
UNIT 13 GANDHI'S VIEWS ON HEALTH

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13.1 INTRODUCTION

Gandhi's views on health including diet reforms, vegetarianism and other issues are as fascinating as his ideas on the most important political or social issues. One of the unique features of this experiment is that Gandhi closely related these as essential conditions towards harmonious and compassionate way of life. Gandhi's strict adherence to these may be understood from two dimensions. One relates to his belief that certain dietary aspects are an inherent component of the Hindu culture and the other relates to treading the path of a moral and spiritual life. The influence of the Vaishnava and Jain traditions is quite implicit in Gandhi's experiments with vegetarianism. It is categorised into three stages: 'the first stage is characterised by an aversion to the breaking of vows, the second by a fuller appreciation of vegetarianism and the third by his desire for a life of simplicity and self-control' (Rao,S, p.444). This Unit highlights some of the experiments carried on by Gandhi in vegetarianism, diet reforms and nature cure and how he related his experiments to a higher level of individual achievement.

Aims and Objectives

After reading this Unit, you would be able to understand

- The background aspects of Gandhi's vegetarianism
- Gandhi's immense faith in nature cure methods and
- How he relates these experiments to achieve health and harmony in life.

13.2 GANDHI'S VEGETARIANISM

It is necessary to understand the background of Gandhi's experiments and adherence to vegetarianism and other key aspects of health before we understand the interconnectedness of these experiments with that of Satyagraha. The soul-force, he felt, requires an enormous strength and this is rooted through self-control and self-restraint with regard to one's diet. Rather this was viewed as a beginning of *sattvik* life and an attempt towards greater self-realisation.

Three important phases that relate to this aspect include his family, his stay in England and his desire to lead an austere life. Gandhi was oriented towards vegetarianism in his early life due to parental influence. On a sporadic rebellious moment, he was misguided into having meat by one of his friends who convinced him (Gandhi) that eating meat was a necessary condition to remain strong and healthy. He indulged in this for a year after which the guilt of cheating his parents overpowered him and made him resolve never to touch meat in his life again. Further, before leaving for England, he was administered an oath not to touch wine, women and meat; it is commendable that Gandhi never violated this oath in his lifetime. Secondly, his discovery of vegetarian movement in England and his subsequent membership in the vegetarian society of England made him take it up as a lifetime mission. Salt's 'Plea for Vegetarianism' was one of the influencing factors towards this direction apart from his love for other beings. Through his membership and writings, he greatly contributed to its cause and often contested the widespread belief that vegetarian food contributed to the weak body constitution of the Hindus. His religious beliefs added to his fervour. His views were further accentuated when his family too showed firmness in their resolve towards vegetarianism by refusing to take anything except vegetarian diet even in their severe sickness, as against the doctor's advice to do so. Thirdly, Gandhi came to the conclusion during the satyagraha struggle that as a part of quest for truth and ahimsa, one needs to control their passions and adopt a *sattvik* life. This, he felt, was possible by adhering to simplicity and self-control in diet and in this, fasting and restricting diet became more embedded in his scheme of things.

Gandhi closely relates ahimsa and religion with his diet experiments. His Vaishnava way of life convinced him that Hinduism is antithetical to eating meat and also as a firm believer in non-violence, he abhorred the killing of animals in order to please one's palate. The unity of all life implies the love for all life including the life of all living beings, whether human or not. Having the capacity to reason and think, a man is bound to respect other creatures too in this creation of God, thus denying to himself the right to take away the life of an animal. For example, he pleaded for cow protection. This moral aspect, combined with harmonious living, is what constitutes the essential foundation of truth.

Gandhi had a firm moral conviction that 'as a man eats, so shall he become'. He wanted each individual to reason and come to conclusion as to what suits his palate. It is neither to be based on faith nor to be based on other's influence. Through experimentation, an individual subjects himself to self-control and non-craving for delicious food. For such a seeker, 'restraint in quantity and quality is as essential as restraint in thought and speech' (Autobiography, p.273).

Gandhi attributed moral basis to his concept of vegetarianism. He disapproved converting from vegetarian to meat-eating simply on health grounds. The moral consists in adhering to vegetarianism at all costs. A deviation means selfishness and a 'selfish basis would not serve the purpose of taking a man higher and higher along the paths of evolution' (Moral

Basis for Vegetarianism, p.26). Gandhi gives us the example thus: 'the basis of my vegetarianism is not physical, but moral. If anybody said that I should die if I did not take beef-tea or mutton, even under medical advice, I would prefer death. That is the basis of my vegetarianism'. Being a food fetish and giving in to temptations of palate too serve no purpose and act as obstacles in our quest for truth, for it negates the spirit of purpose and also ruins us bodily. Gandhi further adds that, 'man is more than meat. It is the spirit in man for which we are concerned. Therefore, vegetarians should have the moral basis—that a man was not born a carnivorous animal, but born to live on the fruits and herbs that the earth grows'. Gandhi argues that we should be concerned more with the moral consequences of being vegetarian rather than physical consequences; he laments that man fails to see the reasoning in this and continues to consume meat.

13.3 KEY TO HEALTH

Gandhi constructively indulged in reading and writing during the long detentions he spent in prisons during the freedom struggle years. On one such detention in 1942 in the Aga Khan Palace in Poona, Gandhi spent his time writing a treatise on various aspects of health. Aptly titled as 'Key to Health', it gives us a deep insight into Gandhi's knowledge on the subject and his experiments with diet for a better health and disposition. By observing the prescribed rules himself and by prescribing them to others, Gandhi thus 'unlocked the gates leading him to health'.

Gandhi emphasised that 'man has come into the world in order to serve God and his creation. Keeping this point of view in front of him, man acts as a guardian of his body. It becomes his duty to take such care of his body as to enable it to practice ideal of service to the best of its ability' (Key to Health, p.3). A healthy body leads to a healthy mind and a healthy disposition thus enables a man to do the tasks assigned to him. Gandhi defines a healthy man as the one whose body is free from disease, carries on his normal activities without fatigue and whose mind and senses are in state of harmony and poise. It is imperative to have a thorough knowledge of one's body and health to maintain certain high standards of health. The importance assigned to the elements i.e. earth, water, ether, light and air has been clearly reiterated by Gandhi in his discourses and he duly stresses on its right use through self-discipline and restraint and service to others. Gandhi advises us to refrain from abusing it for selfish purposes and self-indulgence. He likens the body to a 'machine that depends on the harmonious activity of the various component parts, where if even one of the essential parts is out of order, it comes to a halt'.

13.3.1 Food Values and Diet

In his opening lines on 'Moral Basis of Vegetarianism', Gandhi opined that man requires food as much as he needs air and water. When food is considered as life, it is to be healthy and easy to digest. While the medical fraternity recommends both vegetable and animal food (meat), there is also an equally strong opinion that the physiological and anatomical evidence shows that man is best suited for vegetarian food.

Regarding food, Gandhi appealed for vegetarian food, consisting mainly of fruits (fresh as well as dry) and vegetables. He advocated vegetarian diet for digestion purposes. His contempt for meat and milk stems from his belief that they bring with them the defects of animal from which they are derived. They too are afflicted by diseases and therefore, the consumption of the meat would spell doom for health. Later, departing from his original opinion, Gandhi included in his scheme of diet milk (especially of goat) and milk-

products such as curds and butter for protein value. He hoped that with some useful research, a scientist can surely suggest a vegetable as a supplement to milk and meat. Without this, man will continue to consume both, thus endangering not only his health but also the life of the animal.

Gandhi viewed cereals as necessary but not to include in the meals as they contain high amounts of starch. While sieving of the flour has to be avoided, for the simple reason that it removes vital salts and vitamins, rice need not necessarily has to be polished. Cereals need proper cleansing and to remove inedible portion, rice has to be pounded. For an effective digestion, proper mastication of the food is necessary. It ensures a thorough mixing of food and saliva, which is vital for digestion. Whole-wheat flour ground in one's own *chakki* is superior and healthy since it contains bran.

While there is widespread belief that pulses, beans and lentils should be consumed by all, in reality it is required only for those who do manual work and those who cannot afford to drink milk and cannot do without pulses. Pulses are much harder to digest and have to be taken in smaller amounts. Many a time, even the availability of fruits and vegetables is not easy; a fair amount of leafy vegetables is necessary for health reasons and should be consumed in raw state and any cooking would destroy its natural good taste. Fruits and milk for breakfast gives full satisfaction. A liberal amount of fresh fruit and fresh vegetables form the main part of our diet. Fresh fruits may be home-grown like wild berries, which may be used for local consumption.

A certain amount of fat is necessary for the body which may be acquired from pure ghee or fresh oil. Gandhi considered the availability of adulterated ghee and oil as matter a shame and sorrow. The preference for sweet things, milk puddings and milk sweets was highly disapproved by him and the ghee used in making such items was nothing but thoughtless extravagance. They are not only unnecessary but also harmful except when they are taken in minimum quantity.

Gandhi also advocated the use of honey and gur in daily intake of food for they make healthy substitutes to refined sugar. Gandhi also favoured the western method of gathering honey, which is done in a cleaner and not forceful manner. Gur is an important product that can be taken up by villagers without which their children may be deprived of the stamina. The making and usage of gur is also economically viable for the villagers.

Regarding the use of condiments, Gandhi considered salt as a necessary ingredient for the body that needs to be supplemented in small quantities. But he was averse to the use of spices like chillies, pepper, mustard and asafoetida as they cater mainly to the palate. These condiments destroy the natural flavour and purity of the vegetables and food thus making it unfit for consumption.

Gandhi sternly forbade the intake of tea and coffee for their harmful results. Since the tea leaves contain harmful elements of tannin, they affect the mucous lining of stomach and intestine, thus leading to serious digestive ailments. He was equally disinclined towards coffee and cocoa as they provide no healthy benefits. Instead his prescription for a healthy nourishing drink was honey and lemon with hot water as a substitute for tea and coffee.

13.3.2 Five Elements

Gandhi stressed the significance of five elements in the working of the human body, the impact of which is crucial for our sustenance.

- 1) The air ensures necessary ventilation and purification to our body and for this, one has to know the art of breathing. The air should be fresh, and one needs to cultivate the habit of sleeping in the open to derive maximum benefit. The choice of a suitable locality and house, though, is limited, one has to insist upon the house being well-lighted and well-ventilated.
- 2) Nature provides us with ample amount of water and to keep healthy, one must take pure water. Gandhi advises the use of boiled water for a perfect health and is to be carried with us during our travels. Gandhi strictly forbade and considered unfit the using of water from shallow wells and or deep wells with a staircase leading down to water level. The appearance or taste of water is no visible proof of their purity.
- 3) Ether (or Akash) simply connotes a vacant space or empty space surrounding the earth. This empty space is filled with air and is necessary for maintaining or regaining our health. Gandhi feels that this infinite nature enables us to make a contact with the spatial elements, which in turn contribute to improvement in health, contentment and peace of mind. Resting under this blue canopy, he argues, will have a soothing effect on mind and purge any evil or impurity in mind.
- 4) The use of earth in the form of mud collected from its surface was considered as an effective health medicine for bowel movements, headaches, boils, fever and as a cure for scorpion bite. The Ashrams were experimenting grounds where the soil was dried, pounded and passed through sieve for various medication purposes.
- 5) Unlike other elements, the use of sunlight- a source of heat and light- was the least used and neglected. The sun-baths act as general tonics for health and accelerate the metabolism. Gandhi felt that exposure to the morning sun is one of the fastest remedies to tuberculosis.

13.4 NATURE CURE

Nature cure, Gandhi explains, 'is an ideal mode of life and presupposes ideal living conditions in towns and villages. The name of God is the hub around which the Nature Cure system revolves'. Some of the astounding ideas of Gandhi on nature cure methods derive from his own faith on the system and also from the creative ideas drawn from Just's 'Return to Nature'. Gandhi relied on nature cures even for severest of ailments; he conducted some of the consistent experiments, often on the verge of risk but emerged successful owing to faith and providence. His Autobiography depicts some interesting instances where he refused to give up his faith regarding nature cure treatments. His family complied with his methods and his everlasting faith in God made him sail through some of the worst crises. Instances may be recalled the way he treated his son's fractured hand or nursing back his wife's health. As seen in the earlier section, Gandhi had firm faith in the use of five elements and often recommended them to the inmates of his Ashrams. He even personally supervised and nursed some of the patients to good health with much consistency. He was averse to knocking on the medical doctor's door for small and severe ailments. He considered doctors as those professionals who make a 'show of their knowledge and charge exorbitant fees; their preparations, which are intrinsically worth a few pence, cost shillings. The populace, in its credulity and in the hope of ridding itself of some disease, allows itself to be cheated'. He also strongly felt that doctors induced us to indulge, which in turn, have incapacitated us to lose control over minds and unfit to render service. Gandhi's adherence to nature cure and reliance on the five elements is

a result of the profound care he attaches to human body and health. With literally no practical guidance from anyone except himself, he experimented with diet regulations and long hours of walk to maintain perfect health. Some of the methods as adopted by him are given in the following paragraphs.

13.4.1 Hydrotherapy

Kuhne's book on Nature Cure and especially the recommendations of the hydrotherapy had a telling impact on Gandhi. The experiments with hydrotherapy included hip baths, friction baths, and even the use of wet sheet packs. Gandhi's observations consisted of a positive impact on the patients suffering from insomnia and other diseases. Gandhi recommended wet sheet packs to patients suffering from high fever, small pox and skin problems. Gandhi also brought to the fore the therapeutic effects of hot water and the use of iodine as effective cures on swollen and bruised areas. Even the scorpion bites have been treated with hydrotherapy and Gandhi found it to be the most useful method of ensuring quick relief to the patient. Likewise, Gandhi was quick to take up the remedial effects of steam, a valuable therapeutic agent in cases of rheumatism and joint pains. A traditional method of steam bath, which is cost effective, has been described in detail in his treatise on Nature Cure. Gandhi never once regretted his decision to adopt nature cure methods especially the earth and water treatments. He believed that 'a well-regulated diet, water and earth treatment and similar household remedies' can work wonders; the one who cannot recuperate without doctor's advice, he felt, not only curtails his life by becoming the slave of his body instead of remaining its master, loses self-control and ceases to be a man'.

13.4.2 Ramanama and Nature Cure

In one of the instances as mentioned in Gandhi's Autobiography, one may take note of Latha Maharaj of Bileshwar, who was said to have got cured of leprosy not by any medicine but by applying bilva leaves and Ramanama. The chanting of Ramanama, as enunciated by one of his caretakers, had been an unfailing habit in Gandhi's life. Ramanama was not only a 'surest remedy for all the ills but also meant deriving help from an incomparable power', which is capable of removing all pain. Gandhi clarifies that each individual may choose the name of God in a form that appeals to him the most.

Through constant contemplation on God and a strict observance of rituals along with scriptural readings man is capable of attaining a balanced state of mind that would help in overcoming various obstacles. It is this faith that stood Gandhi in difficult times. It would be pertinent to quote what he said in this context: 'when a man comes to that complete living faith in the Unseen power and has become free from passion, the body undergoes internal transformation. It needs constant vigil and practice; unless God's grace descends upon one, human effort comes to naught' (Nature Cure, p.36).

Gandhi interprets nature cure as an ideal treatment for man, for he is equipped with mind and soul in addition to his body. Thus Ramanama is an unfailing remedy that needs to be taken up not as parrot-like but as a soul reaching out to God and calling him with all his faith to give him the strength. An individual laden heavily with devotion and faith in God needs no other treatment. By taking up Ramanama as a sovereign remedy, Gandhi asserted, 'we would be a land of healthy individuals, not the land of epidemics and ill-health that we are today'. The might of Ramanama could be used only for good cause for it responds to the heart of pure and to the one who resolves to attain purity; self-indulgence, superstition and deceit are major obstacles in seeking the remedy through

Ramanama. Since man's body is regarded as the temple of God, an unhealthy living amounts to desecrating it. Pure and hygienic living and balanced diet are sure ways to realise the supreme and a wise and thoughtful man treads this path with the strength of Ramanama in his heart and soul. Gandhi gives us one of the most beautiful interpretations of freedom from ailments through Ramanama. For example, 'Ramanama cannot perform a miracle of restoring a lost limb. It can perform the still greater miracle of helping you enjoy an ineffable peace inspite of the loss you live and rob death of its sting and the grave its victory at the journey's end'.

A faithful devotee of God easily imbibes spirituality and salvation and enthrones God in his heart. He is also steadfast in his devotion to the five elemental forces of nature as he is to God, for God manifests in nature. This obedience is way of self-discipline that leads to a healthy body and mind and the ensuing small ailments are done away through Ramanama. To sum up in Gandhi's words, Ramanama transforms the body into vital energy, which is equated with accumulated wealth, but 'it is in the power of Ramanama alone to make it a running stream to ever-increasing spiritual strength ultimately making a fall impossible'.

13.5 PROHIBITION (EVILS OF INTOXICANTS)

Gandhi was favourable towards prohibition of intoxicants like alcohol, tobacco, opium and bhang and ganja that are used in India. These harmful drinks not only incapacitate man in his thinking and reasoning but also ruin him and those around him. Gandhi was pained by the conditions of Indians in South Africa who took to the habit of drinking in the booths, while they were prohibited to do so in their houses. Some of the women too were no exception to drinking, thus wasting all their hard earned income on this vicious habit. The most respected English gentlemen too had been influenced by this evil habit, never succeeding in their efforts to give it up. Gandhi witnessed similar conditions in India too where the rich, princes and youth as well as the ordinary labour led pitiable life due to this malevolent habit. Since alcohol ruins man physically, morally and intellectually, Gandhi was against its use in all its forms. He also considered *Tadi* as harmful and ruinous to health but subsequently discovered that fresh *nira* as a healthy drink to substitute breakfast. He found the palm jaggery prepared out of *nira* to be an effective substitute to sugarcane jaggery.

Gandhi was equally critical about opium that makes a man dull, drowsy and lazy. It also robs a man of decency and makes him stoop to the lowest levels of human behaviour. Similarly, the use of tobacco is worse, and Tolstoy, whom Gandhi admired the most, calls it the worst of all intoxicants. Smoking, an expensive habit, makes a man bankrupt, callous and careless. Gandhi agrees with Tolstoy that 'a smoker keeps on committing minor crimes which generally pass unnoticed'. Likewise, Gandhi considers that 'drugs and drinks are the two arms of the devil which he strikes his helpless slaves into stupefaction and intoxication' (Young India, 22-4-1926, p.146).

Gandhi pleaded for total prohibition as the only measure to save the people from the curse of drinking, as prosecutions amount to a smaller measure of prohibition. Fears of loss of revenue or a pretext of miserable condition of living is one of the worst forms of encouraging this evil habit. To Gandhi, cut-down in the military expenditure was a better means of saving revenue rather than encouraging drinking. He opined that the revenue accumulated through this is one of the worst forms of degrading taxation; the tax and the 'excise makes people pay for their own corruption, moral, mental and physical'.

Gandhi laments at the public opinion's inactive role in seeking prohibition and also expresses his disappointment with the government, which failed to realise that 'honest prohibition gives a dignity and prestige' to it.

To this day, no other leader in the history of modern India has effectively addressed this issue as Gandhi did seventy years ago. Neither the public nor the government has taken an active initiative in countering this menace barring women in rural areas. It is time to remember what Gandhi pertinently said in this regard: 'Our freedom will be the freedom of slaves if we continue to be victims of the drink and drug habit. Is any cost too much to establish complete prohibition in all the Provinces?' (Harijan, 24-12-1938, p.396).

13.6 BRAHMACHARYA/CELIBACY

By brahmacharya or celibacy, Gandhi meant that 'mode of life which leads to the realisation of God. That realisation is impossible without practising self-restraint'. He stressed for a complete control over senses, sexual desires and organs and enumerated its merits including freedom from anger and passion. Gandhi interrelated health and brahmacharya as he considers the conservation of vital energy as the real key to health. Since marriage is a union between two hearts, the couple who practise self-restraint are worthy of being considered as *brahmacharis*. Gandhi advocated that the vital energy is crucial for one's health and enables the individual 'to utilise it for enhancing one's mental, physical and spiritual energy'. Self-restraint also leads to control over palate and mind and enables man to undertake physical labour and mental exertion with equal ease.

Gandhi suggests five rules for the conservation of energy. (1) As sexual desire has roots in one's thought, it is ideal to fill the thoughts with good and useful ideas; further, the repetition of God's name and constant contemplation on God are sure methods to yield victory. (2) Reading and talking are two key factors to attain control over mind. Reading of erotic literature and indecent talk do not help in developing self-restraint but infuse animal passions. (3) Cleanliness and hygiene, hard physical labour, yogic exercises are imminent positive measures to exercise self-restraint. A healthy recreation or physical labour is necessary to keep idleness at bay. (4) Since man becomes what he eats, restraint of palate is crucial. The diet should be appropriate, healthy and well balanced just to sustain the body without which one becomes a slave of animal passions. (5) Gandhi suggested that 'man should look upon every woman as his mother, sister or daughter; similarly a woman should look upon every man as her father, brother or son'. A real seeker and follower of brahmacharya easily overcomes the greatest of all passions as the observance of these rules becomes a necessary part of their life.

Gandhi disapproved early marriages for they cannot establish mutual mental communion between the partners. In his Autobiography he reveals that his own marriage was a case in point where they were married at an early age of thirteen and how his thoughts centred on the aspects of physical pleasures that the marriage brought with it. The guilt of giving in to lust while his father was ill plagued his mind for a long time. His resolve towards brahmacharya may be well understood from the fact that he steered clear of such passions during his stay in South Africa where he dedicated his creative energies towards struggle for the betterment of society.

Gandhi was of the view that marriage enables the partners to make a progressive moral rise and this establishes true conjugal love. Gandhi was highly critical of the use of contraceptives as a means of birth control measures. Birth control by self-restraint,

according to him, was best not only from a woman's point of health but also as an effective form of regulating population. Artificial form of birth control is unhealthy in the sense it destroys the desire to exercise self-restraint. The joy of self-restraint and true renunciation absolves them of animal passions thus leading to true companionship of souls.

13.7 SUMMARY

Gandhi's views on vegetarianism, nature cure and celibacy underscore the significance of a healthy life a man ought to follow. His constant experiments with diet and nature cure have inspired the beginning of a nature cure clinic in a rural area called Urli-Kanchan that stands as a testimony of his influence on his followers. It is important to note that in these experiments too he led from the front and came out successful in his endeavours. The measures suggested by him ensure not short term gains but inculcate long term benefits of self-discipline. The chanting of God's name was the supreme remedy for him and it is apt to end it in his own words wherein he says, 'how strange that we run after physicians who are mortal themselves, but forget Ram, the immortal, eternal and never-failing physician!'

13.8 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. What, according to Gandhi, constituted the moral aspect of vegetarianism?
2. Examine the importance of food values and five elements as stressed by Gandhi.
3. Discuss Gandhi's views on nature cure. How important is Ramanama in this discourse?
4. Write a short note on:
 - a) Prohibition of intoxicants
 - b) Brahmacharya

SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 14 SWARAJ

Structure

14.1 Introduction

Aims and Objectives

14.2 Swaraj as Self control

14.3 Swaraj as Self Rule

14.4 Conclusion

14.5 Summary

14.6 Terminal Questions

Suggested Readings

14.1 INTRODUCTION

In the late nineteenth century, the establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885 and the parallel consolidation of cultural nationalism under the leadership of Swami Dayananda and Swami Vivekananda created a feeling of self-assertion and identity shaking off the sense of inferiority that the educated middle class felt earlier on. It is in this context of the new assertiveness the two important phrases that the nationalist movement imbibed were *Swadeshi* and *Swaraj*, each being complementary to the other. Tilak's famous statement that '*Swaraj* is my birthright' is an important reflection of the new mood of nationalism that consolidated after the Ilbert Bill controversy. The Partition of Bengal of 1905 further enriched this till of thinking with self-assertiveness and also with an attempt to create a new awareness with new Indian idioms. Rabindranath Tagore's essay entitled '*Swadeshi Samaj*' depicts this new awareness and an emerging identity of one India where the gulf between the educated and uneducated and between the cities and the villages were to be eradicated not under the patronage of the colonial masters but with our own efforts and sacrifices. In the *Hind Swaraj* (1909), Gandhi's indictment of the Brown Sahib represents the spirit of this new accommodative nationalism.

Gandhi prefers to use *Swaraj* instead of the English word, independence or freedom. In Gandhi's practice and theorising, there is an effort of building a theory on the basis of continuity of tradition with essential reforms and integrating with the larger organic concept of the individual that he propagated *swaraj*. It assumes a different meaning in Gandhi rather than in the simple political sense that was used by his predecessors. Freedom or *swaraj*, for Gandhi, is an inclusive concept - political, economic, social and moral - emphasising on the utmost necessity of the human being to be as perfect as possible. He asserts in the *Hind Swaraj*, "real home self is self control".

Aims and Objectives

After reading this Unit, you would be able to understand:

- Gandhi's concept of *Swaraj*
- The meaning of *swaraj* as self-control and self-rule.

14.2 SWARAJ AS SELF-CONTROL

Gandhi borrows the term ‘*swaraj*’ from the Vedas. One meaning of *swaraj* is self rule and self control and differs from the English usage, which implies freedom without restraints. It also means the “all around awakening-social, educational, moral, economic and political” (*Young India*, 26 August 1926). True freedom is conformity to moral law, the inner conscience, and the law of one’s true being. It induces a person to seek the good and attain it, an end that is worthy. Freedom means self-control, a conquest over self which can be attained only by being fearless. It involves arduous discipline and requires that one follows one’s vows of self-purification and self-realisation. It is through active involvement and participation in the day to day affairs of society that the individual attains salvation or *moksha*. Gandhi insists on the need to rationalise and synthesise desires in an integrated life in order to attain the moral height to distinguish humans from brutes. Another implication of *swaraj* is moral and spiritual freedom or *anāsakti* which comes as the consequence of will and reason leading to concentration of energy. This is the cardinal lesson that Gandhi learns from the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Swaraj as self-rule or self-control means three things: first, freedom is primarily an individual, not a collective quality. Second, it includes the conventional civil liberties of the press, speech, association and religion and third, it distinguishes between inner and outer forms of freedom, inner freedom as anchoring and sustaining outer freedom (Dalton, 1982, pp.144-47). For Gandhi, the individual is the pillar of *Swaraj* but this does not mean unbridled individualism; rather it implies, as in T. H. Green, a balance between individual freedom and social restraint. He insists on individuals cultivating qualities of discipline, voluntary loyalty and solidarity and internal freedom as these would ensure an unimpeachable character and conduct. He constantly emphasises that inert and emasculated people would never be able to attain freedom and individual consciousness alone would lift people out of servility. Gandhi considered weakness, cowardice and fear as sins against human spirit. He taught the Indians the spirit of fearlessness. Self-rule, self-restraint, self-discipline and voluntary self-sacrifice rooted in the notions of individual autonomy and moral self-determinism forms the basis of *swaraj*. “When Gandhi pursued the political goal of *swaraj* (self rule) he meant to teach himself and Indians, that only those who could rule themselves in the sense of self restraint could rule themselves in the sense of controlling their political universe” (Rudolph & Rudolph, 1967, p.249).

Gandhi sees an intimate link between *swaraj* and *swadeshi* or self-reliance. For Gandhi, freedom is rooted in human nature and is to be claimed as part of self-awareness earned through self-effort and conversely, any external threat to human freedom arises not from circumstances outside one’s control but by recognising our weaknesses in the first place, which is why he considers self-purification as integral to the concept of *swaraj*, as that gives the individuals the strength and capacity to translate the abstract notion of freedom into a practical reality in society and politics. According to Gandhi, a person truly realises freedom if he listens to his conscience or the inner voice, the only tyrant that one should accept. Fearlessness, self-rule, self-restraint, self-discipline, non-attachment, renunciation and voluntary self-sacrifice would make resistance to evil easy and that forms the core of the philosophy of *satyagraha*. Gandhi describes *satyagraha* as the act of the brave and the fearless¹ and through it, “Gandhi turned the moral tables on the English definition of courage by suggesting that aggression was the path to mastery of those without self-control, non violent resistance the path of those with control” (Rudolph & Rudolph, 1967, p.185).

14.3 SWARAJ AS SELF-RULE

Swaraj for Gandhi also means positive freedom, to participate in the process of politics in every possible way. It implies participatory democracy as there exists an intimate relationship between the citizen and the state.

By *swaraj* I mean the government of India by the consent of the people as ascertained by the largest number of adult population, male or female, native born or domiciled, who have contributed by manual labour to the services of the state and who have taken the trouble of having registered their names as voters.... Real *swaraj* will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused. In other words, *swaraj* is to be obtained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority (Gandhi 1947, 14).

To underline the meaning of *swaraj*, Gandhi in the *Hind Swaraj* (1909), through the Italian example, points out that for Victor Emanuel, Cavour and Garibaldi, 'Italy meant the king of Italy and his henchmen' whereas for Mazzini, it meant the whole of the Italian people, that is, its agriculturalists. Mazzini's ideal remained unrealized and that Italy still remained in a 'state of slavery'. Merely replacing the British rulers with their Indian counterparts is *Englishstan* and not *Hindustan*, an "English rule without the Englishman, the tiger's nature, but not the tiger" (1997, ch. IV). The quintessence of *swaraj* is service for the betterment of the ordinary people, an idea that Gandhi derived from Vivekananda, Tolstoy, Sermon on the Mount and numerous texts and saints of the Indian tradition.

Gandhi's concern for majority alleviation led him to advance the notion of *Gram Swaraj* with its focus on the village, at the centre of his social, political and economic philosophy. As majority of Indians lived in the villages, he was moved by the appalling conditions – lack of sanitation, health care, hygiene and education, under which they lived. The enormous gap that exists between the villages and cities with regard to employment opportunities, educational avenues, health care, recreational facilities coupled with the onslaught of modern machinery and industrialisation, villagers migrated from villages to cities, only to live in shanties with its squalor and a sense of rootless existence. While village is natural, a city is artificial facilitating the exploitation and plunder by the imperialist powers. Though he considers the growth of cities as an evil thing, as it houses 'brokers and commission agents for the big houses of Europe, America and Japan', he is not seeking its elimination.

Gandhi castigates the Indian princes for the condition of the poor in their states. He severely criticised the British occupation of India, as it led to extreme oppression of the poor pointing out to the earlier periods of self-sufficiency in food and clothing. The English East India Company was responsible for ruining the village industries, and it is for this reason that he places centrality to the renewal of villages through the Constructive Programme².

Gandhi, with the help of his close associate, Kumarappa, prepares the blueprint to change India's rural life. 'Villagism', a term which Kumarappa coins, is accepted by Gandhi to bring about a complete revival of villages and realise *swaraj*. The aim of *gram swaraj* is self sufficiency in material conditions necessary for fulfilling the needs of the ordinary person. The India of my dreams, observes Gandhi, is the *swaraj* of the poor person (Ibid, 17). A truly non-violent state would be composed of self-governing and self-sufficient small cohesive village communities in which the majority would rule with due consideration to the rights of the minorities.

Indian independence must begin at the bottom. Thus every village will be a republic or panchayat, having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs, even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world. It will be trained and prepared to perish in the attempt to defend itself against any onslaught from without. Thus ultimately, it is the individual who is the unit. But this does not exclude dependence on the willing help from neighbours or from the world. It will be free and voluntary play of mutual forces.... In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But will be an oceanic circle, whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance, but ever number, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units.

Gandhi makes welfare of the masses, with fulfilment of their basic needs as the basis of economic freedom, thus reflecting the inspiration that he derives from Ruskin. Gandhi points out that political independence, without economic freedom, without an improvement and elevation in the lives of the ordinary people, the toiling masses, would be meaningless. He wants the complete destruction of modern civilisation and the creation of a new society without governments, parliaments, railways and other fast modes of transport, machinery, doctors, lawyers and armed forces and, in which, people totally renounce violence and resist authority through *satyagraha*. Like Thoreau, he does not consider the government to be important in the day to day activities of the individual, as both believed that all states, including the democratic ones, are the embodiment of force and physical strength, concerned with functions related to law and order, and protection of property. Laws, policies and associations are essentially coercive, stifling and hindering individuality and spontaneity. Gandhi insists on the need to look at political work within the framework of social and moral progress, as power resides in the people and not in legislative assemblies. He dismisses disparagingly power politics, and like Huxley, desires politics that would enable people to improve their lot. Echoing Aristotle's sentiments, Gandhi considers public life as the arena for bringing out the highest spiritual qualities of an individual. Politics is not the art of capturing, holding and managing governmental power but of transforming social relations in terms of justice.

"*Swaraj* for me means freedom for the meanest of my countrymen. I am not interested in freeing India merely from the English yoke. I am bent upon freeing India from any yoke whatsoever. I have no desire to exchange 'king log' for king stork'... there is no freedom for India so long as one man, no matter how highly placed he may be, holds in the hollow of his hands the life, property and honour of millions of human beings. It is an artificial, unnatural and uncivilized institution. The end of it is an essential preliminary of *swaraj*".

Gandhi clarifies equal distribution as his ideal and till that is realised he would like to settle for equitable distribution, as that would not only ensure elimination of gross disparities in income but also allow every member of the society to receive enough goods and services to meet his basic requirements and enjoy a certain minimum standard of living. He considers accumulation of wealth as immoral which is why he proposes trusteeship. To achieve equitable distribution he proposes four specific measures: (a) Bread Labour³ as that would remove exploitation and obliterate the distinctions of rank. It would reduce not only economic inequality but also social inequality and in the Indian context it would

undermine caste-based inequalities. (b) Voluntary renunciation, a value that Gandhi reiterates from the *Isopanishad* and that means not coveting the possessions of others and not accumulating beyond one's basic needs. Personal wants ought to be kept to the barest minimum keeping in mind the poverty of one's fellow human beings and try for a new mode of life. (c) *Satyagraha* to resolve industrial and agricultural disputes as legitimate and the proposal of trusteeship to resolve the conflict between labour and capital with the core idea of non-appropriation by owners. The Ahmedabad Mills strike of 1918 was an example of Gandhi led *satyagraha* movement in industrial conflict⁴ just as the Champaran *satyagraha* of 1916 undermined the notion of submissive labour force and initiated the first village improvement scheme. (d) The need for governmental action to ensure that every work receives a minimum or living wage. Gandhi insists that his ideal would have to be realised through moral process of transformation of individuals by non-violent measures. According to Gandhi, the cause of poverty is the covetousness of the rich and the exploitation of the needy by the greedy. Incomes would have to be redistributed for raising the output and fulfilment of the basic needs of the masses would depend on limiting the wants of the rich. To get rid of poverty there is a need for drastic changes in prevailing attitudes to consumption and to wealth in affluent as well as in the poorer societies.

Gandhi desires economic equality but without wanting to abolish private property. He accepts the fact that the capacities of human beings differs and in any society only a few can accumulate wealth by industriousness but that does not mean they have a right to go for conspicuous consumption. He expects the rich to act as trustees of the entire society. Since they would act neither for private gain nor for profit, there would be differences in the amount of wealth, but there would be no differences in services and lifestyles. Private ownership would continue, except in large-scale industries which would be dictated by concerns of public welfare. He admits that state ownership is preferable to private ownership but in general, he considers the violence of private ownership as less injurious than the violence of the state. According to Gandhi, if there is no law of inheritance⁵ then it would not lead to the growth of a privileged class or allow for personal inequalities of wealth.

The development of social spirit and humanist consciousness are the two cardinal principles of Gandhi's concept of trusteeship. The deeper meaning of his concept of trusteeship is akin to the Weberian notion of puritan ethics, which does not decry the increase in production but prohibits conspicuous consumption. It has a Calvinistic overtone and is beneficial to societies like India where wide disparities are an eyesore and exist without any effective social sanction and control.

Gandhi advances two propositions on the state that establishes his close affinity to classical anarchism, namely (1) the state represents an authority that poses a threat to individual liberty and (2) that it represents violence in an organised form. He shuns Austin's notion of absolute state sovereignty and advocates limited state sovereignty. Accepting the distinction between state and society he looks upon with suspicion any increase in state power. A state has no right to dehumanise or suppress the individual. It exists to fulfil the needs of the individual and failure to do so entitles the individual the duty to disobey and to resist.

The state represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but as the state is a soulless machine, the state can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence.... I look upon an increase of the power of the state

with the greatest fear, because although while apparently doing good by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of all progress...what I disapprove of, is an organization based on force, which a state is (Gandhi, cited in Tendulkar, 1960, Vol. IV, pp.11-13).

Power, according to Gandhi, lies in being an actively engaged citizen with a capacity of public involvement and political participation rather than being a passive acquiescent subject. If individuals recognise the power in their hands and use it constructively to bring out *sarvodaya* through non-violent means against injustice and repression of the state, then the monopolistic and coercive nature of state power could be reduced, thus ensuring purification of politics. A truly non-violent state would be composed of self-governing and self-sufficient small cohesive village communities in which the majority would rule with due consideration to the rights of the minorities. He desires the revival of the *panchayat* (council of five) system but not in its traditional form which was organised around the group and was strictly patriarchal. For Gandhi, the individual and not the group is the unit of the modernised *panchayat* elected annually by all adult villagers- men and women alike. Individual freedom would be the basis of his village democracy with consensus⁶ as the basis of decision-making process.

Gandhi's *swaraj* recognises no race or religions; nor does it distinguish between lettered persons or the moneyed. It is also inclusive with due respect to the toiling masses. It is secular and egalitarian. It is complete independence from foreign rule and complete economic independence. He constantly reminds his readers that political independence involves transfer of power from one set of rulers to another; true freedom is freedom from exploitation, suffering, poverty, deprivation and destitution. Freedom for Gandhi is freedom from political subjugation, economic exploitation and social tyranny. True *Swaraj* would be realised with mass awakening which is possible only through non-violent non-cooperation. Rule of people, for Gandhi, means transcendence of particular interests.

As a philosophical anarchist Gandhi desires a society without the state but as a practical idealist he settles for a minimal state. In a state of enlightened anarchy everyone is his own ruler, ruling in a manner without obstructing others. There would be no political power as there would be no state. In the absence of this ideal, Thoreau's maxim of a "government is best which governs the least" is the next possible option. According to Gandhi, human beings have the capacity for developing their moral capacities to such an extent that exploitation could be reduced to the minimum which is why he states that he "looks upon an increase in the power of the State with the greatest fear, because, although while apparently doing good by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of all progress". The citizens' obligation to accept the authority of the state would depend on its just laws and non repressive policies. A government is an instrument of service if it is based on the will and consent of the people. It is citizens' obligation that distinguishes a democratic from an authoritarian state though Gandhi views all states as soulless machines. A citizen's responsibility is greater under a democratic regime as citizens would have to safeguard against authority becoming corrupt and farcical. In every state there is a possibility of abuse of power and it is the citizens vested with superior moral authority who should not lose their conscience or lose their distrust of state authority. Gandhi makes it the responsibility of every citizen for every act of the government.

It is the citizen who ought to decide whether to show active loyalty or total opposition to the state, to resist none or few of its laws as the citizen is endowed with *satya* and

ahimsa. The citizen cannot relinquish a portion of this responsibility in the name of a social contract or legal sovereignty or tacit consent or the rule of law or similar notions that are implicit in democratic constitutionalism. According to Gandhi, for the sake of peace there can be no unconditional consent, even if secured under majority rule nor can the limits of state action be established in advance in a manner that will automatically secure the citizens his natural rights. Gandhi distrusts institutional safeguards in societies with many factions and class conflict, as the majority could be wrong. The individual alone is a moral person which no state or institution could ever become. A citizen could appeal to eternal unwritten laws against the laws of human beings and of states and the commandments of religion, but like Socrates accept the consequences for challenging the laws of the states.

Not only are states undesirable but even parliaments are as these are ineffectual and can do only when there is outside pressure. Gandhi is critical of the parliamentary system of government in the *Hind Swaraj* (1909), as the members of parliament 'are hypocritical and selfish'; indifferent to matters of serious concern and engage in endless talk. "Members vote for their party without a thought. Their so-called discipline binds them to it. If any member, by way of exception gives an independent vote, he is considered a renegade. The Prime Minister is more concerned about his power than about the welfare of the Parliament. His energy is concentrated upon securing the success of his party. His care is not always that Parliament shall do right. Prime Ministers are known to have made Parliament do things merely for party advantage.... If they are to be considered honest because they do not take what are generally known as bribes, let them be so considered, but they are open to subtler influence. In order to gain their ends, they certainly bribe people with honour. I do not hesitate to say that they have neither real honesty nor a living conscience". Through his criticisms of the British parliament, Gandhi tries to show, according to Bandyopadhyaya (1969) that even the best of the parliaments are not the ideal substitute for anarchy. Later Gandhi diluted his rigorous opposition to parliaments. In 1937, he points out that today's legislatures, unlike that of the past, are composed of representatives of people and that people must be taught how to stand up effectively against the government. Members of the legislature ought to render service to the people, undertake constructive social work and ensure the passage of right legislations. He clarifies that he does not want to destroy the legislatures but "destroy the system which they are created to work". In the late 1930s, Gandhi also moved away from minimal role of the state in the economy to state ownership of key industries as it would provide employment to large number of people. The state would look after secular welfare, health, communications, foreign relations, currency and own land as cooperative farming by the peasants subject to state ownership of land is something that he toyed with but never really developed in full details. Gandhi also insists that the state must eschew physical violence. He supports the idea of a decentralised, non-industrial, non-violent, self-sufficient and self-reliant free society; village *swaraj* would advance the cause of individual freedom.

14.4 CONCLUSION

This elaboration of the implicit meaning of *swaraj* in the formulation of the three pillars of *swaraj* sums up the entire political philosophy and action of the Mahatma. Emphasising the utmost necessity to have unity in a situation of larger plurality and also with the larger awareness of two India's, one of the city and another of the village with abject poverty allows him to portray a more realistic depiction of the Indian reality, much better than

attempted by the socialists and the Marxists. To give life and meaning to the concept of *swaraj*, Gandhi's formulation of the constructive programme is of supreme importance. It portrays the essential reformatory nature of his theorising ensuring the minimum resources and environment essential for self-development of every single Indian and as a means of reaching the goal of *swaraj*.

14.5 SUMMARY

Gandhi prefers to use *Swaraj* instead of the English word, independence or freedom. It assumes a different meaning in Gandhi rather than in the simple political sense that was used by his predecessors. Freedom or *swaraj*, for Gandhi, is an inclusive concept - political, economic, social and moral - emphasising on the utmost necessity of the human being to be as perfect as possible. Gandhi borrows the term '*swaraj*' from the Vedas. One meaning of *swaraj* is self-rule and self-control and differs from the English usage, which implies freedom without restraints. *Swaraj* for Gandhi also means positive freedom, to participate in the process of politics in every possible way. It implies participatory democracy as there exists an intimate relationship between the citizen and the state. Gandhi's concern for majority alleviation led him to advance the notion of *Gram Swaraj* with its focus on the village, at the centre of his social, political and economic philosophy.

14.6 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

- 1) Explain Gandhi's concept of *Swaraj*.
- 2) What does Gandhi mean by *Swaraj* as self-control?
- 3) How does Gandhi equate *Swaraj* with self-rule?
- 4) What are the economic bases of *Swaraj*?
- 5) According to Gandhi, true *swaraj* is both political and economic independence. Explain.

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(Endnotes)

¹ Gandhi realizes the need to confront the fundamental fear of Indians as propagated by some British that Indians lack courage, are weak and morally unworthy.

² The Constructive Programme conceive of reorganization of society for the attainment of *poorna swaraj* (complete independence) through the following: (1) communal harmony, (2) removal of untouchability, (3) prohibition, (4) *Khadi*, (5) cottage industries, (6) village sanitation, (7) new or basic education – *nai talim*, (8) adult education, (9) upliftment of women, (10) education in health and hygiene and (11) propagation of national language, *Hindustani*. “The idea behind the Constructive Programme is to create the model of production even in the face of the opposition of those who try to preserve the *status quo* by means of political power. Its aim is to convert all men into toilers, and distribute the wealth of mankind equitably, if not equally....The idea behind Non-violent Non cooperation is not to oust the present rulers anyhow from power, but to convert them by determined, yet civilized refusal to subscribe to proved wrongs. The aim of conversion is to secure their cooperation in helping their erstwhile victims in building up a new social and economic order based on justice, equality and freedom” (Bose 1972, 10).

³ Gandhi understands Bread Labour to mean performance of body labour by everyone that would entitle them to daily bread. Symbolically it assumed the “form of *Khaddar* (handspun) economics with its tool and symbol the *charka* (spinning wheel) (Bondurant 1967, 156).

⁴ Four injunctions were given during the strike: no violence, no molestation of blacklegs, no dependence upon alms, but self support through other labour, and no surrender, however long the strike were laid down before the striking workers. He considers the workers and the capitalists as ‘fundamentally equal’ with the former striving for conversion of the latter as “destruction of capitalists must mean the destruction of the worker” (*Young India* March, 1931). The outcome of the strike was the formation of the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association, which exists till date, actualizing Gandhi’s concept of the relationship between the employer and the employee. It is more than a trade union. It has its own library, hospital, school, recreation centre, bank and newspaper.

⁵ Gandhi represents the spirit of the modern era when he voices his discomfort against inheritance tax. Tom Paine is the earliest to articulate his critique of hereditary power and extends his critique of inherited political power to that of inherited economic power. In his two works, *The Rights of Man* (1791) and *Agrarian Justice* (1797) he argues for the adoption of inheritance tax in England to offset the unfair distribution of landed property. Reiterating Locke, Paine points out that it is common sense that God gave “the Earth as an inheritance” to all of God’s children. He proposes the creation of a national fund out of the inheritance tax to give (1) a sum of 15 pounds sterling to everyone on turning 21 years old as a compensation for the loss of their ‘natural inheritance’ and (2) a sum of 10 pounds a year to every person over the age of 50, an early version of social security.

Andrew Carnegie staunchly endorses estate taxes. His *Gospel of Wealth* (1928) explores the three possible ways to dispose of wealth: (1) leave it to the families of decedents, (2) bequeath it for public purposes and (3) administer it during one’s life. He disliked the first, allowed the second and encouraged the third. He dismisses the argument that parents leave great fortunes for their children out of affection, stating that such affection is misguided as it does more harm than good to their recipients. He concludes that motivation behind bequeath is family pride and not the welfare of the children. Sharply distinguishing between the intended consequences of the inheritance tax (to create funds for public purposes) and its unintended consequence (private philanthropy) he stresses that wealth is a trust fund for the community that enables the rich to ‘dignify their lives’. Philanthropy in a capitalist economy, according to Carnegie, solves the problem of rich and power. “The laws of accumulation will be left free, the laws of distribution free. Individualism will continue, but the millionaire will be but a trustee for the poor.” Carnegie concludes his famous tract with the words: “The man who dies rich dies disgraced.” True to his belief he gave away 90 percent of his estate before his death which also included a trust fund for Theodore Roosevelt’s widow, as there was no provision made by government for the wives of former presidents, and left a modest trust fund for his family

In 1906, in a message to the Congress, President Theodore Roosevelt proposed a federal inheritance tax with a logic that differed from that of Carnegie. Unlike Carnegie who advocates the duty of the rich towards the poor, Roosevelt, echoing Adam Smith's sentiments in the *Wealth of Nations* (1776): "It is only under the shelter of the civil magistrate that the owner of valuable property can sleep a single night in security." states that the wealthy have a special obligation to the government itself. A rich person needs to pay for the protection provided by the state for his property, both from external threat of foreign invasion and from internal threat from theft, fraud or destruction. In more recent times Warren Buffet echoes the sentiments of Paine and observes that if talent cannot be passed on to the next generation so shouldn't money? In this history of the concept of inheritance/estate/gift tax two arguments form the basis: the fairness issue (inherited wealth is not fair to the poor) and the productivity issue (inherited wealth is not beneficial for its recipients).

⁶ The idea of Panchayat is consensus and shunning of adversary process; of allowing all those who should be heard and decisions reached not through show of hands but by judging the sense of moral fitness of the participants. Discussion continues till a satisfactory consensus could be arrived at; and in case of a standoff it becomes clear that no agreement is possible (Rudolph & Rudolph 1967, 187-88).



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UNIT 15 SWADESHI

Structure

15.1 Introduction

Aims and Objectives

15.2 Swadeshi: Self-Reliance

15.3 Swadeshi: An Economic Philosophy

15.4 Village Economy

15.5 Swadeshi Movement And Khadi

15.6 Swadeshi: A Religious Idea

15.7 Summary

15.8 Terminal Questions

Suggested Readings

15.1 INTRODUCTION

Swadeshi is that spirit within us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote.- Gandhi

The word *svadeśī* derives from Sanskrit and is a sandhi or conjunction of two Sanskrit words. *Sva* means “self” or “own” and *deśa* means country, so *svadeśa* would be “own country”, and *svadeśī*, the adjectival form, would mean “of one’s own country”. The opposite of *svadeśī* in Sanskrit is *videśī* or “not of one’s country”. The word swadeshi had many connotations in Gandhian thought- economic, political, cultural and philosophical. It is central to Gandhi’s philosophy, which in effect, means self-sufficiency. Swadeshi is that spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote. Swadeshi is the political movement in British India that encouraged domestic production and boycott of the foreign goods. In politics, it is defending the indigenous institutions. In economics, things that are produced by one’s immediate neighbours and serve those industries by making them efficient and complete where they might be found wanting. In religion, it means protecting the tradition of one’s own ancestral religion. By advocating swadeshi in all these spheres, Gandhi argues for an amalgamation of these by keeping away from its defects. In other words, swadeshi is the philosophy of defence of one’s own *home* by revitalising it through all means. However, historically, swadeshi as a movement is significant in national movement directing against the boycott of western goods by defending indigenous industries and its goods. Gandhi considers that much of the deep poverty of the masses is due to the ruinous departure from Swadeshi in the economic and industrial life. In the spirit of swadeshi, Gandhi’s idea of economy is self-supportive and self-contained economy. His religion is not only *sanatan* but also tolerant. Gandhi says, *I must not serve my distant neighbour at the expense of the nearest. It is never vindictive or punitive. It is in no sense narrow, for I buy from every part of the world what is needed for my growth. I refuse to buy from anybody anything, however nice or beautiful, if it interferes with my growth or injures those whom Nature has made my first care.*

The philosophy of swadeshi spins around the idea of service to our immediate neighbours. Gandhi holds that Swadeshi is the only doctrine consistent with the law of humility and love. Swadeshi, for Gandhi, was the spiritual imperative. Swadeshi, as a strategy, was a key focus of Gandhi and described it as the soul of swaraj (self-rule). Swadeshi is a concept evolved in search of making a nation against the colonial British India. Swadeshi assigned national meaning to territory, economy and culture. Swadeshi movement aimed to achieve swaraj by establishing India's economic self-sufficiency from Britain. This unit explores the various facets of Gandhi's idea of swadeshi and its relevance in the contemporary world, which is market-centred, greedy and commercialised. In the times of globalisation, the philosophy of swadeshi is inspiring in protecting one's own economy and identity.

Aims and Objectives

After reading this Unit, you would be able to understand:

- Gandhi's concept and meaning of swadeshi.
- The meaning of self-reliance.
- The meaning of swadeshi as an economic philosophy.

15.2 SWADESHI: SELF-RELIANCE (IN DEFENCE OF INDIGENOUS LIFE)

Generally, the idea of Swadeshi in Gandhian philosophy means local self-reliance and use of local knowledge and abilities. In other words it aims at appropriate technology. *Swadeshi* (Self-reliance) is mainly understood to mean a protectionist technique that Gandhi employed against the mercantile policies of the British, whereby the masses were urged to abstain from using cloth manufactured outside India, and instead to use cotton, silk, or wool cloth made in India. But Gandhi gives it a broader meaning: "*Swadeshi* carries a great and profound meaning. It does not mean merely the use of what is produced in one's own country. That meaning is certainly there in *swadeshi*. But there is another meaning implied in it which is far greater and much more important. *Swadeshi* means reliance on our own strength. We should also know what we mean by 'reliance on our own strength'. 'Our strength' means the strength of our body, our mind, and our soul. From among these, on which should we depend? The answer is brief. The soul is supreme and therefore soul-force is the foundation on which man must build." (Essential writings of Mahatma Gandhi, p.362)

In sociology and critical social theory, alienation refers to an individual's estrangement from traditional community and others in general. It is considered by many that the atomism of modern society means that individuals have shallower relations with other people than they would normally. The term "exploitation" may carry two distinct meanings. One, the act of using something for any purpose. In this case, exploit is a synonym for use. Two, The act of using something in an unjust or cruel manner.

Gandhi believed that alienation and exploitation often occur when production and consumption are divorced from their social and cultural context, and that local enterprise is a way to avoid these problems. To renew India's vitality and regenerate its culture, Gandhi had a vision of free India that was not a nation-state but a confederation of self-governing, self-reliant, self-employed people living in village communities, deriving their

right livelihood from the products of their homesteads. Maximum economic and political power - including the power to decide what could be imported into or exported from the village - would remain in the hands of the village assemblies. Gandhi considers that in India, people have lived for thousands of years in a relative harmony with their surroundings: living in their homesteads, weaving homespun clothes, eating homegrown food, using home-made goods; caring for their animals, forests, and lands; celebrating the fertility of the soil with feasts; performing the stories of great epics, and building temples. Every region of India has developed its own distinctive culture, to which travelling storytellers, wandering 'sadhus', and constantly flowing streams of pilgrims have traditionally made their contribution.

Gandhi defends that the doctrine of swadeshi is neither exclusive nor patriotic. It is inclusive and considers everybody in the nature. Gandhi felt that in seeming to serve India to the exclusion of every other country, "I do not harm any other country. My patriotism is both exclusive and inclusive. It is exclusive in the sense that, in all humility, I confine my attention to the land of my birth, but is inclusive in the sense that my service is not of a competitive or antagonistic nature." (Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi, Madras: G.A.Natesan & Co., 1933, p. 344).

In the words of Gandhi:

I believe in the truth implicitly that a man can serve his neighbours and humanity at the same time, the condition being that the service of the neighbours is in no way selfish or exclusive, i.e., does not in any way involve the exploitation of any other human being. The neighbours will then understand the spirit in which such service is given. They will also know that they will be expected to give their services to their neighbours. Thus considered, it will spread like the proverbial snow-ball gathering strength in geometrical progression, encircling the whole earth. It follows that Swadeshi is that spirit which dictates man to serve his next-door neighbour to the exclusion of any other. The condition that I have already mentioned is that the neighbour, thus served, has, in his turn, to serve his own neighbour. In this sense, Swadeshi is never exclusive. It recognizes the scientific limitation of human capacity for service (Harijan, 23-7-1947, p. 79).

15.3 SWADESHI: AN ECONOMIC PHILOSOPHY

Gandhi's *Swadeshi* is an economic doctrine. It proposes not only self-reliance and usage of indigenous skills and knowledge systems, but also propagates simple living and one's own dignity. In times of globalisation, market-oriented and commoditised life, swadeshi has its contemporary relevance.

Gandhi's idea of swadeshi deals about the importance of indigenous skills and its productivity. He believed that swadeshi is means in realising the self-reliance and self-governance (swaraj). In that sense his politics of spirituality has not only internalised the essence of material production and labour, but also proves that he is a pragmatic philosopher. The practice of economic philosophy of swadeshi had direct hit on British Empire and its economy.

Gandhi was never dogmatic in articulating his ideas of swadeshi; rather he is practical and had great concern for his fellow human beings. It is true that he opposes the western

civilisation based on greed-centred industry and technology. He is even critical about the modernity based on this kind of temperament. In place of individual centred philosophy, he argued for community centred religious philosophy. In other words, in his philosophy the life and economy of village occupies central place against the city and modernity. In that sense, he has favoured a reformed tradition. It does not mean that Gandhi is against reason, science and technology. He defends his religious and cultural traditions, indigenous skills and traditional economy in the backdrop of western colonial rule but at the same time he opts for appropriate technology. It provides alternative reasoning to the logic of western modernity.

Gandhi never meant that his idea of swadeshi has totally excluded the foreign or western in course of strong defence of home industry. As Gandhi says,

I have never considered the exclusion of everything foreign under every conceivable circumstance as a part of Swadeshi. The broad definition of Swadeshi is the use of all home-made things to the exclusion of foreign things, in so far as such use is necessary for the protection of home industry, more especially those industries without which India will become pauperized. In my opinion, therefore, Swadeshi which excludes the use of everything foreign, no matter how beneficial it may be, and irrespective of the fact that it impoverishes nobody, is a narrow interpretation of Swadeshi (Young India, 17-6-1926, p. 218).

Further Gandhi holds the view that,

I buy useful healthy literature from every part of the world. I buy surgical instruments from England, pins and pencils from Austria and watches from Switzerland. But I will not buy an inch of the finest cotton fabric from England or Japan or any other part of the world because it has injured and increasingly injures the millions of the inhabitants of India.

I hold it to be sinful for me to refuse to buy the cloth spun and woven by the needy millions of India's paupers and to buy foreign cloth although it may be superior in quality to the Indian hand-spun. My Swadeshi, therefore, chiefly centers round the hand-spun Khaddar and extends to everything that can be and is produced in India (Young India, 12-3-1925, p. 88).

The modern worldview is that the more material goods you have, the better your life will be. But Gandhi said, "A certain degree of physical comfort is necessary but above a certain level it becomes a hindrance instead of a help; therefore the ideal of creating an unlimited number of wants and satisfying them, seems to be a delusion and a trap. The satisfaction of one's physical needs must come at a certain point to a dead stop before it degenerates into physical decadence. Europeans will have to remodel their outlook if they are not to perish under the weight of the comforts to which they are becoming slaves." Gandhi's struggle of boycotting foreign goods and promotion of swadeshi goods is based on a principle but not on hatred against British. Gandhi is in principle against the commoditised consumer goods. In that way, swadeshi goods are not an exception to him. As Gandhi maintains, *Even Swadeshi, like any other good thing, can be ridden to death if it is made a fetish. That is a danger that must be guarded against. To reject foreign manufactures, merely because they are foreign and to go on wasting national time and money in the promotion in one's country of manufactures for which it is not suited would be criminal folly and a negation of the Swadeshi spirit. A true votary of Swadeshi will never harbour ill-will towards*

the foreigner; he will not be actuated by antagonism towards anybody on earth. Swadeshism is not a cult of hatred. It is a doctrine of selfless service that has its roots in the purest AHIMSA, i.e., love. (M K Gandhi, From Yerawada Mandir: Ashram Observance, Translated by V.G. Desai, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1957, p. 66).

15.4 VILLAGE ECONOMY

The British believed in centralised, industrialised, and mechanised modes of production. Gandhi turned this principle on its head and envisioned a decentralised, homegrown, hand-crafted mode of production. In his words, it is **“Not mass production, but production by the masses.”** In Gandhi’s swadeshi economy, village economy and local industry play an important role. He aims at self-sufficiency of the village community. According to the principle of swadeshi, whatever is made or produced in the village must be used first and foremost by the members of the village. Swadeshi avoids economic dependence on external market forces that could make the village community vulnerable. It also avoids unnecessary, unhealthy, wasteful, and therefore environmentally destructive transportation. The village must build a strong economic base to satisfy most of its needs, and all members of the village community should give priority to local goods and services. Every village community of free India should have its own carpenters, shoemakers, potters, builders, mechanics, farmers, engineers, weavers, teachers, bankers, merchants, traders, musicians, artists, and priests. In other words, each village should be a microcosm of India - a web of loosely inter-connected communities. Gandhi considered these villages so important that he thought they should be given the status of *village republics*. The village community should embody the spirit of the home - an extension of the family rather than a collection of competing individuals. Gandhi’s dream was not of personal self-sufficiency, not even family self-sufficiency, but the self-sufficiency of the village community.

By adopting the principle of production by the masses, village communities would be able to restore dignity to the work done by human hands. There is an intrinsic value in anything we do with our hands, and in handing over work to machines we lose not only the material benefits but also the spiritual benefits, for work by hand brings with it a meditative mind and self-fulfillment. Gandhi wrote, *It’s a tragedy of the first magnitude that millions of people have ceased to use their hands as hands. Nature has bestowed upon us this great gift which is our hands. If the craze for machinery methods continues, it is highly likely that a time will come when we shall be so incapacitated and weak that we shall begin to curse ourselves for having forgotten the use of the living machines given to us by God. Millions cannot keep fit by games and athletics and why should they exchange the useful productive hardy occupations for the useless, unproductive and expensive sports and games.* Mass production is only concerned with the product, whereas production by the masses is concerned with the product, the producers, and the process.

Gandhi believes that a locally based economy enhances community spirit, community relationships, and community well-being. Such an economy encourages mutual aid. Mass production leads people to leave their villages, their land, their crafts, and their homesteads and go to work in the factories. Instead of dignified human beings and members of a self-respecting village community, people become cogs in the machine, standing at the conveyor belt, living in shanty towns, and depending on the mercy of the bosses.

According to Gandhi, when every individual is an integral part of the community; when the production of goods is on a small scale; when the economy is local; and when homemade handicrafts are given preference, it is the real swadeshi. These conditions are conducive to a holistic, spiritual, ecological, and communitarian pattern of society. “My idea of village *swaraj* [self-rule] is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its own vital wants, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity” (Essential Writings of Gandhi, p.358).

15.5 SWADESHI MOVEMENT AND KHADI

Initially the idea of swadeshi figured in the writings of early nationalists such as Dadabhai Nauroji, M.G.Ranade and Bipin Chandra Pal, who came in defence of the national economy against the colonial economy. The swadeshi movement assumed its radical and mass form after 1905 following the contested spatial partition of Bengal. In 1907, swadeshi was officially incorporated within the conceptual and ideological framework of the Indian National Congress in the avowed objective of *swadeshi swaraj*. The partition of Bengal created widespread indignation all over the country. In the turbulent atmosphere that followed the boycott, Swadeshi movements started. Swadeshi was a paradigmatic instance of totalising territorial nativism. Historically Swadeshi was linked to the other categories such as national economy, territory and culture. Swadeshi literally meaning one's own country, aimed at the promotion of indigenous industry. Along with Swadeshi, the boycott of British goods was organised. The Swadeshi and boycott were powerful instruments directed against foreign rule. They attacked the British rule where it hurt most. About Swadeshi, Lajpat Rai said, “I regard it as a salvation of my country. The Swadeshi movement ought to teach us how to organise our capital, resources, labour, energies, talents for the greatest good of all Indians irrespective of creed, colour or caste. It ought to unite us, our religious and denominational differences notwithstanding. In my opinion, Swadeshi ought to be the common religion of united India.” On the boycott movement, he said, “The meaning of the boycott is this ... The primary thing is prestige of the government and the boycott strikes at the root of the prestige. The illusory thing they call prestige is more powerful and potent than authority itself and propose to do this by boycott - We desire to turn away our faces from the government house and turn them to the huts of people”.

In Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* of 1909 Swaraj, Satyagraha and Swadeshi are key principles. To realise the swaraj, Gandhi believes that the ideal of swadeshi is necessary in every sense. He appreciated the Indian civilisation against western to make meaningful interpretation of swaraj and satyagraha. Gandhi took this swadeshi to the popular level by making a powerful political movement with mobilisation of masses. Gandhi created a new form of swadeshi politics that encouraged the production and exclusive consumption of *khadi*. Sumit Sarkar, the noted historian, defines the concept of Swadeshi, a sentiment closely associated with many phases of Indian nationalism-that indigenous goods should be preferred by consumers even if they were more expensive than or inferior in quality to their imported industries and that it was patriotic duty of men with capital to pioneer such industries even though profits initially might be minimal or non-existent (Swadeshi Movement in Bengal 1905-1908, New Delhi, 1973, p.92).

Gandhi describes swadeshi as a call to consumer to be aware of the violence he is causing by supporting those industries that result in poverty, harm to workers and to humans and other creatures. Indian nationalists believed that the causes of their economic woes were partly due to the British colonialisation of India. Swadeshi was a nationalist movement to boycott British goods and to buy Indian goods.

Historically, the Indian local economy was dependent upon the most productive and sustainable agriculture and horticulture and on pottery, furniture making, metal work, jewelry, leather work, and many other economic activities. But its base had traditionally been in textiles. Each village had its spinners, carders, dyers, and weavers who were the heart of the village economy. However, when India was flooded with machine-made, inexpensive, mass-produced textiles from Lancashire, the local textile artists were rapidly put out of business, and the village economy suffered terribly. Gandhi thought it essential that the industry be restored, and started a campaign to stem the influx of the British cloth. Due to his efforts, hundreds of thousands of untouchables and caste Hindus joined together to discard the mill-made clothes imported from England or from city factories and learned to spin their own yarn and weave their own cloth. The spinning wheel became the symbol of economic freedom, political independence, and cohesive and classless communities. The weaving and wearing of homespun cloth became a mark of distinction for all social groups.

Khadi: A Symbol of Economic Sufficiency

The term *swadeshi* had both economic and political dimensions in India's struggle against British colonialism. For Gandhi, it is centred on handspun *khaddar* and extended to everything that could be produced indigenously by rural masses. *Khadi* emerged as a symbol of *swadeshi*. The *swadeshi* workers articulated the significance of *khadi* to the people of nation through various forms. *Khadi* was portrayed as the material artifact of the nation, which is a traditional product and produced by traditional means. The Gandhian nationalist movement rendered *khadi* a discursive concept by defining its significance in terms of contemporary politics and economics of *swadeshi*. The *swadeshi* proponents effectively transformed a common object of everyday life, homespun, home-woven cloth, into the consummate symbol of the *Indian* community. As it is observed, *khadi* became a visual symbol in that it marked individual bodies as distinctly Indian in relation to visual symbols of regional, religious, caste and class identification. Susan Bean views *khadi* as both a symbol of India's potential economic self-sufficiency and a medium for communicating to the British the dignity of poverty and equality of Indian civilisation.

15.6 SWADESHI: A RELIGIOUS IDEA

Gandhi links up his idea of *swadeshi* to religion. *Swadeshi* is not an isolated economic and political principle of his philosophy. It is very much connected to his philosophy of spiritualism and religion. Gandhi considers economic *swadeshi* not as a boycott movement undertaken by the way of revenge, but as a religious principle to be followed by all. *Swadeshi* is a religious principle to be undergone in utter disregard of physical discomfort caused to individuals. A person conforming to the ideas of *swadeshi* will learn to do without a hundred things which today he considers necessary.

According to Gandhi, *Swadeshi* in religion teaches one to measure the glorious past and re-enact it in the present generation. The pandemonium that is going on in Europe shows that modern civilisation represents forces of evil and darkness, whereas the ancient, *i.e.*, Indian civilisation, represents in its essence, the divine force. Modern civilisation is chiefly materialistic, destructive, as ours is chiefly spiritual. *Swadeshi* is intimately related to Hindu religion. For Gandhi, Hindu religion is inclusive, tolerant and reformatory. In that sense Gandhi's *swadeshi* upholds the tradition of Hindu religion.

15.7 SUMMARY

Swadeshi is one of the central principles of Gandhi's philosophy. Gandhi realises the swaraj through swadeshi. Swadeshi was a paradigmatic instance of totalising territorial nativism by connecting national economy, territory and culture. Gandhi's swadeshi is always in defence of indigenous skills, local knowledge systems, cultural traditions and village economy. Swadeshi may read as self-sufficiency of the home through revitalisation in all its aspects. Through Swadeshi, Gandhi is successful in uniting the economic struggles with nationalist movement. Gandhi envisaged an organic and political society characterised by the economic self-sufficiency and social harmony. The swadeshi worker not only symbolises charkha and khadi but also lives in simplicity and spirituality. In Gandhi's Swadeshi, economics would have a place but would not dominate society. The swadeshi economics is based on the principle of non-possessiveness, where as capitalism is based on possessiveness. It is believed that beyond a certain limit, economic growth becomes detrimental to human well-being. Gandhi's principle of swadeshi has relevance in the contemporary times of globalisation.

15.8 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Discuss various connotations of swadeshi in the philosophy of Gandhi
2. Critically evaluate the economic philosophy of Gandhi.
3. Write a note on village economy of Gandhi
5. Discuss the principles of swadeshi and its relevance in contemporary times.
6. Write a short note on:
 - a) Khadi Industry
 - b) Swadeshi Movement

SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 16 SATYAGRAHA

Structure

16.1 Introduction

Aims and Objectives

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16.2.1 Superiority of Satyagraha to Passive Resistance

16.2.2 Satyagraha, a Glorious, Internal Revolution

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16.8 Satyagraha Legacy outside India

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16.10 Summary

16.11 Terminal Questions

Suggested Readings

16.1 INTRODUCTION

I have no doubt that the British Government is a powerful Government, but I have no doubt also that Satyagraha is a sovereign remedy. The acme of satyagraha would be to lay down our lives for the defence of India's just cause.

Gandhi in *Harijan*, September 1946

'Power' of any state or government is often measured by its military and economic strength and it is always maintained that the country A is powerful enough to convince or coerce country B to take certain measures that are favourable to the former even at the expense of the latter. Against this backdrop, Gandhi's words mentioned above displays his

faith in the philosophy and practice of ‘Satyagraha’, a ‘sovereign remedy’ in the hands of the ‘powerless’ to fight against the most ‘powerful’. Gandhi developed the concept of Satyagraha, which involved a search for *satya* (truth), *ahimsa* (Non-violence) and self-suffering. With his Satyagraha, Gandhi not only challenged the conventional notion of power, but showed to the world that the weaker section of society was as powerful in crucial respects as the strong. He trusted the power of the ‘idea’ of Satyagraha to face the ‘might’ of the British imperialism/colonialism. For him, Sarvodaya is life’s goal and Satyagraha - non-violent resistance - is the means to achieve it, while anasakti is a method of training of self-discipline to gain power. Gandhi believed that Satyagraha is an infallible panacea and is the only weapon that is “suited to the genius of our people and of our land, which is the nursery of the most ancient religions ...”

The Indian National Congress (INC) established in 1885 worked for the arousal and consolidation of the national feeling, bringing in a large number of the Indians into the vortex of nationalist political agitation and struggle. Early nationalists offered economic critique of imperialism/colonialism and constantly wrote and spoke about India’s growing poverty and linked it with the British colonial economic exploitation. The nationalists gave full support to the popular struggle for human rights that was being waged in South Africa after 1893 by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Later, by 1915, Gandhi returned to India and plunged into the national politics. The emergence of Gandhi in the Indian political scene and his ‘Satyagraha’ movement turned it into a vigorous and successful mass movement, which eventually freed India from the clutches of the European colonial rule.

Aims and Objectives

After studying the unit, you will be able to understand:

- The philosophy of ‘Satyagraha’ and its political and socio-economic dimensions.
- Satyagraha as an attempt to achieve a silent, non-violent revolution.
- The difference between ‘Satyagraha’ and ‘Passive Resistance’

16.2 CONCEPT OF SATYAGRAHA

Having experienced the scornful racist discrimination in South Africa, Gandhi resolved to unite the ‘coloured’ people and to fight for their rights. Gandhi initially called the popular movement against the racist regime as ‘passive resistance’, a term he borrowed from Leo Tolstoy. But ‘Passive resistance’, was not only a foreign term that Gandhi had strong reservations about, but the connotations of the term was also inadequate to highlight the aspect of truth and moral courage that Gandhi associated with non-violent political resistance. Moreover, it put political ends at the forefront, dissociated from deeper ideological values. Gandhi needed an Indian term that could encompass all these aspects of the revolution within it. Gandhi felt that “passive resistance” was “too narrowly” construed and could be interpreted as a weapon of the weak. Maganlal Gandhi suggested the term Sadagraha (sad-truth; agraha-firmness and so, firmness in a good cause).

Gandhi changed the word ‘Sad’ to ‘Satya’ - “Satyagraha”, to designate the struggle, he was planning to launch. The word “Sat” implies openness, honesty and fairness: Truth. “The word Satya (Truth), is derived from Sat, which means being. And nothing is or exists in reality except Truth (M.K. Gandhi, Young India, July 30, 1931).” Satyagraha literally means insistence on truth. This insistence arms the votary with matchless power.

This power or force is connoted by the word Satyagraha. Gandhi explains: “Truth (Satya) implies love and firmness (Agraha) engenders and therefore serves as a synonym for force. I thus began to call the Indian movement “Satyagraha”, that is to say, the Force which is born of Truth and Love or non-violence, and gave up the use of the phrase “passive resistance” (M.K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, 1928, p. 72).

The term satyagraha expressed the nature of non-violent direct action of the Indians against the racial policy of the Government of South Africa. It is the relentless pursuit of truthful ends through non-violent means. It is an attempt to vindicate truth, not by inflicting suffering on the opponent but on one’s own self in an effort to bring in change of heart on the part of the opponent. It postulates the conquest of the adversary by suffering in one’s own person. Gandhi maintained: “The hardest heart and the grossest ignorance must disappear before the rising sun of suffering without anger and without malice” (*Young India*, February 19, 1925).

While commenting on the basic characteristic of Satyagraha which implies onward march only and of no possibility of retreat or look back, Gandhi comments: “Since Satyagraha is one of the most powerful methods of direct action a Satyagrahi (practitioner of Satyagraha) exhausts all other means before he resorts to Satyagraha. He will therefore constantly and continually approach the constituted authority, he will appeal to public opinion, educate public opinion, state his case calmly and coolly before everybody, who wants to listen to him, and only after he has exhausted all these avenues will he resort to Satyagraha. But when he has found the impelling call of the inner voice within him and launches out upon Satyagraha he has burnt his boats and there is no receding” (*Young India*, October 20, 1927). Again, he adds: “My experience has taught me that a law of progression applies to every righteous struggle. But in the case of Satyagraha the law amounts to an axiom. As a Satyagraha struggle progresses onward, many other elements help to swell its current, and there is a constant growth in the results to which it leads. This is really inevitable, and is bound up with the first principles of Satyagraha. For in Satyagraha the minimum is also the maximum, and as it is irreducible minimum, there is no question of retreat, and the only movement possible is an advance”.

Highlighting the significance of ‘Fasting’ as a tactic as a part of Satyagraha philosophy, Gandhi points out: “Fasting unto death is an integral part of Satyagraha programme, and it is the greatest and most effective weapon in its armory under given circumstances. Not every one is qualified for undertaking it without a proper course of training (*Harijan*, July 26, 1942). Here, Gandhi tries to convince the detractors of the demonstrative effect of one’s suffering on others, for paving way to a positive impact.

16.2.1 Superiority of Satyagraha to Passive Resistance

Satyagraha and Passive Resistance are methods for meeting aggression and settling conflicts. Passive Resistance as practised by non-Conformists in England and the Germans in Ruhr against the French was a political weapon of expediency whereas Satyagraha is a moral weapon based on the superiority of soul-force or love-force over physical force. Passive Resistance is the weapon of the weak, while Satyagraha can be practised only by the bravest who have the courage to die without killing. Passive Resistance aims at embarrassing the opponent into submission, while Satyagraha intends to wean the opponent from error by love and patient suffering. In Passive Resistance there is no place for love for the opponent; in Satyagraha there is no room for ill-will and hatred, since the Satyagrahi is supposed to act against the evil and not the evil-doer. Passive Resistance is static, while Satyagraha is dynamic. Passive Resistance is a negative approach, while

Satyagraha is positive in content and conduct. Passive Resistance does not exclude the possibility of violent methods. Satyagraha does not permit violence in any form or shape and on any eventualities. There is nothing passive about Satyagraha and on the other hand, it is active, pure and simple. It emphasizes internal strength of character, while passive resistance does not lay emphasis on the moral stature of the resistance (M.K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, 1928, pp.73-5).

16.2.2 Satyagraha, a Glorious, Internal Revolution

Gandhi believed that change in the polity or society is to be brought about by changing the hearts and minds of men and not by bloody revolutions. Since every individual has a conscience, Gandhi aimed at its awakening, not through violent means, but, by stressing on self-purification and moral influence. He was convinced that through Satyagraha the change of heart can be made possible. In essence, 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 wrongdoer cannot do the wrong intended by him (*Harijan*, December 10, 1938). It seeks to eliminate antagonisms without harming the antagonists themselves, as opposed to violent resistance, which is meant to cause harm to the antagonist. A Satyagrahi therefore does not seek to end or destroy the relationship with the antagonist, but instead seeks to transform or “purify” it to a higher level. Satyagraha is also termed as “silent force” or a “soul force”. It arms the individual with moral power rather than physical power. It is a “universal force” that “makes no distinction between kinsmen and strangers, young and old, man and woman, friend and foe.”

16.2.3 Satyagraha and Militant Nationalism

The Indian anarchists living in London at the beginning of the twentieth century and those who were in the field in India were advocating use of force and violence to achieve the right to self-determination and freedom from colonial rule quickly, since they sincerely and seriously believed that strategies of moderates may delay, if not deny, the achievement of freedom. The youth of the country lamented the evil effects of the colonial rule and this helpless and hapless feeling as well as the failure of the moderates in achieving the goal of self-determination, enthused some among them to take recourse to violence as a means to achieve their right.

In his *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi criticised the use of force by the Indians as a means to achieve the goal of self-rule. For him, “Swaraj is not English rule without Englishman. Real Home Rule is self-rule or self-control; the way to it is passive resistance that is soul-force or love-force and in order to exert this force, Swadeshi in every sense is necessary” (M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, 1938, Eighteenth Reprint, 2006, p. 90). “Real home rule is possible only where passive resistance is the guiding force of the people. Any other rule is foreign rule”, remained his conviction (*Ibid.*, pp.72-3). Gandhi reiterated that “Brute-force is not natural to Indian soil. You will have, therefore, to rely wholly on soul-force. You must not consider that violence is necessary at any stage for reaching our goal” (*Ibid*, p.84).

Though he accepted and acknowledged the patriotic spirit of extremists and their craving for right to self-determination and admired their spirit of sacrifice for the sake of their mother country, he disapproved of their violent activities and believed that the extremists would complicate rather than clear the mess that the Indians were in under the alien rule. As an alternative, he suggested ahimsa and Satyagraha, non-violent mass movement to

face the all-powerful British Raj. He believed that ahimsa is the weapon of the strong and a true Satyagrahi is handling a more lethal weapon than the extremists were handling.

16.2.4 Satyagraha, Civil Disobedience and Non-Cooperation

Civil disobedience and non-cooperation as practised under Satyagraha are based on the “law of suffering”, a doctrine that the endurance of suffering is a means to an end. This end implies a moral upliftment or progress of an individual or society. Therefore, non-cooperation in Satyagraha is a means to secure the cooperation of the opponent consistently with truth and justice. Gandhi sincerely believed that “non-cooperation with evil is as much a duty as is cooperation with good”. Pacifism, civil disobedience, rightful resistance against wrong policies, passive resistance, non-cooperation are some of the forms of non-violent struggles Gandhi brought into practice. All these terms come under the common term “Satyagraha”.

16.2.5 Duragraha

Gandhi contrasted Satyagraha (holding on to truth) with “Duragraha” (holding on by force), as in protest meant more to harass than enlighten opponents. He wrote: “There must be no impatience, no barbarity, no insolence, no undue pressure. If we want to cultivate a true spirit of democracy, we cannot afford to be intolerant. Intolerance betrays want of faith in one’s cause.”

16.3 SOURCES OF THE IDEA OF SATYAGRAHA

‘Satyagraha’ was based on the principles of Ahimsa or non-violence, which was the founding principle of Gandhi’s political ideology that was based on theological tenets of Jainism, Buddhism, Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gita. The Upanishads declare that the entire world rests on the bedrock of satya or truth. Buddha gave to the mankind the message of Ahimsa or non-violence and maintained that hatred could be overcome not by hatred but by love. Mahavira held ahimsa as the highest form of religion. The Hindu mythology abounds in stories, especially of Raja Harishchandra, extolling the virtue of holding on to truth, through thick and thin. Philosophy of Socrates and teachings of Jesus Christ too are based on perfect Satyagraha. The Christian dictum, “Resist no evil; if anybody smite your right cheek, show him the left also”, remains the guiding principle of the Gandhian Satyagraha.

Gandhi gave this concept a new shape and philosophy and converted it into a new weapon against evil. Gandhi was also influenced by the writings of Thoreau, Tolstoy and Ruskin. They advocated non-cooperation of civilians against the government if it proved suppressive or tyrannical. Their thoughts got a practical shape in Gandhi’s approach, first against the highly unruly administration of colonial Governments in Africa and later in the struggle for Independence in India. It is rather natural when Gandhi maintains: “I do not claim to have originated any new principle or doctrine. I have simply tried in my own way to apply this eternal principle to our daily life and problems. Truth and non-violence are as old as hills. All I have done is to try experiments on as vast a scale as I could” (*Harijan*, March 28, 1936).

16.4 SATYAGRAHI

Satyagraha is fundamentally a way of life, which guides the modes of political activism undertaken by the Satyagrahis. On an individual level, it involves a life committed to truth,

chastity, non-attachment and hard-work. On the political front, Satyagraha involves utilisation of non-violent measures to curb the opponent, and ideally to convert him rather than to coerce him into submission. A Satyagrahi wants to make the evil-doers see the evil that they are indulging into, and realise their injustice. It involves transforming them into acceptance of the right, and if that fails to come around, then at least to stop them from obstructing the right. Picketing, non-cooperation, peaceful marches and meetings, along with a peaceful disobedience of the laws of the land were typical modes of resistance adopted by Satyagrahis. His course is plain. He must stand unmoved in the midst of all cross currents.

Reverence to the opposition was one of the unique features of the Satyagraha preached by Gandhi. Under no circumstance, should the opposition or the flag of the opposition be insulted in a Satyagraha movement. A true Satyagrahi had to resist and bear all hardships, including physical assault with patience, not ever stooping to anger, and to defend the faith even at the cost of life. Satyagrahis had to be extremely strong in inner strength and moral courage in order to do that. Satyagrahis need to maintain a pure and simple life. Gandhi made his own life a veritable example of his teachings, and also turned his ashram at Sabarmati as a haven for individuals who chose to maintain a life based on his teachings. Violence of all forms was to be resisted and refrained from. Abuses and swearing were strictly prohibited and all forms of abstinence from sensual pleasures were highly advocated. Every one was meant to work for his or her food and the clothes, which Gandhi called bread-labour. Wearing Khadi and leading a simple life was prescribed. Absolute secularism and eradication of every shade of untouchability were also distinct characteristics of satyagraha. Through this, Gandhi believed that the Indians would be strong enough to tread the paths of a truly non-violent revolution.

Satyagraha or struggle against injustice could be individualistic or on a mass scale. Gandhi felt that a Satyagrahi had to obey the laws of the society intelligently, and of his own free will. For mass civil disobedience it was necessary to create a band of well tried, pure hearted volunteers who thoroughly understood the strict conditions of Satyagraha. Patience and sleepless vigilance were required for the same. Gandhi was also aware of the difficulties in organising devoted volunteers, in a continued struggle. Gandhi set up Satyagraha Ashram at Kochrab with 25 men and women as the first inmates to train Satyagrahis.

16.4.1 Satyagrahi and his Opponent

While elaborating on the relationship between a Satyagrahi and his opponent, Gandhi maintained that the former must know that his suffering will melt “the stoniest heart of the stoniest” opponent (*Young India*, June 4, 1925). As such, through self-suffering he appeals to his opponents better nature, as retaliation is to his baser (*Harijan*, July 26, 1942). “It is never the intention of a Satyagrahi to embarrass the wrongdoer. The appeal is never to his fear; it is, must be, always to his heart. The Satyagrahi’s object is to convert, not to coerce, the wrongdoer. He should avoid artificiality in all his doings. He acts naturally and from inward conviction” (*Harijan*, March 25, 1939). A satyagrahi must be willing to shoulder any sacrifice which is occasioned by the struggle which they have initiated, rather than pushing such sacrifice or suffering onto their opponent, lest the opponent become alienated and access to their portion of the truth become lost. He must always provide a face-saving “way out” for the opponents. The goal is to discover a wider vista of truth and justice, not to achieve victory over the opponent. A Satyagrahi bids goodbye to fear. He is therefore never afraid of trusting the opponent. Even if the

opponent plays him false twenty times, the Satyagrahi is ready to trust him the twenty-first time, for an implicit trust in human nature is the very essence of his creed.

16.4.2 Discipline of the Satyagrahi

The following points were laid down by Gandhi as a code of discipline for volunteers in the 1930 movement:

- Harbour no anger but suffer the anger of the opponent. Refuse to return the assault of the opponent.
- Do not submit to any order given in anger, even though severe punishment is threatened for disobeying.
- Refrain from insults and swearing.
- Protect opponents from insult or attack, even at the risk of life.
- Do not resist arrest nor the attachment of property, unless holding property as a trustee.
- Refuse to surrender any property held in trust at the risk of life.
- If taken prisoner, behave in an exemplary manner.
- As a member of a Satyagraha unit, obey the orders of Satyagraha leaders, and resign from the unit in the event of serious disagreement.
- Do not expect guarantees for maintenance of dependents.

Gandhi envisioned Satyagraha as not only a tactic to be used in acute political struggle, but as a universal solvent for injustice and harm. He felt that it was equally applicable to large-scale political struggle and to one-on-one interpersonal conflicts and that it should be taught to everyone. He asked Satyagrahis to follow the following principles (Yamas described in Yoga Sutra):

- Nonviolence (ahimsa)
- Truth — this includes honesty, but goes beyond it to mean living fully in accord with and in devotion to that which is true
- Non-stealing
- Chastity (brahmacharya) — this includes sexual chastity, but also the subordination of other sensual desires to the primary devotion to truth
- Non-possession (not the same as poverty)
- Body-labour or bread-labour
- Control of the palate
- Fearlessness
- Equal respect for all religions
- Economic strategy such as boycotts (swadeshi)
- Freedom from untouchability

16.5 SATYAGRAHA IN SOUTH AFRICA

Gandhi's Satyagraha experiment began in South Africa in 1906. The non-white immigrants were expected to register themselves in the Registrar of Asiatics and the government issued a certificate of registration with their identity and fingerprints. Failure to comply with the regulation resulted in forfeiture of their right to live in Transvaal and the defaulter was liable to a fine of 100 pounds and deportation. Gandhi was determined to oppose this black ordinance and goaded the Indians not to submit to the ordinance if it became law. While speaking before 3,000 Indians gathered at a theater in Johannesburg on September 11, 1906, Gandhi organised a strategy of nonviolent resistance to oppose racist policies of the South African Government. Satyagraha was born and since then, it has been adopted by many around the world to resist social injustice and oppression. On July 1, 1907, the ordinance came into effect and the Indians were required to get themselves registered by July 31. Gandhi and his followers stoutly opposed the move. The Transvaal Indian Association organised boycott, dissuaded Indians from registering and as a result only 100 out of 1500 registered in July. Leaders of the movement including Gandhi were imprisoned. General Smuts assured Gandhi that in case the Indians would voluntarily register, the Registration Act would be repealed. On Gandhi's advice, the Indians voluntarily registered by April 1908. However, Smuts went back on his promise and refused to repeal the act. Popular movement was resumed and Gandhi announced his decision to burn the certificates collected earlier. Soon, women, working class and the peasants joined the Satyagraha movement against oppression and injustice meted out by the White rulers towards the coloured people. Gandhi devised and gave concrete shape to his doctrine of Satyagraha and between 1907 and 1914 he initiated a number of civil resistance movements which revealed the effectiveness of organised nonviolent resistance against a more powerful opponent.

16.6 SATYAGRAHA MOVEMENTS IN BRITISH INDIA

The British Government appointed the Rowlatt Commission for recommendations regarding administration of justice in India. The Committee recommended greater curbs on civil liberties in India. Consequently, the Imperial Legislative Council passed two bills, one provided for the arrest and detention of persons involved in anarchical activities, the other made the possession of seditious literature a crime. The Rowlatt Bills had granted sweeping powers of preventive detention or enforced residence on all suspected political agitators and as such was received with dismay by every section of Indian public opinion.

In opposition to these, Gandhi initially requested the Viceroy to withhold his assent for the 'black bills', but on the latter's failure, he galvanised mass support for this act of defiance; he proclaimed April 6 as Satyagraha Day, a day of *hartal* (suspension of all business), fasting, mass meetings to protest against the hated legislation. The non-co-operation evoked a widespread response. The people were denied of their freedom of expression, freedom of association, right to religion and other such fundamental freedoms. On April 13, 1919, people who congregated in the Jallianwala Bagh for certain religious purpose were fired upon by the British army officer O'Dyer. This massacre, termed by Nehru as "a long horror and terrible indignity", resulted in the loss of 1,202 lives and left 3,600 wounded and some permanently disabled.

Eruption of violence among the masses during the course of the popular movement in different parts of the country made Gandhi to realise the need for teaching the people of

civil disobedience and Satyagraha and launched massive training programme. In *Young India* he called the public attention “to constructive Satyagraha as also sometimes cleansing Satyagraha”.

16.6.1 Champaran Satyagraha

Under the Tinkathia system the peasants of Champaran in Bihar were bound by law to grow indigo on 3/20th of their land and sell it to the British planters at prices arbitrarily fixed by the latter. They were liable to unlawful extraction and oppression by the planters. Gandhi went into a systematic enquiry into their grievances and took up their cause. His activities forced the local administration to appoint a committee of inquiry and as a result, Champaran Agrarian Bill and subsequently Act was passed protecting the interests of the poor peasants.

16.6.2 Kheda/ Kaira Satyagraha

The crops had failed in Kaira district of Gujarat in 1918 but the officers insisted on full collection of land revenue. Gandhi organised the peasants to offer Satyagraha and goaded them to refuse to pay taxes and to suffer all consequences. Even those who could afford to pay declined to pay as a matter of principle, on the face of all threats of coercion and attachment. The government was forced to yield to the pressure and to arrive at a settlement with the peasants.

16.6.3 Ahmedabad Mill Worker's Strike

Gandhi led the mill-workers of Ahmedabad in a strike against the mill-owners who had refused to pay them higher wages and exploited them severely. He rallied behind them by under-taking a fast and this united all so firmly that the mill-owners gave in on the fourth day of the fast and agreed to a 35 per cent wage increase.

16.6.4 Bardoli Satyagraha

The Bardoli Satyagraha, led by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel with undisputed zest, marks an important movement with non-violence as its hallmark. In 1928, the taluka contained 137 villages with some parts of it rich in crops like cotton, rice etc. The peasants of the region were incensed by a large increase in land revenue announced by the British government. The non-violent movement started after two years of petitioning and protesting, with the peasants moving a resolution on non-payment of taxes until the government considered withdrawing the increase in revenue. Large number of men and women participated in this Satyagraha movement wherein they were threatened by the government that their land would be forfeited. An iron will is said to have prevailed in Bardoli with mass resignations from the village headmen and the subordinate officers. After a four-month battle and a spate of observations, threats of arrests and continuous assessment of situation, peace was opted for and led to the reinstatement of the headmen and talatis and release of arrested Satyagrahis. Following a careful scrutiny of official records and taking stock of the situation, the government annulled the increase which they tried to enforce at any cost. The leadership acumen of Patel was recognised by one and all and earned him the credit of being a true disciple of Gandhi. Sarojini Naidu, a prominent leader, noted that Patel ‘translated Gandhi’s teachings into practical, dynamic action’ (cited in Rajmohan Gandhi, Patel, pp.168-9).

16.6.5 Salt Satyagraha

The British had decided to take the Indian salt back to Britain and refine it and

repackage it and sell it back to the Indian people at about 20 times the price. The enormous taxes imposed on salt, an essential commodity that everybody needs every day, was perceived by one and all totally unjust, and made Gandhi to decide to defy the salt tax. He decided to break the infamous salt law as it affected everybody, Hindus and Muslims, rich and poor. Gandhi calculated that movement against oppressive salt laws would unite the people irrespective of their religion, region or economic status.

The Salt Satyagraha was organised in 1930, when Gandhi announced to the nation that he was going to defy the salt laws enacted by the British and defy the British government. When Gandhi began the march, 247 miles to the sea, on March 12, 1930, it just caught the imagination of the people and millions poured out into the streets; the response was so tremendous that the Congress doubters also began to see the wisdom of it, and the British government was taken completely by surprise. It turned out to be a turning point in the freedom struggle in India. Gandhi's Satyagraha reached the pinnacle of success, and the Indian Nationalist movement reached a feverish pitch, forcing the government to initiate procedures towards the Gandhi-Irwin pact, followed by the Second Round Table Conference, where Gandhi gave one of his greatest speeches exposing the evils of the British rule and endorsing the methods of Satyagraha.

16.6.6 Individual Satyagraha

From his experience, Gandhi understood that every individual is not fit to be a 'Satyagrahi' by inclination and temperament and so, there was a virtual need for training and conditioning. He was aghast with the mass violence in retaliation of use of force by the state agencies like police. As such, in October 1940, when he thought of launching a fresh Satyagraha movement, it was decided that the campaign should be limited to selected individuals who were trained to be Satyagrahis. To his credit, Vinoba Bhave was selected by Gandhi to be the first leader to offer Satyagraha. Satyagraha by that time has gained wide popularity, and there were committed Satyagrahis all over the country. The Quit India Movement reclaimed the ideals of Satyagraha, which finally went a long way in securing Indian independence by August 15, 1947.

16.7 SATYAGRAHA IN THE FRENCH AND PORTUGUESE INDIA

16.7.1 French India

The news of the British withdrawal from India before August 1947 augmented the nationalist movement in the French Indian colonies. The locals intended to join free India and this idea spurred them into action. On August 3, people of Pondicherry surrounded the Government offices and demanded freedom from the French rule. Under the leadership of Kamal Prasad Ghosh, the mayor of Chandernagore, a general strike was called for and a *hartal* was announced but withdrawn after the release of about 100 persons who had been arrested earlier. On August 9, the French Indians took to direct action and the public agitation crippled the French India administration as the people sealed the government offices, forced the police to lay down their arms and drove away the French Administrator. Anticipating a flare-up in the French Indian settlements on the eve of August 15, the French approached the Indian Government through Paul Henri Roux, *Chargé d'Affaires* of France in New Delhi at that juncture, who appraised Nehru to the effect and sought an amicable settlement between the Governments of France and India. Nehru suggested to the French to put their stand on French India on paper and

present it to the Indian Government but the French refused to commit themselves on paper. Meanwhile, François Baron, the then Governor of French India, directly approached Gandhi, and pleaded for his interference and assured him of their resolve to settle the matter peacefully through negotiations with its Indian counterpart, assuring to introduce constitutional reforms towards democratising the French Indian administration. Gandhi condemned the action of the Indians who declared their freedom from France and Portugal, as thoughtless and a sign of arrogance and warned against taking the law in their own hands. Gandhi condemned the freedom fighters in Chandernagore as *duragrahis* and not *satyagrahis*, who are supposed to be fighters of a righteous cause through fair means and not violence. Gandhi's condemnation was distorted, printed and distributed throughout French India that further confused and divided the nationalist elements. Taking benefit of this confusion and the resultant lull in the popular movement, Baron let loose rigorous oppression of the freedom fighters and started constitutional reforms for which, he claimed, he got the approval of Gandhi. Though the Indian leaders were enamoured by the French, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, true to his character and conviction, firmly asserted that the French Settlements too must be liberated at the same time as India became free from the British colonial yoke while Gandhi and Nehru opined that their liberation could wait for some more time.

However, on November 7, 1947, Subbiah, the Communist leader from Pondicherry and Arunanshu from Chandernagore met Gandhi at Delhi and impressed him on the cunningness of Baron and how his words were twisted and falsely presented to serve the purpose of suppressing the *satyagraha* and in perpetuating the French rule on the Indian soil and strengthening their regime here. Gandhi maintained: "I am surprised that my friendly act towards Chandernagore could be distorted by anyone to suggest that I could ever countenance an inferior status in the little foreign settlements in India." (CWMG, LXXXIX (August 1, 1947 – November 10, 1947), pp. 500, 514). The leaders and participants of freedom movement in French India imbibed the ideals of Gandhism and fought against the French colonial rule. The Gandhian non-violent movement with a popular base and participation subsequently achieved independence from the French colonial rule as the French Indian problem was solved amicably through peaceful negotiation between France and India by 1954.

16.7.2 Portuguese India

The Portuguese India too witnessed the establishment of nationalist organisations such as the Goa Seva Sangh founded in 1943 by Purushottam Kakodkar, Vinayak Mayenkar, Nilakanth Karapurkar and others to fight the Portuguese colonial rule. The spread of nationalist ideas harnessed mass support for the *satyagraha* movement at a later date. This awakening resulted in the launching of a popular movement in the Portuguese India for the restoration of civil liberties on June 18, 1946 under the leadership of Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, who maintained: "Goa is part of us (the Indians) and we can't allow her movements for freedom and unity to be suppressed with such wanton ferocity". He advised the Goans that "the first step towards the resurgence of national life in Goa was the abolition of its infamous law regarding assembly, organizations and publication". The Portuguese Government reacted vehemently; arrested Lohia and barred his entry into Goa. With the formation of Goa National Congress which decided to offer *satyagraha* on 8th, 18th and 28th of every month, public meetings, hoisting of Indian national flags, and circulation of pamphlets were undertaken. Police brutalities and imprisonment of the leaders failed to unnerve the Goan nationalists. While supporting Lohia's courageous action, Gandhi advised him to leave the matter to Nehru. The news of the British

withdrawal from India by mid 1947 encouraged popular movements in Portuguese India in spite of the ruthless suppression and oppression spearheaded by the colonial administration. The intransigence of the Portuguese colonial rulers made it difficult for Nehru and the Indian Government to engage and convince its Portuguese counterpart.

The Indian nationalist elements resorted to direct action, which resulted in *Satyagraha* on August 15, 1954. The Portuguese authorities endeavoured to convince the international community that the *satyagrahis* were not Goans but Indian intruders. It also alleged connivance and support of the Indian Government. Its proposal to appoint a team of observers from the countries selected by Portugal and India to probe the matter was turned down by the Indian Government. Further, in spite of appeals from the leaders of the liberation movement to come to their rescue, Nehru believed that the *Satyagraha* opposition to Portuguese colonialism should be an “entirely Goan movement, popular and indigenous” and did not favour the Indian nationals’ participation in the *Satyagraha* movement in Goa. Despite tremendous adverse public opinion, Nehru stuck to his guns and imposed a ban on the entry of Indian nationals into Goa on August 15, 1954. In June 1955, the Portuguese police opened fire and dispersed a gathering of Goans at Cancona in South Goa as they were taking “an oath of allegiance to the liberation movement” from within, without any prior warning indicating that the *satyagrahis* were not safe in the Portuguese India.

Despite the lack of open support and encouragement from the Indian side, mass *Satyagraha* was held on August 15, 1955. Some 4,204 *satyagrahis* marched into the Portuguese possessions but faced the Portuguese police firing. This violent episode led to the death of 22 *satyagrahis* and injuries to 225 persons. Following this, Nehru deplored the ‘wanton and brutal exercise of force against unarmed people’ and asked the Portuguese to close their delegation in Delhi. On September 1, 1955, both the countries closed down their respective Consulates and the Goa borders were sealed off preceded by the economic sanctions and further denial of any facilities to the Portuguese ships entering Indian ports. On September 4, 1955, the Congress Working Committee declared that individual *Satyagraha* by the Indian nationals for the liberation of Goa should be avoided and ruled out mass entries into Goa. In April 1956, Morarji Desai, the then Chief Minister of Bombay, urged the Goan citizens of Bombay to build up a fearless *Satyagraha* movement and pointed out: “But, the struggle for Goan freedom has essentially to be a Goan movement. You have to help yourselves.” In a public meeting held in Poona on February 5, 1957 a demand was raised for the relaxation of the Union Government’s restrictions on the non-violent *Satyagraha* campaign launched by the people for the liberation of Goa by K.M.Jadhe, President of the *Goa Vimochan Sahayak Samiti* (*The Hindu*, September 5, 1955). The Portuguese Indian authorities had scant respect for non-violent *Satyagraha* movement, and the *satyagrahis* were dealt with utmost contempt and in a crude fashion. To avoid violent reaction, Nehru relied on economic blockade and then on diplomacy. In the end, he had to resort to ‘show’ of force, if not ‘use’ of force to liberate Goa from the Portuguese colonists.

16.8 SATYAGRAHA LEGACY OUTSIDE INDIA

Satyagraha has gained wide acceptance around the world as a more potent tool of resistance than armed violence. *Satyagraha* legacy was carried on long after Gandhi and Martin Luther King used it in his battle against racism and also used the term “soul force” during his famous “I Have a Dream” speech. The Reverend Martin Luther King used it in the United States to oppose segregation and during the campaigns he led for the civil

rights movement in the United States. While acknowledging Gandhian influence over his work, Martin Luther King said: “Like most people, I had heard of Gandhi, but I had never studied him seriously. As I read I became deeply fascinated by his campaigns of nonviolent resistance. I was particularly moved by his Salt March to the Sea and his numerous fasts. The whole concept of Satyagraha was profoundly significant to me. As I delved deeper into the philosophy of Gandhi, my skepticism concerning the power of love gradually diminished, and I came to see for the first time its potency in the area of social reform. ... It was in this Gandhian emphasis on love and nonviolence that I discovered the method for social reform that I had been seeking”. Later, Nelson Mandela used the Satyagraha technique in South Africa to end apartheid.

16.9 CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

At present, the negative effects of globalisation have created an unbridgeable gap between rich and poor countries and people as well. Powerful nations try to corner all the world's resources for their own benefit and are ready to use military force to impose their will on others. Moreover, militancy, insurgency and terrorism have become the order of the day in several parts of the world. Minority Politics of language, culture, ethnicity, religion and region and consequent crises situation has taken a heavy toll on global peace and security. Real or perceived grievances – political, economic and socio-cultural – have led to catastrophic conditions everywhere. On failure of peaceful, constitutional means in achieving the goal, the leadership has taken recourse to violence and use of force. There are incidents leading to huge loss of life and property by terrorist activities and also by counter-terrorist actions of the State. Unfortunately, innocent civilians are becoming targets of both terrorists and state agencies. Terrorists terrorise to discredit the State in the eyes of its own subjects and State terrorises to eliminate opposition to its authority and to suppress political dissensions. While terrorists try to justify their action in the name of right to self-determination/achievement of political goals/ root cause of socio-economic injustice, the State justifies it in the name of protecting their citizens and safeguarding their territorial integrity. There is rather a race between the parties to terrorise and who terrorises more comprehensively and effectively wins the race. This is the sorry spectacle of international politics of the day. In such a situation, all right thinking human beings have to resolve that violence is unacceptable and unjustifiable and serves no purpose.

Here comes Gandhian technique of ‘Satyagraha’ and his vision of a non-violent mass movement. All his arguments against the use of violence on the part of anarchists against the British colonial rule are more relevant today than they were ever before. That violence leads to more violence needs no further proof. His advocacy of the use of soul-force or love-force and his strategy of Satyagraha to attain unsullied ‘swaraj’ stands vindicated. Uninterrupted peace and ever-lasting prosperity could be achieved, if only Gandhian prescription to the issues of globalisation and international terrorism is paid heed of.

16.10 SUMMARY

To achieve the goal of national independence from colonial rule, Gandhi emphasised ahimsa and satya, which he welded together in the concept and practice of Satyagraha. Satyagraha proved to be a novel method of political action, a technique which revolutionised Indian politics and galvanised millions to action against the British Raj. Satyagraha for Gandhi was the only legitimate way to earn one's political rights, as it was based on the ideals of truth and non-violence. Satyagraha was the key aspect of all revolutions of the Indian National Movement in the Gandhian era. It is the most potent legacy Gandhi left

to India and to the world. Satyagraha is the pursuit of truth. Gandhi believed that truth should be the cornerstone of everybody's life and that we must dedicate our lives to pursuing truth, to finding out the truth in our lives. And so his entire philosophy was the philosophy of life. It was not just a philosophy for conflict resolution, but something that we have to imbibe in our life and live it all the time so that we can improve and become better human beings.

16.11 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Describe the concept of 'Satyagraha' and bring out its political, socio-economic and spiritual dimensions.
 2. Evaluate the role of Gandhi in transforming the Concept of Satyagraha as a political weapon against the European Colonial masters.
 3. Is Satyagraha a panacea to the present day ills in national and international politics?
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(Compiled by Ms.Mamta Tyagi, Research and Teaching Assistant, School of Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Studies, Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi)