental institutions with the voluntary public (national) institutions.

It is through the advocacy and use of these methods that Gandhi delivered his supreme message of *substituting willing obedience for forced obedience, and voluntary co-operation for involuntary co-operation*. And, it is this message that has

vouch-safed for Gandhi the unique position in the galaxy of philosophers and reformers. Commenting on Gandhi's philosophy and technique of peaceful protest through Satyagraha, Diwakar rightly observes: "It is not Gandhiji who made satyagraha but satyagraha which has made Gandhi the Mahatma... If it is a matter of obligation between the two, it is satyagraha which has obliged Gandhiji rather than its reverse".

X

ETHICAL, SOCIAL & ECONOMIC IDEAS

Gandhi was not only a philosopher of the politics of peaceful protest, he was also a great social reformer. In the course of his six-decade long public career, he studied the social and economic system of India, identified its maladies and suggested the reforms which, he thought, would improve the quality of life.

ETHICAL & SOCIAL IDEAS

In order to rid the society of the narrow, sectarian and demeaning interpretations of scriptures, Gandhi sought to re-interpret the following notions and concepts and present them to the people as viable ideals:

DHARMA: In its restrictive sense, Dharma means religion. Gandhi asked the people to study and interpret religious scriptures, to practice and preach the religion of their choice and to pursue those religious practices which are conducive to good life and relevant to changing times and circumstances.

In its liberal sense, Dharma means *Duty*. All through his life, Gandhi asked the people to act according to their conscience, to do those things which appeal to one's reason and conscience and contribute to the welfare of all.

VARNA: Varna means economic class. Gandhi accepts Manu's classification of people in terms of their economic functions: (i) *Brahmans*: the ruling elite, the priests and the teachers; (ii) *Kshatriyas*: the soldiers; (iii) *Vaishyas*: Businessmen; and (iv) *Shudras*: Manual workers and domestic servants. He does not, however, accept this classification as a 'closed system,' restricting one's choice of occupation to that of

one's parents, family or class. One may find his family occupation more suitable and convenient as it provides some sort of an infra-structure. However, should one feel tempted to take an occupation different from that of his family or class, he should be free to do so. In fact, Gandhi feels that Manu's classification itself provided for the freedom to change one's profession, occupation, trade or business.

It was a subsequent distortion of Hindu religion, when vested interests closed their ranks to others, assumed the status of supremacy and reduced the other classes to a level of inferiority and indignity. In course of time, the economic classes got degenerated into a caste system which was so closed as to deny not only the freedom of occupation, but also the freedom of interaction. The Shudras, i.e., the manual workers, the sanitation workers and the domestic servants were reduced to the level of 'untouchables' by birth.

Gandhi considered the caste system as immoral, inhuman and unjust – and devoted the last two decades of his public life for the liberation and welfare of the so-called 'untouchables' who had suffered indignity, discrimination and deprivation for centuries. He called them the *Harijans*, the sons of God, and asked the State and the society to discharge their duty to restore them their status of equality and to work for their welfare. The Constitution of India has implemented Gandhi's advice, in letter and spirit, by reserving for these classes an adequate number of seats in legislatures, schools and jobs, making special provisions for their welfare, and declaring the practice of 'untouchability' in any form unconstitutional and punishable as a cognizable offense in accordance with law.

ASHRAMA: Ashrama refers to the stages of man's life. The Hindu scriptures divide man's full life of 100 years into 4 stages or ashramas of 25 years each: (i) **BRAHMACHARYA-ASHRAM**, stage of celibacy and student life: 0–25 years; (ii) **GRIHASTHA-ASHRAM**, stage of family life – the most productive and active period of man's life: 26–50 years; (iii) **VANAPRASTHA-ASHRAM**, stage of retirement: 51–75 years; and (iv) **SANYAS-ASHRAM**, stage of renunciation: 76–100 years. Gandhi accepts this division as rational and scientific. He would like the active participants in political life, the voters as well as the candidates, to be from within the second stage of man's life, i.e., from 26–50 years, so that the political system remains dynamic and does not lose its sense of direction.

However, in order to put a premium on the capacity of the youth, he would be ready to lower the age of voters and candidates from 26 years to 18 years, but would in no case go beyond 50 years, as he believed that a government run by old people is old, it lacks dynamism.

NISHKAMA-KARMA: Nishkama Karma is Gita's gospel of selfless action. Gandhi would like the people to discharge their duties and perform their obligations willingly, voluntarily and cheerfully. They should do so for the sake of doing it. Only by performing their obligations first, they can expect to earn the corresponding rights. He would expect the people to perform their obligations without an eye on the rights. One should perform his obligations in a missionary spirit, as his duty to fellowmen.

PUNARJANMA: Punarjanma means the cycle of rebirth. Gandhi subscribed to the Hindu theory of rebirth. He thought that man is born again and again until he attains the stage of atonement, salvation, *moksha* or *nirvana*, i.e. until the soul gets merged with God. And, in order to attain atonement, one has to continue to act in strict accordance with the voice of his soul, which is the spark of the ultimate reality of God.

JIVADAYA: Jivadaya means compassion for everything living. And, it is compassion not only for fellow human beings, but, for the lower animals, the plants and the like as well. Gandhi considers it a duty of man as a human being to protect, to love and to benefit those who come in his contact. Special care should be taken to benefit those who need or seek our protection. the 'have nots' should be benefitted by their association with the 'haves', weak by the strong, poor by the rich, illiterate by the educated.

ENDS & MEANS: Gandhi reverses Machiavelli's dictum: "End Justifies the Means." To Gandhi, means alone justify the end. In fact, the end can not be separated from the means. The end is but the last process of the processes of means. Our end would be good only if and to the extent our means are good. As the means, so the end. Noble ends demand noble means.

ETHICS/RELIGION AND POLITICS: Gandhi observes in his *Autobiography* that: "those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means." Here, by religion Gandhi means the universally acceptable rules of morality or ethics which are common to all religions. He believes that politics can remain pure and beyond corruption only if and

in so far as it is based on ethical principles. He, thus, stands for the spiritualization of politics.

In terms of religion, however, Gandhi's preference is for a 'secular' state and not for theocracy. He would not like the state to recognize any religion as state religion. He wanted the state to treat all religions at *par*. The state should ensure to all its people freedom of conscience, liberty of belief, faith and worship and the right to practice, preach and propagate the religion of one's choice. He would neither like the state to interfere in religious matters, nor allow religion to meddle with politics. The domains of both the religion and politics are mutually exclusive.

Gandhi, thus, stands at once for the spiritualization and secularization of politics.

LIBERATION & UPLIFTMENT OF WOMEN: Gandhi was pained to find that woman had traditionally been the victim of *man's conservatism, lust and anger*. The birth of a daughter was considered *a curse of God*, a symbol of God's *displeasure*. She was, consequently, humiliated and harassed. She was *caged in home, covered by veil*, denied education and deprived of her status of equality with man.

He believed that woman, like man, was a creature of God, *gifted with conscience and reason*. In all respects, she was *co-equal of man*. In her *civility, gentleness, kindness, love, affection, toleration and sacrifice*, she was *even superior to man*. Man had no divine, social or legal sanction to arrogate to himself a status of superiority and domination and degrade women to a level lower than himself.

Gandhi urged man to liberate woman from her bondage to man, and stop her use as *a symbol of sex, a source of pleasure and a servant of the household*. At the same time, he asked the woman to go to school and to earn her livelihood. Education and economic independence would liberate her of her bondage to men and enable her to live with dignity and respect as a human being.

Woman has also a unique function to perform as a wife and a mother. She is to *bear and rear children*. She should continue to give, in abundance, her love and affection to her children and educate them into the alphabets of religion, music, painting, arts, languages, mathematics and games befitting their tender age. It is for the performance of this unique role that the Hindu scriptures have called her *GRIHALAKSHAMI*, the goddess of the household and she should continue to live up to that image. This she would better be able to do, if she herself is educated, is

economically independent of her husband and treats and is treated by her husband as a friend and equal partner in life.

Gandhi would urge the society and the state to prohibit discrimination on ground of sex, accord women their status of equality and make special provision for their upliftment and welfare. In order to bring them at par with men, the state should give them priority in education, jobs and legislatures.

LIBERATION AND REHABILITATION OF DEVADASIS: Gandhi also worked for the abolition of a number of immoral and inhuman customs and practices. One such custom was known as Devadasi. Unable or unwilling to bear the cost of bearing and rearing their unwanted daughters, the parents used to take them to the temples at a very young age and offer them to God as His permanent slaves. They were brought up by the priests who trained them as singers and dancers for the recreation of God. In fact, they were used as prostitutes by the priests and their friends and then left to live a life of shame and degradation. And, all this was done to please God Almighty. Gandhi asked the state to prohibit by law this immoral and inhuman custom, urging it, at the same time, to educate, to employ and to rehabilitate the women who suffered humiliation and harassment for no fault of theirs.

WARDHA SCHEME OF EDUCATION.

The Wardha Scheme of Education provides for a seven-year free and compulsory vocational education for all. Under this scheme, every child, boy or girl, within the age-group of 7-14 years would receive free school education. This education would be imparted through some vocation in which a child would be properly trained so that once he comes out of the school, he is able to earn his livelihood and is not economically dependent on anyone whatsoever.

- Gandhi was against all compulsion, coercion or violence. However, in view of the highly abnormal situation created by stark illiteracy in India, he allowed the state to make education compulsory until the scar of illiteracy is removed from the face of India. Once that is achieved, there would be no need to make education compulsory as people would have developed the tradition of education.

So far as higher education is concerned, the students would still get the education free. However, at this stage education would be provided only to those who deserve it, by making sufficient

grades at the qualifying examinations. So far as the cost of education is concerned, Gandhi would like the private sector to share it with the government almost in proportion to their respective requirements. The government would pay for the higher education and training only for as many men as it would need.

In order to bring women, untouchables and other socially backward and economically deprived sections of the society, Gandhi would require the state to make special arrangements on a priority basis, so as to bring them at par with the rest of the society.

ECONOMIC IDEAS

The economic reforms suggested by Gandhi were in the context of India's poverty and unemployment caused by the drain of India's economic resources by the alien British rulers for a period of over three and a half centuries. Some of his suggestions were, however, relevant, only to the situations he faced, though others continue to be relevant even today.

SWADESHI: Swadeshi means self-reliance. It denotes *love for everything indigenous*. It means preference for Indian institutions, Indian goods, Indian clothes, Indian customs and practices. During India's struggle for freedom, it meant boycott of alien British cloth and adoption of hand-spun and hand-woven cloth. It meant Indian political institutions like Panchayats or Indian village councils. It meant Indian judicial system in place of the British. It meant rejection of everything alien and adoption of everything Indian instead. That is what he thought was most essential for the economic development of the nation and for generating resources enough to wipe out poverty and unemployment.

ECONOMIC TRUSTEESHIP: Gandhi was not only the greatest democrat of his times, but also a gentle socialist. He believed in the possibility of bridging the gulf between the rich few and the poor many. He would, however, not use violence or force to deprive the rich of their riches. He would rather appeal to the conscience of the rich to keep as much part of their wealth as is necessary for their own decent living and divert the rest for the welfare of the poor and the needy. The rich would become the trustees of their surplus wealth and use that surplus wealth for welfare activities like schools and colleges, hospitals and dispensaries, orphanages and rehabilitation homes or for

whatever purpose. This way Gandhi would not only have an equitable distribution of wealth; but would also be able to ensure everyone an equitable share therein. And, such a massive socio-economic change would be brought about without having recourse to the way of violence, bloodshed or destruction. And, this is possible if one makes a sincere and an honest effort in this direction.

BREAD-LABOUR: Gandhi desired that everyone should earn the basic necessities of one's life (food, clothing and shelter) by the sweat of one's brow, that is, by his physical labour. He wanted that every able-bodied person must work according to his capacity and do the work of his choice. No one should claim the right of eating without performing the physical work he can. He insisted on the law of "bread-labour" for he believed that it is "a law of God that the body must be fully worked and utilized". In other words, "the needs of the body must be supplied by the body". However, he had no hesitation in asserting that the lazy ones, i.e., the do-nothing fellows "need and must starve".

CONCLUSION

It was essentially through the socio-economic reforms of these types that Gandhi wanted to bring about social and economic transformation without having recourse to violence. These were the items which were right on top of Gandhi's constructive programme through which he was eager to eliminate the scars of social evils, like illiteracy, unemployment and poverty from the face of India. The society reformed on these lines and through the way of non-violence, by the voluntary effort of the people themselves, would be a society which would not only strike a balance between tradition and modernity, but would also emerge as a self-reliant entity of which every citizen would be proud. And, this was the positive or the constructive aspect of Gandhi's struggle for India's Swaraj or independence.

XI

GANDHI'S IMPACT ON DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

Martin Luther King Jr. Was attracted towards the political philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi first as a student at Crozer Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where he attended a series of lectures on Gandhi's life and works delivered by Dr. Mordecai W. Johnson and Dr. A.J. Muste in September, 1948. King found Gandhi's message "so profound and electrifying" as to rush for the literature on Gandhi. He came across some half-a-dozen books whose study gave him a deeper understanding of Gandhi's thought and action.

Dr. King came to accept Gandhi's gospel of Nonviolent Direct Action as an acceptable and effective mode of fighting injustice and discrimination. And, he got his first opportunity to experiment with Gandhi's philosophy and strategy on December 1, 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama, where and when Mrs. Rosa Parks had refused to relinquish her bus seat to a white man and was arrested. Dr. King immediately mobilized the congregation of his Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, and the local clergy to fight out racial segregation and discrimination by adopting, adapting and even inventing the manifold techniques of Nonviolent Direct Action.

Like Gandhi, his political mentor, Dr. King was also influenced by non-conformist Christianity. Dr. King was not only a true Christian but also a Baptist minister, presiding over the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, and the Ebenezer Baptist Church on Auburn Avenue, in Atlanta, Georgia, almost in quick succession. Acknowledging the inspiration of Christianity and Gandhi, Dr. King once wrote: "Gandhi was the first person in history to lift the love ethic of Jesus above mere interaction between individuals."

Abraham Lincoln's conception of Democracy, Henry David Thoreau's gospel of Civil Disobedience and Leo Tolstoy's Kingdom of God Is Within You, were the other sources which left their indelible imprint on the political and social philosophies of both Mahatma Gandhi and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

CONCEPT OF HUMAN NATURE:

Dr. King found himself in agreement with Gandhi's conception of Human Nature as Divine, Rational and Social. He believed that man as a creature of God possesses the spark of God in the form of his soul. As a rational being he is capable of selecting from amongst the available alternatives the one he considers best for himself and his society. And, as a social being, man has the innate capacity of submitting to social restraints. Dr. King believed that all human beings, irrespective of the colour of their skin and the texture of their hair, are created equal, possess the faculties of soul and reason in common and have an equal right to co-exist. As such, he thought it to be possible for both the White man and the Black man to sit together on the table of brother-hood to iron out their differences.

Tolstoy had inspired both Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. King to have faith in the ability of the Black man to appeal to the conscience and reason of the White man and that of the latter to respond thereto sooner or later. Gandhi and King did not, therefore, "hate" their opponents, they returned their hatred with love. They distinguished the doer from the deed and made the questionable deeds of their opponents as targets of their attack. In this way, they were able to win over their opponents and transform and convert them from their enemies into friends.

CONCEPT OF STATE

Like Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. King, too, subscribed to the decentralization of political power and equitable distribution of economic resources. They thus came to uphold that the State should be federal, but also that federal State should lead to federal society which respects distinctions based on caste, colour, creed, religion, sex or place of birth.

As men of religion, both Mahatma Gandhi and Rev. King believed in the spiritualization and secularization of politics. While the state should refrain from interfering with citizens' freedom of conscience and their liberty of belief, faith and worship, the politicians must themselves observe the universally

acceptable norms of morality and ethics, must neither discriminate against any section of their people, and must not deny them their cherished goals of Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.

Abraham Lincoln had inspired both Gandhi and King to subscribe to his conception of Democracy as the "Government of the people, by the people, for the people," as a political system which not only allows everyone an equal opportunity of participation in the political process, but also equal beneficiary thereof. That is why, all through their political careers, both Gandhi and King kept explaining the significance of Lincoln's proclamation: "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal."

CONCEPT OF NON-VIOLENCE

Dr. King accepted Gandhi's thesis that war and violence have failed through history to solve human problems. Violence only multiplies violence. It is, therefore, to be matched by its opposite force, non-violence. If violence is not matched by violence, it would die for want of nutrition. In Gandhi's Nonviolent Direct Action, Dr. King found the realization of the Christian concept of returning love for hatred and the need of self-sacrifice instead of inflicting suffering on the opponent. He became firmly convinced that "the Black leadership must prepare to suffer as Gandhi did." And, to emulate Gandhian techniques consciously, he suffered, without retaliation, all through his Civil Rights Movements. He faced criticism, defamation, dogs, police, jail, Ku Klux Klan, bomb attacks and finally an assassination as cruel as Gandhi had suffered. Yet, he did not hate his opponents. He believed in the efficacy of non-violence to transform enemies into friends.

METHODS OF SATYAGRAHA

As effective supplements to the available devices of democracy, Dr. King accepted many of Gandhi's para-legal methods of peaceful protest and adopted and adapted them liberally in the course of his fight against racial discrimination. These included, inter alia, the following:

- i) Religious Congregations-cum-Protest Meetings;
- ii) Ceremonial March – like Montgomery March, Selma March, especially March on Washington which was marked by his "I Have a Dream" sermon from the foot steps of Lincoln Memorial;

- iii) Boycott and Picketing of segregated buses, schools, hospitals, lunch counters, pubs, bars, hotels, washrooms, swimming pools, gas stations, churches and stores;
- iv) Publication of posters, leaflets, pamphlets and views and news bulletins;
- v) Prayer to God Almighty to enable the White men to see their injustice and to enable the Black men have courage to fight injustice, discrimination and segregation without having recourse to violence;
- vi) **CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE:** Dr. King disobeyed and asked his people to disobey the discriminatory laws, orders and practices for he believed that submission to injustice is cowardice. He taught his people to rise to their full stature as human beings and fight out discrimination and segregation once and for all and in all fields of social and political activity, appealing at the same time not to resort to violence.
- vii) **COURTING IMPRISONMENT:** Dr. King led his people, including the fellow clergy and the congregation, to disobey the discriminatory laws, orders and practices and in that process they were often put in jails, where they suffered additional humiliation, harassment and indignities. Like Gandhi, Dr. King too found the jail a congenial place to "rethink his philosophy and his goals and assess his personal qualifications, his attitudes and beliefs."

At the same time, Dr. King *did not find the following methods* adopted and advocated by Gandhi to be *suitable*, i.e. in accordance with the time and circumstances prevailing in America of 1950's and 60's:

- i) *Non-payment of Taxes*, advocated both by Thoreau and Gandhi;
- ii) *Fasting*, advocated and adopted by Gandhi.

Nevertheless, Dr. King worked out some unique methods of Non-violent Direct Action which were essential to fight the varied manifestations of segregation and discrimination. The *methods invented by Dr. King* were the following:

- i) SIT INS: inside and outside schools, hospitals, hotels, offices, and gas stations;
- ii) STAND INS: at lunch counters, restaurants, pubs, and bars;
- iii) WADE INS: in swimming pools;
- iv) KNEEL INS: in churches;

- v) . **FREEDOM RIDES:** to provide alternate modes of transportation to the people boycotting segregated buses.

CONCLUSION

Through the active and frequent use of these para-legal methods of peaceful protest and pressure, Dr. King, like his mentor Mahatma Gandhi, was able to:

- i) prepare and lead the Blacks to fight out segregation and discrimination;
- ii) appeal to the conscience and reason of the Whites to see the enormity of their injustice;
- iii) make the Congress of the United States enact the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the Voting Rights Act in 1965.
- iv) soften the attitude of Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson.
- v) make the U.S. District Courts and the Supreme Court of the United States declare the segregating and discriminatory laws unconstitutional and void;
- vi) have the process of desegregation and social and emotional integration started.

Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy and strategy enabled Dr. King to reach the mountain top, to see and show the promised land and initiate the slow but sure process of non-violent social change. Like Mahatma Gandhi, he was the apostle of Truth and Non-violence and a Drum Major for Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. He had a dream that his children would "no longer be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." He lived up to Gandhi's prophecy that the relevance of Non-violent Direct Action to the context of democracy would one day be proved by an American Negro. And, it was established by Dr. King, the day he was able to make the Black man realize that he was 'somebody' and that 'someday' it would be possible for him to live together with the White man and meet him on the table of brotherhood.

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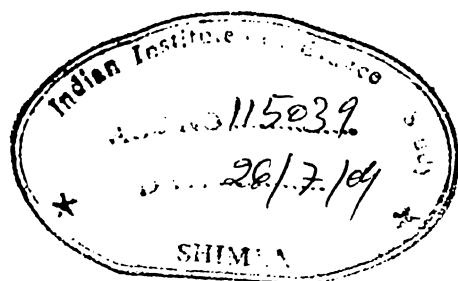
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