
UNIT 1 CONTEXT AND EMERGENCE OF GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

Gandhi is widely recognized as the preeminent theorist of nonviolent civil disobedience, the leader of India's successful campaign for national independence and an architect of modern Indian self-identity. He never wrote a comprehensive and systematic political or philosophical work in the mode of Thomas Hobbes or Hegel, and the pamphlets and books he did write are extremely diverse in topic: they include criticisms of modern civilization, the place of religion in human life, the meaning of non-violence, social and economic programmes and even health issues. These works are constructed upon a series of concepts (*satyagraha*, *swaraj*, *sarvodaya*) which Gandhi elaborates into thematic strands. The Unit aims to throw some light on the unique context and the advent of Gandhi into a national leader.

The emergence of Gandhi played a pivotal role in the history of Indian Nationalism. He took the country by storm with his novel political ideologies centered on the cardinal principles of *ahimsa* and *satyagraha*. Armed with these ideological tools Gandhi shouldered critical responsibilities in the momentous events that finally led India to the path of freedom. The emergence of Gandhi, on the Indian political scenario was not the mere instance of another emerging new leader, but it was the rise of a whole new philosophy that permeated into every sphere of the Indian psyche. Gandhi's political ideals were merely an extension of his spiritual tenets, which were rooted in deep humanitarian values. Gandhi's greatness lies not only within pioneering a unique fervor in Indian politics and the rise of the masses, but in the way he revolutionized the entire way of looking at politics as an extension of mankind's inherent greatness, enriched with an innate belief in and commitment to truth. No wonder, he is revered as the Mahatma and has been immortalized as The Father of the Nation.

Thus by the end of the Unit you should have a fair idea of,

- context and emergence of the phenomenon of Gandhi and his philosophy;
- reading Gandhi with the complex nuances his work deserves.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

India's freedom struggle is a long and fascinating story. It is unique in the sense that it did not descend suddenly or abruptly like a bolt from the blue, but it matured and took shape in the womb of time for more than a century. Its revolutionary character consisted not in the quantity of bloodshed, but in the quality of the changes it brought about in the political system the socio-economic order of India. It was not a bloody revolution, but a peaceful one carried out with the unique Gandhian weapons of '*Satyagraha*' and 'Non-violence'. It was basically an ideological conflict between the emerging Indian Nationalism and entrenched British Imperialism. Its uniqueness is to be seen in the fact that the Indian National Congress which spearheaded the revolt against the British Imperialism was not a mere political party in any ordinary sense of the term, but it was a national liberation movement. As such it was able to inspire and attract different groups of people with diverse, even conflicting, interests and forge a united front to fight for the liberation of India from the yoke of the oppressive colonial rule. Thus the Indian National Movement provided a common platform for all the freedom fighters irrespective of their race, religion, caste, class, region, language and sex.

Gandhi appeared on the political firmament of India and imparted a new momentum to the nationalist movement. Jawaharlal Nehru has described the advent of Mahatma Gandhi in his inimitable dramatic style in his book "Discovery of India", he says, "and then Gandhi came. He was like a powerful current of fresh air that made us stretch ourselves and take deep breaths; like a beam of light that pierced the darkness and removed the scales from our eyes; like a whirlwind that upset many things, but most of all the working of people's minds". Gandhi's rise in Indian politics gave a new hope to the people. He filled the leadership void and dominated the Indian National Congress for about three decades until India's independence was won. He imparted to the great national organization a new dynamic spirituality for combat, which he produced by rediscovering the long forgotten strings of the Indian genius, and effecting a synthesis between the ancient civilization of India and modern western civilization. Under his dynamic and inspiring leadership, the masses of India stirred themselves and plunged into the nationalist movement. His identification with the common people of India in terms of their poverty, frugal lifestyle, culture, language and religious beliefs and practices as well as their dreams and aspirations for human dignity and good life was so complete, sincere and authentic that even the most stubborn and obstinate among them found it difficult to resist his call to join the non-violent struggle for the liberation of India from foreign rule. The non-violent non-cooperation movement launched and directed by him makes a fascinating story.

1.2 CONTEXT

The development of Indian Nationalism occurred in three separate phases. The phase of moderates and the phase of radicals, It was the third phase of Indian Nationalism that witnessed the rise of M.K.Gandhi. Let us have a brief look at moderate phase and the phase of radicals before coming to Gandhi.

Moderates: The early nationalist leaders believed that a direct struggle for the political emancipation of the country was not yet on the agenda of history. What was on the agenda was the arousal of national feeling, consolidation of this feeling, the bringing of a large number of Indians into the vortex of nationalist politics and their training in politics and political agitation. The first important task was the creation of public interest in political questions and the organization of public opinion in the country. Secondly popular demands had to be formulated on a country-wide basis so that the emerging public opinion might have an all- India focus. Most important of all, national unity had to be created, in the first instance, among the politically conscious Indians and political workers and leaders. The early national leaders were fully aware of the fact that India had just entered the process of becoming a nation. Indians had to be carefully welded into a nation. Politically conscious Indians had to constantly work for the development and the consolidation of the feeling of national unity irrespective of religion, caste or region.

The Indian national movement up to 1905 was dominated by moderate leaders. They started constitutional agitation within the four walls of law. They believed that if public opinion was created and organized and popular demands presented to the authorities through petitions, meetings, resolutions and speeches, the authorities would concede these demands gradually and step by step. Their political work had a two- pronged direction. Firstly, to build up a strong public opinion in India to arouse the political consciousness and national spirit of the people. Secondly, the early nationalists wanted to persuade the British Government and British public opinion to introduce reforms along directions laid down by the nationalists. The moderates were never resorted to rebellion, aiding or abetting a foreign invasion or resort to crime.

The nationalists criticized the official policies for bringing about the ruin of India's traditional economic policies for bringing about the ruin of India's traditional handicraft industries and for obstructing the development of modern industries. They complained that India's wealth was being drained to England, and demanded that the drain be stopped. They carried on persistent agitation for the reduction of land revenue in order to lighten the burden of taxation on the peasant. They declared that high taxation to be one of the causes of India's growing poverty and demanded the abolition of the salt tax. The nationalists agitated for the improvement in the conditions of work of the plantations. Dadabhai Naoroji declared that the British rule was "an everlasting, increasing, and every day increasing foreign invasion".

The basic weakness of the early national movement lay in its narrow social base. It did not penetrate down to the masses. In fact, the leaders lacked faith in the masses. Describing the difficulties in the way of organizing of active political struggle, Gopal Krishna Gokhale pointed to the endless divisions and subdivisions in the country, the bulk of the population ignorant and

clinging with a tenacity to the old modes of thought and sentiment, which are averse to all changes and do not understand change.

Radicals: After 1905, nationalist movement entered the second phase during that period, one in which Indian nationalists grew more vocal and radical in their demands. Boycott, resistances and demonstrations were their political weapons. They came to be known as the Radicals. Some famous Radical leaders were Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal.

The conditions for the emergence of radical nationalism had thus developed when in 1905 the partition of Bengal was announced and the Indian national movement entered its second phase. On 20 July 1905, Lord Curzon issued an order dividing the province of Bengal into parts: Eastern Bengal and Assam with a population of 31 million and the rest of Bengal with a population of 54 million consisting of Bengalees, Biharis and Oriyas. The official reason given for the decision was that Bengal was too big to be administered properly. However the real motive behind the partition plan was the British desire to weaken the nerve centre of Indian nationalism- Bengal, on communal grounds by creating a wedge between the Hindus and Muslims. The Indian National Congress and the nationalists of Bengal firmly opposed the partition. To make their protest more powerful the *Swadeshi* and Boycott movement was launched.

Swaraj for the radicals meant “complete freedom from foreign control and full independence to manage national affairs without any foreign restraints. They hated foreign rule and had no faith in the benevolence of the British public or Parliament. They had deep faith in the strength of the masses and they planned to achieve *Swaraj* through mass action. They, therefore, pressed for political work among the masses and for direct political action by the masses. The radicals also affirmed their faith in passive resistance, mass agitation and strong will to suffer or make self-sacrifices. The radicals advocated boycott of the foreign goods, use of *swadeshi* goods, national education and passive resistance. However, the influence of radicals was curtailed as the British Government played the game of ‘Divide and Rule’. While suppressing the radicals, it tried to win over moderate nationalist opinion so that the militant nationalists could be isolated and suppressed.

Reconciling both these strands emerged the Gandhian phase, the third phase of national movement. Gandhi launched and encouraged protest of Government, boycott, *Swadeshi* a mass movement of non-cooperation. All these awakened the masses under his leadership for the first time on such a wide scale. This resulted in active involvement of people on national movement. He reigns in the hearts of millions of Indians as The Father of the Nation, for the path breaking role that he played not in the Indian struggle for independence but for moulding the national character and the lives of the Indians alike. At a time when the fabric of the Indian society was tearing apart, he accomplished the herculean task of unifying the nation. Confronted with diverse political ideologies like hard line extremism, the moderate approach and the newly emerging communist forces the confused Indians found solace in the simple philosophies of Gandhi. He worked assiduously for the upliftment of the downtrodden like the dalits and gave them a new

identity. Women, under his aegis, found back their long lost confidence and actively participated in the tasks of national cause. Gandhi with similar perseverance championed the cause of the secularism. As a visionary, he realized right at the onset that the real strength of India lies in communal harmony and brotherhood.

1.3 GANDHI IN THE INDIAN POLITICAL ARENA

Gandhi returned to India in January 1915. During the first year after his arrival, Gandhi did not take a public stand on any political issue because he did not want a plunge into Indian politics until he equipped himself with first-hand knowledge of the conditions in India. Therefore, in accordance with the advice of his 'political guru', Gopal Krishna Gokhale, he undertook a countrywide tour, giving as much as he received in the form of political education. This study tour took him to *Shantiniketan* where he met Rabindranath Tagore. Very soon, his name became as well known throughout India as the architect of *Satyagraha* Movement against racism in South Africa and requests started coming from various parts of the country that he should visit their place and help the people there in solving some of their local problems. Before embarking on the study tour, Gandhi had established the *Satyagraha* Ashram on the banks of the Sabarmati at Ahmedabad in 1916 where the families which had lived at the phoenix Settlement joined him to live together as a community committed to profess, practice and propagate the message, values and disciplines of *Satyagraha*. Besides these, Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Mahadev Desai, Acharya Kaka Kalelkar, Kishorelal Mashruwala and J C Kumarappa, Miss. Amtul Salam and Miss. Madeline Slade from England who later took the name of Mira Ben, also joined this Ashram as inmates.

It so happened that this year of enforced silence ended early 1916 at the time of founding of Benaras Hindu University. Pandit Madan Mohan Malavya, the founder of the university had arranged a series of lectures to be delivered by eminent persons who had come for the occasion after the foundation-stone had been laid by the then Viceroy, Lord Hardinge. It was Mahatma Gandhi's turn one evening, which was the first time that he spoke in public since his arrival in the country a year ago. Big leaders, English Officers, Rajas and Maharajas were present. Wearing a turban, the future Mahatma was looking like a peasant. As he started to speak, it appeared, as if Mother India was beginning to unfold her long suppressed tales of woe. Asserting that the poor of India were being exploited, he explained how the money for the jewels worn by Rajas and Maharajas was earned by them by sucking the blood of the poor. Ridiculing them for their women-like jest for ornaments, he advised them to sell their jewels and utilize the proceeds for the well-being of the poor. He made similar observations about the capitalists. At last he opened a scathing attack on the English as having started the exploitation of the poor. As some among the audience shouted, "Gandhiji, go on, Gandhiji, go on", the Englishmen, the Rajas and the Maharajas, the Rai Bahadurs and the Khan Bahadurs, all vacated their chairs and walked away. But Gandhi went on. At last the Maharaja of Darbhanga, a pillar of the British Empire, who was presiding, also left. As the chairs became empty, Gandhi a firm believer in discipline, despite the request of some of the audience to continue, concluded his speech. It acted, however, as an indication of what was to come.

Later in 1916, Mahatma Gandhi attended the Annual Session of the Congress held at Lucknow. This session, presided over by Ambika Charan Majumdar, was unique in many respects. It saw the re-uniting of the radical and moderate groups. It also brought about an understanding between the Muslim League and Congress for joint fight and drew up a Constitution for the Congress which had been without any during the last 30 years of its existence. However, by this time Gandhi had been able to enter into many hearts and reserve a special place for himself there. He had also become able to earn the title 'Mahatma'. All round the *pandal* where the Subjects Committee meeting of the Congress was being held, there was constant shouting of "Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai". In this Congress Session, some persons from Bihar met Gandhi and spoke to him about the hardships the workers were suffering at the hands of British indigo planters. Gandhi gave voice to the cause of the oppressed cultivators in Champaran district of Bihar who were suffering under tyranny of the European indigo-planters.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Compare and contrast Moderates and Radicals?

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2) Did South Africa experience helped in advent of Gandhi?

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1.4 EMERGENCE AS AN ALL INDIA LEADER

Gandhi turned his attention to the grievances of the cultivators oppressed by the indigo planters in Champaran. But the District Magistrate served on him an order to leave the district immediately. Gandhi refused to obey the order and was tried for defiance. He pleaded guilty of

disobeying the order, but he justified his action on the ground that human authority must yield before the higher authority of conscience. It was a new plea in a court of law. But not altogether so, for in the history, men like Socrates and religious saints and martyrs had taken this line to justify their action in the past. But for the British Magistrate who was utterly unused to such a procedure, the plea was staggering. His non-violent resistance provided a viable alternative in the struggle. The Champaran *satyagraha* forced the government to adopt the 1918 Champaran Agricultural Act, whereby those compelled to let their land for indigo cultivation were given some relief. What Gandhi left was carried forward by local peasants, with Champaran becoming a strong base for non-violent political mobilization, though the Congress leadership never allowed them to organize protests against the indigenous landlords. Despite the peasants' failure to lead movements against the vested interests, the Champaran *satyagraha* articulated the neglected voice of protests. Gandhi emerged as the supreme leader and non-violence gained salience. This was not a subaltern protest, but one in which the subalterns were inducted into the process of political mobilization. In other words, the Champaran *satyagraha* represented 'a battle in which many different levels of consciousness coexisted the complex perspective of the participants'. Apart from projecting Gandhi as a perfect mobilizer, this 1917 *satyagraha* also contributed to a unique multi-class political 'platform uniting the clearly antagonistic classes for the battle against foreign rule. Not only did Gandhi succeed in containing the class wrath within a specific limit, he also created a situation in which the struggle against the exploiters coincided with the challenge against colonialism. So Gandhian non-violence, as the Champaran *satyagraha* demonstrated, provided a potent means of legitimate and effective resistance within the new political dispensation in which the Congress was gaining in importance. The Champaran movement was a watershed in Gandhi's political life, not only in terms of conceptualizing *satyagraha* as a device but also in terms of its application to build a political platform regardless of class.

Similar to the Champaran experiment, the 1918 Kheda *satyagraha* was a Gandhi-led no-revenue campaign. Hard-hit by economic hardship due to the destruction of crops by rains, a rise in agricultural wages, the high rate of inflation and the outbreak of plague, the Patidar peasants organized a movement against the government's decision not to waive land revenue. Launched by Mohanlal Pandya and Shankarlal Parikh from a small town of Kathlal in the district of Kheda of Gujarat, the movement gained momentum as the Gujarat Sabha, an organization under the aegis of the Congress, extended support. Once approached by the Gujarat Sabha, Gandhi arrived in Kheda in March 1918 to launch a *satyagraha* campaign against the government decision to confiscate the properties of defaulters. The campaign lasted for four months and in June the government of Bombay decided not to implement the order, sparing the peasants who failed to pay the revenue. Like the Champaran *satyagraha*, the movement, spearheaded by local Congress activists, continued with local support. Gandhi's presence was more symbolical than anything else. Even his lieutenants, Vallabhbhai and Vitthalbhai Patel, remained insignificant in the entire movement, in which the local leaders became most important. As a cementing factor, Gandhi brought the *satyagrahees* together for the movement that had an agenda set by the local leaders in their own terms. In other words, Gandhi was important in the Kheda *satyagraha* so long as he agreed to support the demands of local leaders. This was evident when Gandhi urged the villagers to join the British army during the First World War and they refused.

During the Kheda *satyagraha*, Gandhi also participated in the Ahmedabad textile mill strike of February-March 1918. This was a different kind of experiment involving the workers. The successful campaign in Champaran had catapulted Gandhi to the centre-stage. When the workers in Ahmedabad became restive, Gandhi was invited by Anusuyya Sarabhai, a social worker who happened to be the sister of Ambalal Sarabhai, the president of the Ahmedabad Mill Owners' Association, to intervene and resolve the crisis. What triggered the strike was the withdrawal of 'plague-bonus' to the workers. Equivalent in some cases to 80 per cent of the wages, this was paid to dissuade the workers from fleeing the plague-ravaged towns. Once the epidemic was over, the mill-owners decided to discontinue the practice. This decision affected the workers adversely simply because of the spiraling price rise due to the outbreak of war.

Drawing on his belief that there was no major contradiction between capital and labour, Gandhi sought to defuse the crisis through dialogues with the mill-owners. The mill-owners appeared to be adamant and characterized Gandhi's intervention as 'unwarranted'. On 22 February, 1918, the mill-owners locked out the weavers despite Gandhi's repeated requests. With the closure, Gandhi decided to champion the workers' demand though he asked them to tone down their earlier demand for a 50 per cent wage increase to 35 percent. Although the workers agreed to Gandhi's suggestion, the mill-owners did not relent and workers seemed to lose morale. It was at this juncture that Gandhi began the 'first' of his seventeen 'fasts unto death' on 15 March, 1918. This three-day fast appears to have forced the mill-owners, who deeply respected Gandhi, to come to an agreement with the striking workers. As per the agreement, suggested by the arbitration board, the workers demand was partially fulfilled because they got a 27.5 per cent wage hike instead of their revised demand for a 35 per cent increase. So the compromise formula 'looked like a face-saving formula and a tactical defeat for Gandhi'²⁶ though he forced the mill-owners to accept the principle of arbitration in which workers' representatives had a say along with the employers.

A unique event in Gandhi's political life, the Ahmedabad strike added a new chapter to the history of the Indian nationalist movement. Though critical of Gandhi's obsession with passive resistance, *The Bombay Chronicle* appreciated the principle of arbitration as a turning point in labour employer relations in Ahmedabad in particular and a unique system of resolving industrial disputes in general. Similarly, *The Times* criticized Gandhi for blackmailing the mill-owners who happened to be his admirers by his fast unto death, though it hailed his role in articulating arbitration as an effective device to break the *impasse* between the workers and industrialists.

These three movements projected Gandhi as an emerging leader with different kinds of mobilizing tactics. What was common in all these movements was the fact that a) they were organized around local issues; and b) in mobilizing the people for the movements, the importance of the local leaders cannot be underestimated. There is no doubt that Gandhi's appearance on the scene gave a fillip to these movements. Yet, if we carefully chart the movements, we will discover that Gandhi was invited to lead when support was adequately mobilized by the local organizers. By his involvement with these movements at a stage when they struck roots in the concerned localities, Gandhi projected a specific kind of leadership: he

was not a primary but a secondary organizer. There is no doubt that the movements gained different heights with his intervention. The masses interpreted Gandhi's message in their own terms and rumours surrounding the powers of this messianic leader served to break the barriers of fear involved in confronting formidable enemies. As evident in Champaran and Kheda, Gandhian intervention in elite nationalist politics established for the first time that an authentic nationalist movement could be built upon the organized support of the peasantry, though its political object was not one which Gandhi endorsed. The peasants were meant to become willing participants in a struggle wholly conceived and directed by others, with Gandhi providing a national framework of politics in which peasants are mobilized but do not participate in its formulation. This was also true of the Ahmedabad strike where Gandhi accommodated the interests of the mill-owners even at the cost of the workers since their demand was partially conceded. Based on his belief that capital and labour were not contradictory to each other, Gandhi agreed to the negotiated settlements as probably the best solution under the circumstances. Workers failed to get what they had asked for. Yet Gandhi's role was most significant in articulating a form of political mobilization in which the workers were also decisive. Just like the Champaran and Kheda *satyagrahas* that extended the constituencies of nationalist politics by incorporating the peasantry, the Ahmedabad textile strike was a watershed, for it accorded a legitimate space to the workers in what was conceptualized as nationalism.

These three movements constitute a milestone in what Gandhi articulated as nationalist politics. A leader had emerged to radically alter the complexion of India's struggle for freedom. With his involvement in mass movements in Champaran, Kheda and Ahmedabad, Gandhi forged a new language of protests for India by both building on older forms of resistance while at the same time accepting the colonial censure of all forms of violent protest. Two complementary processes seem to have been at work: at one level, local issues obviously played a significant role in mobilizing the masses for protest movements in the localities; at another, the presence of Gandhi at a critical juncture helped sustain these movements as they were perhaps losing momentum due to the growing frustration of the local organizers. So Gandhi was a missing link that not only galvanized the masses into action but also contributed immensely to the successful conclusion of these protest movements in Champaran, Kheda and Ahmedabad involving completely different constituencies of nationalist politics, namely, peasantry and labour. These movements appear to have set the tone and tenor for future movements which Gandhi was to lead, with the people at large participating in response to his call for political action. Although he was a secondary organizer in all these movements, he appeared to carry with him a magic wand that not only activated those who remained peripheral but also sustained the momentum of the movements despite odds. He emerged as a mass leader who felt the pulse of the people perhaps more accurately than anybody else during the freedom struggle. And the consequence was obvious because it was Gandhi who transformed the struggle for freedom to a wider nationalist campaign involving various categories of people including those who usually remained detached.

Gandhi led three major pan-Indian movements. The 1919-21 Non-Cooperation Movement was the first one that gained significantly, with the merger of the Khilafat agitation of the Muslims against the dismantling of the Khalif in Turkey. The Civil Disobedience Movement was an all-

India movement in which Gandhi reigned supreme. Basically a salt *satyagraha*, the Civil Disobedience campaign manifested differently in different parts of India. The 1942 Quit India Movement, also known as the open rebellion, was the last of the three pan-Indian campaigns spearheaded by Gandhi. Like the earlier anti-British nationalist offensives, the Quit India Movement was not uniform in its nature throughout the country, and yet masses drew on Gandhi and his ideas while zealously participating in what was proclaimed to be the final battle with the colonial rule. Although these movements were organized in different phases of India's nationalist struggle, two features that recurred in all these instances of mass mobilization are as follows: first, Gandhi remained the undisputed leader who appeared to have swayed masses with his charisma and magical power; and second, despite their pan-Indian characteristics, these movements were independently organized by the participants, drawing on local grievances both against the rural vested interests and the government for supporting them. As examples from rural Bengal show, the message of the Mahatma was decoded completely differently by the people during the Quit India Movement. On occasions, they even justified violence in the name of the Mahatma. This was what was unique in Gandhi, who succeeded in infusing a mass zeal for participation in the freedom struggle in contrast with the past when the nationalist movement was narrowly conceptualized and participation was therefore highly restricted.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

- 1) What are the unique features of Gandhi's movements?

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- 2) Reflect on the factors that contributed to the making of Mahatma.

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1.5 LET US SUM UP

Gandhi was the consummate problematizer of conventional ideas about human society. His creative intervention sparked off new debates on relevant issues involving other leading personalities holding similar/dissimilar views. For instance, instead of insisting only on political independence from colonial rule, he devoted a great deal of attention to purging Indian society of indigenous patterns of domination. Although he continuously drew upon the tradition while conceptualizing his ideas, he nonetheless challenged what he took to be its defects in order to reform it. So the importance of Gandhi's creative work lay precisely in seizing upon the fugitive and supplementary forms of everyday life and in infusing them with a rigorous anti-disciplinary discipline which allowed them to no longer be fugitive. It is this extraordinary ordinariness that makes Gandhi's socio-political ideas so astonishingly salient today.

Gandhi's social and political thought is multi-dimensional. If its kernel is derived from India's civilizational resources, its actual evolution was shaped by his experiences in South Africa and India. His political ideology was a radical departure from the past in the sense that it was neither the constitutional loyalism of the Moderates nor the Extremism of the revolutionary terrorists. In his articulation of Indian nationalism, he sought to incorporate the emerging constituencies of nationalist politics that had remained peripheral in the bygone era. Gandhi brought about an era of mass politics, though he dismissed the role of the masses in the early part of the Non-Cooperation Movement as nothing but mobocracy. Gandhi knew India, and especially the Indian masses. He could merge, argued Jawaharlal Nehru, with the masses and feel with them, and because they were conscious of this they gave him their devotion and loyalty. So, an analysis of the role of the Mahatma in India's freedom struggle clearly indicates the changing nature of the movement in response to the zealous participation of various sections of India's multicultural society. It was possible because Gandhi was perhaps the only effective nationalist leader who truly attempted to transcend the class conflicts by devising a method which, for the first time, brought about the national aggregation of an all-India character. This is where Gandhi was unique. Not only did he articulate the peripheral voices, he also translated them into action by linking with the obvious adverse consequences of colonialism.

1.6 KEY WORDS

Moderates: believed in petitioning and persuading British;

Radicals: sought to boycott and resist through direct actions.

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UNIT 2 GANDHI'S METAPHYSICAL WORLD-VIEW

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

Gandhi considered himself to be a religious man and that it was his study of religions that led him from piety to ethics and from ethics to metaphysics. Gandhi imbibed a passion for truth and belief in God from the religious atmosphere of his family. At the early stages of his spiritual evolution his passion for truth was only an insistence on telling the truth and his belief in God was only theistic in nature. From theistic position where God is personal, Gandhi's attitude developed into a metaphysical position where God is 'The Eternal Principle' and 'the Universal Law'. His world-view is rooted in the fundamental metaphysical ideas. God (Truth), World and Man constitute his basic ontological principles. The Unit aims to understand Gandhi's world-view and the underlying metaphysical principles that shaped his out-look. Thus by the end of the Unit you should be able

- to know Gandhi's understanding of metaphysics;
- to understand the uniqueness of his multi-textured metaphysical concepts.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Gandhi's philosophy, which he called "an experiment with truth," was not a philosophy in which he merely interpreted or analyzed things for himself. It was an experience, or experiment, in which he changed himself and his environment. In the process, Gandhi re-oriented many traditional ideas practice. He said: "I do not claim to have originated any new principle. I have simply tried in my own way to apply eternal truths to our daily life and problem." He was an ordinary man who became a mahatma, a man of great soul. Gandhi said the eternal truths could be applied to daily life and problems. He said they were everywhere in history. He found that life persists amidst death and that there is compassion and friendliness amidst bitterness and hatred and persecution and war. Devotion to truth was the one characteristic of Gandhi. It was his greatest quality. Love of truth led him to all kinds of disciplines and experiments. He always began with smaller problems and applied the success he achieved to greater problems. "One step

is enough for me" was his motto and he progressed from one step to another. The non-violent non-co-operation movement which won India's freedom was the outcome of the smaller success of his *satyagraha* or "passive resistance" in South Africa. India's freedom was, for him, a means to the larger problem of world peace. *Satyagraha* is a moral or spiritual struggle against political and economic domination which implies denial of truth. The reason is the colonial power in order to rule India takes the means of falsehood and manipulation. The struggle for freedom thus does not mean only to attain political and economic freedom but more importantly it is an upliftment of human conscience that lends to the nonviolent battle for the victory of truth. The concept of truth in Gandhi bears multiple meanings in view of the rich theoretical and practical dimensions. For Gandhi, truth is not only a metaphysical category but also a moral and spiritual concept signifying the importance of truth in life. We will look into the notion of truth and theoretically explicate some of the connections it has with associated concepts like non-violence.

2.2 GANDHI'S NOTION OF TRUTH

While *ahimsa* by definition denotes activity and action, it is the way Gandhi develops his philosophy of temporal action, namely through an examination of truth, which makes his philosophical contribution decisive. As a result, our discussion becomes an exploration of Gandhi's truth and its role in both the spiritual and temporal world. Studying Gandhi's emphasis on worldly existence is significant insofar as his philosophy is one that engages action. It is through the practice of *ahimsa* – the practice of Truth - that one realizes Truth.

Gandhi most often places truth and non-violence on the same level and claims that truth and non-violence are the two sides of the same coin. He is of the opinion that a truthful man is bound to be non-violent and vice versa. That is why it is supposed that truth and non-violence cannot be kept apart. However, one can see the difference between the two principles in morality. While truth is the bed-rock principle, non-violence follows as a corollary. All forms of non-violent behaviour follow from the one adhering to truth as a deep moral commitment. A *satyagrahi* is necessarily nonviolent because he contradicts himself if he is not so. This necessary relation between truth and non-violence need not commit Gandhi to the identity of the two. A non-violent person is in better position to realize truth as the supreme value.

Truth qualifies to be a moral law in view of the fact that it shows how moral values are possible at all. The presupposition of truth as the fundamental moral principle makes it into a moral law in the sense that truth prevails as the principle of good life in the world. Truth has the character of the Kantian categorical imperative because it demands absolute obligation from the truth-seeker. Truth acts as the moral law which is absolutely imposed on the truth-seeker by moral reason or the "inner voice".

Truth is God

Gandhi equates truth with God keeping in view the primacy of truth as an ontological category. He says: truth is God, rather than God is truth. This formulation speaks of the fundamental change that has occurred in Gandhi's concept of God. That also speaks of his approach to religion and metaphysics. The ideas of truth-based religion and truth-based metaphysics

dominate Gandhi's philosophy. The following implications are entailed by the formulation "Truth is God":

1. Truth has a spiritual dimension in addition to the moral dimension.
2. Truth is a metaphysical category as it characterizes the fundamental nature of reality.
3. Truth is the Absolute Reality which is the source of all existence.

Thus Gandhi makes it clear that truth has a transcendental significance in his metaphysical system in view of the all-comprehensive character of this concept. Truth does not have a partial presence because; if partial it amounts to a distortion of itself. Truth cannot be domain-specific, nor can it be confined to any particular discourse. Those who argue for the discourse dependence of truth do not understand the deeply absolute character of truth. Thus Gandhi emphasizes this point by showing that truth is God or the Absolute Reality.

The concept God signifies the Absolute Reality that cannot be subsumed under any other Reality. This leads to the idea that God is the ultimate ground of all existence. Gandhi makes his concept of God theology-free in order to get rid of the attempt to absorb it to any particular theological tradition. Gandhi's God is free from the theological frameworks which relativise God to their particular conceptions. Gandhi writes: "The word *satya* comes from *sat*, which means 'to be', 'to exist'. Only God is ever the same through all time. A thousand times honour to him who has succeeded, through love and devotion for *satya*, in opening out his heart permanently to its presence. I have been but striving to serve that truth". Thus Gandhi gives absolute status to truth keeping in mind his predilection towards equating truth with God. This makes truth a metaphysical reality more than the moral law.

Gandhi uses the term truth in two ways, namely truth as Absolute Truth, and truth as relative truth. While the significance of Gandhi's use of the term Truth reflects the importance of the term in many Indian philosophical and religious traditions, the distinction between Absolute Truth and relative truths is most succinctly described through the Buddhist paradigm of truth.

The Buddhist understanding of truth broadly differentiates between the Absolute Truth that is the transcendent truth, and the conditional truth that relies on the Absolute Truth. Both these forms of truth include factual and scientific truths. However, Gandhi understands and application of truth in formulating his philosophy is primarily concerned with morality and social relations.

Absolute Truth

Absolute Truth is characterized by its fixed and unalterable nature. For Gandhi, Absolute Truth (hereafter Truth) is the only fundamental truth. He uses the term interchangeably with God and

maintains “beyond truths there is one absolute Truth which is total and all embracing. But it is indescribable because it is God. Or say, rather, God is Truth”. He later updated this idea, arguing “... it is more correct to say that Truth is God than to say that God is Truth”. ‘Truth’ understood as ‘God’ is in some ways a pragmatic word choice for Gandhi. This pragmatism comes from the need to effectively communicate in a language that is understood by the many. His faith and devotion to his religion, together with the religions he studied, informed his interpretation of Truth to an overwhelming degree. Gandhi went so far to insist “I can live only by having faith in God. My definition of God must always be kept in mind. For me there is no other God than Truth; Truth is God”. As a term, then, God becomes an embodiment of the idea of Truth. If God is accepted as an external force or agent, with an omniscient role in the entire cosmos, the use of the title is effective. If, however, God is understood in a physical form or even as the divine creator of destinies, the descriptor does not capture that which Gandhi is attempting to illustrate.

Yet God is not the only characteristic Gandhi assigns to Truth. He also equates Love to Truth. That is to say, in describing Love, Gandhi combines the working definitions of love with the negative and positive elements of *ahimsa* insofar as integration of the responsibility of self and communal realisation is necessary for the realisation of Truth. Love for the self is as significant as love for the other and for the community as a whole. Indeed the realisation of Truth demands the realisation of all three entities. Gandhi’s choice of the term “love” is interesting because of its intensity. Rather than discussing, care or responsibility, which are open to interpretation of scope and passion, love denotes a very particular, albeit indefinite, depth and zeal that incorporates near extreme elements of care and responsibility.

Truth as Love underscores the all- embracing nature of Absolute Truth. Hence, Gandhi does not define Truth. The terms God and Love are too broad to be seen as “defining” terms. In part Gandhi uses these terms to ensure there are no boundaries to Truth. That is he does not consign limits to Truth, and therefore he does not claim to have discovered a universal absolute. As a result, Gandhi further argues that Truth can never be realized. At the same time, Gandhi has provided us with the qualities of Truth and, therefore, a path for its achievement. Given Gandhi’s belief in the Indian conception of *moksha*, the spiritual release as the supreme end of life, and in the relationship of Truth to God, the realisation of Truth is a significant piece of Gandhi’s puzzle. He supports the claim that Truth is unattainable partially through his religious beliefs. Because Gandhi insists that there cannot be a complete transcendence of desires and pleasures as long as we are in our physical form, it becomes impossible to understand Truth completely. The limitations of the physical form denote the importance of *moksha*. Gandhi insists that a person comes closer to Truth as s/he controls her/his passions. Yet the limitations of the physical form deny a person complete transcendence from violence. While confined to our physical form and living in the elements of existence it is impossible for us to know Truth fully. The implication of the unattainability of Truth is that *ahimsa* also becomes impossible to practice in its entirety, as complete transcendence of desires and pleasures is impossible.

Hence, Gandhi establishes Truth as a guiding principle in our existence as it provides principles to spiritual, emotional and active elements of “this-worldly” life. Truth’s all- embracing nature is best articulated through an understanding of the use of Truth in Indian languages. “The word

satya (truth) comes from *sat* which means “to be” or “to exist.” To live through Truth is “to be” or “to exist” in wholeness.

Relative Truth

The unattainability of Truth does not diminish its importance. Instead, Gandhi stresses the need for the use of relative truths to strive for Truth. Relative truths are those definitive ideas that provide guidance to our thoughts and actions, yet are not static. They change and morph to provide guidance in versatile situations. These truths maintain as their guiding principle the idea of Absolute Truth and, therefore, *ahimsa*.

Relative truths are describable and definable. It is the relationship of relative truth to Absolute Truth that is at the core of Gandhi’s argument. Relative truth becomes the form of truth that is attainable in the human condition or the temporal world. Truth characterized by God, Love, and *ahimsa* must be manifested through action in order to attain *moksha*. “He... who understands truth follows nothing but truth in thought, speech, and action, comes to know God and gains the seers vision of the past, present, and future.” Gandhi insists that there is no part of our lives that Truth cannot guide. The discussion of Absolute Truth and relative truth can also be seen as a discussion of means and ends insofar as relative truth is the means and Absolute Truth is the end.

This logic however, confronts yet another form of dichotomy whereby a mean cannot be an end in itself. Gandhi insists that this is not the case. The relationship of means and ends in Gandhi’s thought is most apparent through his insistence on characterizing Absolute Truth rather than defining it. His characterization is a means to the achievement of the end and an end in itself.

Hence, to make reference to means and ends as two distinct entities is somewhat incorrect. Truth understood solely as a means or as an end leaves the breadth of Gandhi’s *ahimsa* at the surface. The benefit of acting through *ahimsa* is retained for oneself. The existence of a better society and the realisation of *moksha* are not engaged. That is to say, one’s social responsibility is denied if Truth is treated as a means only. Truth understood as a means and an end implies that Truth is the means to defining relative truths and is also the ultimate end. Using the end as a guide for the means without diminishing its role as the ultimate end is the truest expression of *ahimsa*. As a means and an end, Truth engages the individual and the community insofar as it defines the individual and the community as a whole: it is that which allows one to see her/his community as an extension of her/himself.

Gandhi’s uses the term truth both as means and ends conterminously. *Ahimsa* is the means and Truth is the end. *Ahimsa* and Truth are so intertwined that is practically impossible to disentangle them. Means and ends work together in Gandhi’s paradigm for the realisation of Truth. This truth while it is ontologically absolute, it is also relative seen from the epistemic angle. This

notion of relative is no concession to relativism. It is relative rather in relation to our ability to access it.

Gandhi's ideas on Truth allow people to interpret moral principles in a way that preserves the individual and embodies an understanding of the individual as a member of the community. Accepting this as Gandhi's understanding of the individual, Gandhi's Truth allows the individual to find the "best reasons" for acting in moral situations. As a result of Gandhi's understanding of the individual as embedded in community, autonomy is value-laden whereby both individuals and the community have the goal of realizing Truth. It is not merely individual autonomy. The concept of autonomy must incorporate idea of communal autonomy as it relates to individual autonomy when making moral judgments. This nuanced version of autonomy, which includes a characteristic of social responsibility, is not the only way in which Gandhi incorporates autonomy as a way of making moral judgments. As outlined above, Gandhi also ensures that individuals have the right to interpret, and act upon moral principles as they see fit. Truth without definition leaves itself without boundaries, open to inquiry, and encourages personal assessment. Even though Gandhi puts forth a notion of Truth that is to guide moral judgments, he does not confine the notion to how we must make judgments. Instead his notion of Truth seeks to provide a method for allowing his conception of the individual in a community, rather than an individual that stands alone, for determining his moral judgments. Gandhi's method of philosophical inquiry, namely praxis, inadvertently incorporates moral judgments. In fact, for Gandhi it is through actions in the public sphere that moral judgments manifest themselves. The deduction of moral judgments rests with an individual who is defined through her or his membership in the community, and underscores the social responsibility Gandhi's praxis demands.

Glyn Richards in *The Philosophy of Gandhi* correctly emphasizes Gandhi's metaphysical concept of Truth as key to understanding the theoretical and practical dimensions of his philosophy. His concept of Truth (*satya*) provides a rationale and coherence to his political theory and practice. Truth is an exploration and an adventure of engagement with the spiritual and moral and the political seen as a unity, the oneness of these was never in doubt for Gandhi. He frequently expressed his view of reality and of political truth in terms of the formulation "Truth is God" in his reflections on Truth; Gandhi expressed a personal preference for the Hindu impersonal formulations of the non-dualistic *Advaita Vedanta* with its view of the all-encompassing, spiritual Self as *Atman* and its identification of *Atman* with the impersonal absolute *Brahman*. Gandhi was also extremely flexible in his formulations of Truth, frequently referring to God, Rama, and many other personal and impersonal terms.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Reflect on the complexity of Gandhi's notion of Truth.

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2) What are the implications of the formulation 'Truth is God' ?

2.3 CONCEPT OF GOD

Gandhi is an apostle of ahimsa. The basic principle of life is based on Truth. He says, "I often describe my religion as religion of truth. We are sparks of Truth. The sum total of sparks is indescribable as-yet-unknown Truth, which is God." The bearing of this religion on social life is or has to be seen in one's daily social contact. To be true to such religion one has to lose oneself in continuous and continuing service of our life. Realization of Truth is impossible without a complete merging of oneself in an identification with this limitless ocean of life. Hence, for me, there is no escape from social service, there is no happiness on earth beyond or apart from it. Social service must be taken to include every department of life. In this scheme there is nothing low, nothing high. For all is one though we seem to be many.

God was the central fact of Gandhi's life. God was not a mere intellectual conception to him. "God to be God," he said, "must rule the heart and transform it." Gandhi's aspiration was to see God face to face. "To me God is Truth and Love, God is Ethics and morality. God is fearlessness. He is even the atheism of the atheist. He is a personal God to those who need His touch." When Gandhi successfully came out of the ordeal of his fast unto death in protest against the British Cabinet's award of separate electorates for untouchables, he wrote a note to the late Rev. C. F. Andrews at Cambridge, England. It ran thus: "Dearest Charlie, God is both indulgent and exacting."

God and Truth are convertible terms to Gandhi. The progress of his spiritual experience was a transition from "God is Truth" to "Truth is God." Denial of God we have known; denial of Truth we have not known, he said. He saw that the atheist and the skeptic in their passion for truth denied God. His ashram or hermitage was an abode for atheists and sceptics too. He said nobody has denied truth or can deny it, for "Truth is God." "Truth is God," he said and added: "I am being daily led nearer to It by constant prayer." Gandhi's spiritual experience cannot be limited by a formula.

For Gandhi, all religions have the same truth, or elements of the same truth. He called the creation of the world God's play or *maya*, but did not dismiss the world as an illusion or

appearance. He did not believe that the world "is hopeless and cannot be saved." God is, to Gandhi, the all-pervasive Reality, immanent in man and in the world (but also transcendent). If God's creation hides Him it is for man to reveal Him or discover Him by his actions, by ahimsa or non-injury. "To find Truth as God, the only means is ahimsa." God is not "was" but "is." He distinguished between "the God of history" and "the God of life" or "the living God." He said to the missionaries: "do not then preach the God of history, but show Him as He lives today through you." This would, of course, apply to everybody who goes by mere tradition or history. Gandhi called his religion the Religion of Truth. This is the same as ahimsa or non-violence. "The bearing of this religion," he said, "is, or has to be seen, in one's daily social contact. To be true to such religion one has to lose oneself in continuous and continuing service of all life."

Gandhi says, 'God is life, He is the Supreme Good. God is truth and love', God is fearlessness. God is the source of Light and Life, and yet He is above and beyond all these. He is the most exciting personage in the world. Truth and Harmlessness constitute the essence of God. "God is that indefinable something which we all feel but which we do not know." "There is an indefinable mysterious power that pervades everything. I feel it, though I do not see it. It is this unseen power that makes itself felt and yet defies proof, because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my senses. It transcends reason. But it is possible to reason out the existence of God to a limited extent." "I do not regard God as a person. Truth for me is God and God's Law and God are not different things. God is Law Himself. Therefore, it is impossible to conceive God as breaking the Law. He and His Law abide everywhere and govern everything."

He declares, "I do perceive that, whilst everything around me is ever-changing and ever-dying, there is underlying all that change, a living power that is changeless, that holds all together, that creates, dissolves and re-creates. That informing Power or Spirit is God." God is Truth-Knowledge-Bliss (*sat-chit-ananda*). The word '*Satya*' (truth) is derived from '*Sat*' which means being. And nothing is or exists in reality except Truth. And where there is truth, there also is knowledge, pure knowledge. And where there is true knowledge, there is always bliss.

Gandhi looks upon God as an impersonal, omnipresent power or Spirit that pervades the Universe; and that is immanent in the human soul. He is Truth, Love and Bliss. He can neither be perceived nor grasped by the intellect., but He can be felt. He can be imperfectly grasped by the intuition which is direct realization. God is Truth and Love. He can be known only through love or non-violence. Means and ends are inseparable. They are convertible terms. God is the end. Therefore He can be known through truth and love or non-violence. "Truth is God. When you want to find Truth as God the only inevitable means Love, i.e., non-violence, and ultimately means and ends are convertible terms." God-realization is the Supreme end according to Gandhi. He says, "I believe in absolute oneness of God and therefore of humanity. Though we have many bodies we have but one soul. The rays of the sun are many through refraction. But they have the same source." "I believe in *Advaita*. I believe in the essential unity of a man and for that matter of all lives." There is unity of life in all lives. There is unity of Spirit in all mankind. Man's ultimate aim is the realization of God and all his activities, social, political, religious have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. Gandhi says, "The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavor, simply because the only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can be done by the service of all. I am a part and parcel of the whole, and I cannot find Him apart from humanity. My creed is service of God and therefore of humanity."

God-realization is the Highest Good. It can be attained through the realization of oneness of life or Spirit of all mankind and sentient creation. God can be realized through service of all mankind. Love and Ahimsa are the only means of God-realization. Purity is essential for realization of God. Gandhi says, "To see the universal and all pervading Spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. Identification with everything that lives is impossible without self-purification. God can never be realized by one who is not pure in heart." Perfect self-control depends upon God's grace. Absolute self-surrender to God is necessary for complete self-control including sex-restraint. Jesus Christ says, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. Thou shall love thy neighbour as thyself."

2.4 CRITICAL VIEW

Gandhi is not an academic philosopher. So he has not evolved a system of metaphysics on the firm foundation of philosophical reflection. There are elements of intuitionism, rationalism or asceticism, and eudaemonism in his metaphysical doctrine, which are not reduced to a coherent unity. But still his voice is that of a prophet in this age of darkness. He is a great religious and moral reformer and political leader. He is a major contributor to the achievement of India's freedom from the British rule. He is fittingly called Father of the Indian nation. He is a great humanist. Gandhi holds that man has the freedom of the will. He can choose between right and wrong. God has given a man freedom. Conscience is the voice of God in man. It intuitively apprehends Rightness wrongness of particular actions. In complex situations God reveals the Truth to us through the intuition of conscience. This is the element of Intuitionism.

Gandhi offers almost an ascetic doctrine of human life. Suppression of instincts and desires and living the life of pure reason constitute the moral life. Our wants should be reduced; our desires should be suppressed: pleasure should be shunned; perfect equanimity and stoical indifference to pleasure and pain should be cultivated. The life of fearless and uncompromising pursuit of Truth, regardless of consequences, is the highest ideal. Sex instinct should not be gratified except for procreation; it is an evil, and as such, should be eradicated. Violence or injury to others should be eschewed altogether. All these show that Gandhi's metaphysical doctrine contains elements of asceticism, rigourism, rationalism or moral purism, anti suffers from its defects.

Gandhi believes in the existence of God. God is the Supreme Good, Truth and Love. He is the moral governor. Finite spirits are sparks of infinite Truth or God. They can realize Truth of perfection by social service-by identifying themselves with the whole creation-mankind and sentient creation and realizing the oneness of life. Ahimsa or nonviolence in thought, word and deed, is the means to the realization of Truth. Ahimsa is love and good will and active service. The world is rational constituted. It is the sphere of spiritual and moral life, and not dead to values. This is the element of metaphysical eudaemonism in Gandhi's doctrine.

Truth and Ahimsa are the keystones of Gandhi's philosophy. Truth is God. Ahimsa is love. God is Love. Realization of Truth means realization of God. It is possible only through Ahimsa, non-violence or love. God can be realized through love and service of humanity. He makes too much of truth. He says, "God is Truth." But it is more correct to say, according to him, that "Truth is God". He does not clearly explain the meaning of the Infinite. Truth is the supreme good. His metaphysical doctrine is vague as to the nature and content of the Supreme Good. However, he should be credited for "de-theologizing" truth. This means the truth as

Gandhi sees is not appropriable by any religious denomination. It can be pointed out here that if Gandhi were to say, as he did earlier, that God is truth, then truth becomes denominational. It would then be easy to see truth as associated with the Semitic or the *Vedantic* or whatever else we have view of God. Each believer can see truth as one with his God. The de-theologized view of God is of quite some significance in the age we are living when all types of fundamentalist fanaticism are playing havoc with the fate of human kind. In the context of India, this view of God is farthest from that of *Hindutva*, the Indian version of religious fascism. Therefore Gandhi can say that *Iswar*, *Allah* are thy names. This is no figurative expression for Gandhi as most people seem to think. It can be suggested that there is deeper truth to it. The expression has an ontological status for Gandhi and therein lies its significance.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) In Gandhian framework, what are the salient features of God?

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2) What critical issues can be raised with regard to Gandhi's Metaphysics?

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2.5 LET US SUM UP

Gandhi's writings have an implicit theoretically well-grounded ontology, an ontology that is constituted by a conceptual structure of existence covering both the human and the cosmic. This in fact gives a clue to answer or understand everything Gandhi talks about; truth, reality, god, good, love, and so on. In the modern west, the affirmation of existence is always only cognitive and knowledge is also always rational. Given the prevalence of this view, anything that departs from this discursive norm tends to be treated as philosophically suspect. Much of philosophical knowledge arises in Gandhi through the immediacy of "experiment", experience and vision,

which may not be "rational" in the Cartesian sense, a notion of reason in the way of scientific procedures. In Gandhian world-view everything is seen as interconnected. The relation of human reality with the cosmic reality is where, for Gandhi, metaphysics enters. Metaphysics is in this sense an orienting of the self in a particular way to this reality. That is how God can be equated with Truth and Truth with goodness and the moral requirements flow from this.

2.6 KEY WORDS

Truth: is not just an epistemic or theoretical-semantic issue as it is for the dominant modern western tradition but a multi-dimensional concept;

Truth is God: it de-theologizes Truth from the grip of religion and includes atheists also.

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UNIT 3 GANDHIAN UNDERSTANDING OF MAN

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 - 3.2 Human Nature
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3.0. OBJECTIVES

The concept of human nature is of vital significance in any system of thought. In fact, it is the different views of human nature which are to a great extent responsible for different ethical and metaphysical systems. Gandhi's indictment of modern civilization, his view of politics and especially of social and individual ethics are firmly based upon his assumptions regarding human nature and his understanding of man. His theory of human nature was closely bound up with his views on God and religion. He had a very definite conviction about what man is in his essential nature and of what he becomes through a false view of himself, of what he should be and can become, and of his place in a law-governed cosmos. The cosmos was a well-coordinated whole whose various parts were all linked in a system of interdependence and mutual service. It consisted of different orders of being ranging from the material to the human, each governed by its own laws and standing in a complex relationship with the rest. Human beings were an integral part of the cosmos, and were tied to it by the deepest bonds. Gandhi considered all life sacred whether human or non-human, for non-human beings too were divine in nature and legitimate members of the cosmos.

The Unit aims to cover Gandhi's views on human nature and seeks

- to understand Gandhi's philosophy of man;
- to know his understanding of the essence of man.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Gandhi fought for the liberation of humanity, and particularly of his countrymen for almost five decades of his public life and in that period he had to deal with millions of people belonging to various social groups. This mass contact provided him with opportunities to study and discover as to how human nature actually expresses itself in day-to-day social life. He developed a very clear concept of self and of human nature which forms an integral part of his world-view.

Despite his belief in the 'consciously-divine', rational and sociable nature of man, he realized that its manifestation in social life often betrays its distinctive characteristics, that is, that there is an apparent gulf between God and man owing to the immersion of the latter's soul in ignorance. Because of this, he declared that man is an imperfect and a fallible being. He felt that man takes in vice far more readily than virtue. He believed that there is no human being in this world who is wholly good or wholly bad. The difference between human beings is after all a difference only in the degrees of virtues possessed by them and not the fundamental difference between the wholly good and the wholly evil as such. Human nature, he repeatedly asserted, will only find itself when it fully realizes that to be human it has to cease to be bestial or brutal. He claimed to be a fairly accurate student of human nature and "vivisector of my own failings. I have discovered that man is superior to the system he propounds." In his autobiography, he declared that the brute by nature knows no self-restraint, and man is man because he is capable of, and only in so far as he exercises, self-restraint. Elsewhere, he states that the duty of renunciation differentiates mankind from the beast. Man becomes great exactly in the degree in which he works for the welfare of his fellow men. The differences between men are merely those of degree, not of kind.

Gandhi never isolated man from society primarily because he finds no distinction between man and man. To him all men are equal because all men are divine. This serves as the fundamental principle of the essence of man from Gandhian perspective. That he wants a radical change in the society from the point of view of this fundamental principle of the essence of man is undeniable. When a society shares a conjoint, communicated and disciplined vision of man, the essence of man as a divine entity finds its positive avenue of exposure. As Gandhi embraces everyone in the society as his constant divine partner in the total efflorescence of man, he shows an altogether radical and different avenue of conquering social maladies like fanaticism, superstitions, hatred, ill-will, anger, fear, falsehood and so on by honoring the inner divine essence of man. That Truth, Goodness and Beauty must come out effective and victorious in man, because man alone knows how to overcome all constraints related to the advancement of humanism, is the *sine qua non* of the Gandhian philosophy of man.

An iconoclast in the concept of man and radical visionary, Gandhi shows the avenue of respecting woman and eliminating differences between men and women. He draws our attention to the invaluable words of Swami Vivekananda who regards and adores every man and woman as a brother and a sister and teaches the age-old Indian lesson of humanism in the right perspectives of respect and nobility. He strongly believed that the souls of mankind are one and inseparable. The absolute oneness of humanity also encouraged him to purify his imperfect soul along with the purification of all the souls of mankind, for he strongly believes in the struggling spirit in man to be divine in essence and excellence. The practical consequence of this awareness of the divinity of the individual is that it compels one to look upon other individuals as ends in themselves and not as means to serve the purpose of others. This ensures the dignity of the individual. In fact, human dignity is grounded in human divinity. As the human individual partakes of the divinity of God, Gandhi believed that man is inherently and basically good. This provides the master key to Gandhi's concept of human nature.

3.2 HUMAN NATURE

This 'wonderful piece of work, noble in reason and infinite in faculty', man, engaged the attention of Gandhi too. In fact, implicit in any world-view is the concept of self and human nature and Gandhi paid considerable attention to it. His autobiography is full of observations about the manifestations of human nature. Therein, we find him stating that "a man often succumbs to temptation"; that "Selfishness turns them blind". In *Harijan*, he says that "people find the easiest of things oftentimes to be the most difficult to follow"; that "we are all thieves"; that "listlessness is common to us all"; and that "Love of power is usual in man and it often only dies with his death". We also find him observing that habit gets mastery over men; that they "follow the authority of one man like sheep". Notwithstanding his pronouncements on the darker side of human nature, it should, however, not be construed that Gandhi was always confronted with the darker side of human nature, he did come across its purely moral expressions as well. Recording such reminiscences, he wrote that "man is both matter and spirit, each acting on and affecting the other"; that "however bitter a man might be, he is sure to come round if we bestow upon him pure love in thought, word and deed"; that "generally those who believe in taking a tooth for a tooth, after a time forgive one another and become friends"; and that somehow he was "able to draw the noblest in mankind" and that is what enabled him to maintain his "faith in God and human nature".

Gandhi continued to maintain that man possesses an inborn, though limited, capacity of correcting his mistakes and of cultivating his special virtues. He believed that human nature is infinitely modifiable; that is, "it was also given to human beings to learn from the mistakes and not to repeat them". In other words, he thought that "there are chords in every human heart, If we only know how to strike the right chord, we bring out the music". In this connection it should be mentioned that, *Bhagavad Gita* had taught Gandhi that man can only strive to cultivate his special virtues, he cannot command results. Secondly, he believed that man's capacity to cultivate his special virtues is limited and that, therefore, his nature could not be changed "in a moment". In other words, he was not so naive as to think that men could be transformed overnight. Further, he recognized the role that circumstances play in moulding man's nature, though he could never be sure as to how far a man is free and how far a creature of circumstances.

His belief in the monistic doctrine of the metaphysical unity between God and man enabled him to describe the relationship between man and man as also divine. Believing that "all life in its essence is one", he declared that we are all children of the same God and that, therefore, potentially human nature is the same everywhere. This is to say that soul is one in all and that its possibilities are the same for everyone. It is interesting to note, in this context, the metaphors of a tree and an ocean with which he often used to describe the divine equality of human beings. Employing the metaphor of a tree he once said: "We are all leaves of a majestic tree whose trunk cannot be shaken off its roots which are deep down in the bowels of the earth, The mightiest wind cannot move it". And, taking recourse to the metaphor of an ocean he stated that "No one has the capacity to judge God. We are drops in that limitless ocean of mercy". In his autobiography, he observed: "We are all tarred with the same brush, and are children of one and the same creator, and as such the divine powers within us are infinite". It was this belief that enabled him to declare Truth to be "a social virtue".

His recognition of "conscious-divinity" as the important feature led him to include the virtues of moral-progression, non-violence, and benevolence. Subscribing to the view that there is nothing in this world which is not subject to change he regarded human nature also to be dynamic, and not static. He declared that "Human nature either goes up or goes down". And, this virtue of moral progression, he thought, distinguishes man both from the God and the beast. He argued that for them the question of progression just does not arise, as God is already perfect and the beast is essentially dormant. Distinguishing man from God he observed that "No one can remain without eternal cycle unless it be God himself ". And about man's distinction from the beast he declared that "Progress is man's distinction, Man's alone, not beast's". This distinction enabled him to regard man as "a special creature of God, precisely to the extent that he is distinct from the rest of His creation".

Emphasizing the need for cultivation of virtues, he opined that striving alone can enable man to bridge the apparent gulf between God and man's soul and thereby, to realize his self (that is soul or *atman*). And Self-realization was regarded by him to be the only vocation of man's life, something which is absolutely desirable. In other words, he firmly believed that "that alone is worth-having or worth-cultivating which would enable us to realize our Maker and to feel that, after all on this earth we are merely sojourners". In *Harijan*, he insisted that "Man's ultimate aim is the realization of God, and all his activities; social, political, religious, have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God." In other words, man is born in order to know his Maker and he should live to that end. The natural course of man's evolution he, thus, thought is "From beast, through man, to God". Unlike the sages of India's great past who suggested the path of withdrawal from the struggles of social life, Gandhi suggested that the only way through which man could attain the ultimate state of *Brahmanirvana* (self-realization) was the way of involvement in the struggles of social life, that is the way of the service of God's creation.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What are the important features of human nature?

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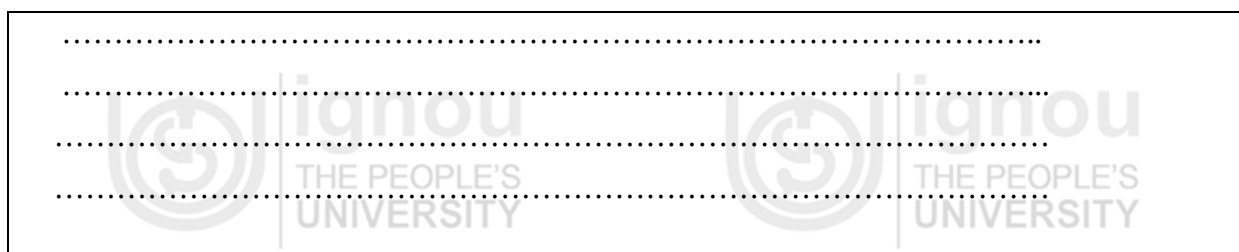
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2) Are all humans same in the Gandhian framework ?

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3.3 PHILOSOPHY OF MAN

Based on his metaphysical presuppositions, Gandhi believes in the essential goodness of man. This conviction that man is inherently good is so fundamental in Gandhian thinking that one may even say that Gandhi's entire attitude and approach to the questions related to life was based on this belief in the innate goodness of the human individual. The unique weapon of *satyagraha* and his revolutionary agenda for social transformation were all based on this belief. Although Gandhi put his implicit faith in the goodness of the individuals he was not unaware of the element of error and evil in him. With his deep insight into human nature Gandhi knew that just as there is the divine spark in man there is also the brute in him. Gandhi makes a distinction between the 'higher self' and the 'lower self' and at the *nadir* of the lower self he identifies the 'brute'. The very fact that man has a body brings in with it certain natural limitations which cannot be ignored or under estimated as insignificant. But one shall not identify man with his lower nature, nor shall the ideal of life be identified with the attainment of the needs of the body. Man, Gandhi contends, is a mixture of good and evil, and the upward and downward tendencies are inherent in him.

But as man is essentially good, goodness being his basic nature, Gandhi argues that man is also perfectible. "Godliness implies that it is more natural for man to be good than to be evil, though apparently descent may seem easier than ascent". This is the ground for Gandhi's optimism. Of course, to err is human but to try to overcome error is divine. "There is no one without faults, not even men of God", wrote Gandhi. They are men of God not because they are faultless but because they know their own faults and are ever ready to correct themselves. One hears in these words of Gandhi an echo of the famous saying that every saint has a past and every sinner a future. Man must choose either of the two courses; the upward or the downward but as he has the brute in him he will more easily choose the downward course than the upward, especially when the downward course is presented to him in a beautiful grab. Although the downward course is easier than the upward as we are born with brute strength, "we are born in order to realise God who dwells in us. That is the privilege of man, it distinguishes him from the brute creation". He is more concerned with how to bring out the divinity that is already there in human nature. For this, Gandhi believed, human individuals have to be trained to extricate themselves from the pulls and pressures of the lower nature. He propounded a set of rules and vows for facilitating this upward impulse to perfect himself and to realise his ultimate end.

Entering deep into the genesis of man, Gandhi believes that the inner worth of mankind lies not by exhibition of external force but by silent and struggling endeavor to rise to the ascent and

excellence of man the unknown. The striving for perfection is, therefore, one of the inner adventure always thrilling, pulsating and poignant. The concept of man in relation to the society as Gandhi formulates has no parallel in the contemporary times. He says, "I value individual freedom but you must not forget that man is essentially a social being. He has risen to his present status by learning to adjust his individualism to the requirements of social progress. Unrestricted individualism is the law of the beast of the jungle. we have learnt to strike the mean between individual freedom and social restraint" (*Harijan*, 1927). A perfect synchronization between man and society is the fundamental requisite to the march of man and society as a living and dynamic force of civilization. Man marches ahead not because he excels in scientific marvels or in utilitarianism but he continually makes an adventure for inward excellence. This inward excellence always encompasses everyone in and around him. He forsakes himself for others in and around him to be nearer to himself by embracing all. The more he is dedicated to this mission for self-sacrifice, the greater is the possibility of better efflorescence of the vision of man within him. In fact, he is reborn with this vision that promises him to be an ideal partner and sympathizer of the society to which he belongs. Society, then, becomes an indispensable part of his very being, -the existence, worth and fullness of man.

Side by side with socialization as the essence and excellence of man, Gandhi reminds man of cultivating the true spirit of religion which guides and directs man towards the avenue of purity and perfection. This true spirit of religion can be exercised through prayer. Only a prayerful heart, as he ardently believes, can make a bridge between man and man. It should be the 'vital concern' of every human being who cares for discipline and orderliness. Gandhi is concerned more with the excellence of man than with customs, principles, rites and rituals which serve as mandatory components of one's so-called religion. That man is the only essence of religion and divinity is the radical approach to religion which he time and again highlights in the vision of man and religion. Moreover, he emphasizes on environment of oneself by means of exercise of the nobler qualities that contribute to the excellence of man and his religion. These are love, truth and non-violence in particular. Love as Gandhi considers, truly reveals man as man. The essence of man is the essence of love. Bereft of the inner spirit of love, man degrades himself down to the level of an animal. An ardent optimist in the fullness of man, he awaits better days of purer efflorescence of man.

The quest for Truth is the quest for the inner essence of man. It is the quest that calls forth means for synchronization between Truth and non-violence. As the core of religion is prayer, so is Truth that constitutes the highest and noblest prayer that leads to the harmonized essence of Truth and Ahimsa. And as prayer is the core of the lift of man so is his endeavor at making a fusion between Truth and Ahimsa that becomes a part and parcel of the essence of man. Gandhi banks upon Ahimsa essentially because it is a means--a very effective means which shakes hands with Truth, the end or the goal of man. To arrive at this goal, one must, as Gandhi emphasizes, continually strive even in the face of repeated failures. He is more interested in visualizing God in the quest for Truth than in anything else, and so, he takes recourse to Ahimsa which serves as a certain and definite means for Truth.

When Gandhi advocates for cultivation of Truth as the essence of man, he also advocates for practice of patience. The lesson learnt through cultivation of patience is the lesson of love and mutual understanding between man and man. Therein lies the fountain of greatness that leads man towards unison with Truth. To be baptised with the spirit of patience is to be baptised with the training of how to purify oneself amidst sorrows and sufferings, obstacles and constraints. The path of Ahimsa is, therefore, the path of patience and suffering, the path of continual crystallization for whatever is good for mankind.

For adherence to true idealism which conforms to the practical and living aspects of religion, Gandhi makes inroads to the concept of inwardness in man. This means that man must strive hard to be worthy of an ideal which has its close alliance with Truth. He allows man to keep open the doors of consciousness in order to celebrate the essence of religion in idealism not in a narrow compass but in a wider context of the religion of boundlessness. To orient oneself with this spirit of idealism is to orient one's faith in religion in the right perspective of perfection. Herein lies the virtue of an ideal that coordinates religion in the spirit of boundlessness. Otherwise, man becomes a victim to imperfection and parochialism. What, therefore, contributes to the excellence of man is the continual assessment of an ideal he so enriches on or sticks to it for crystallization.

Gandhi is aware of crystallization further beyond man by means of aesthetics. This means that in the process of continual advancement, man must practice the aesthetics of Truth, Goodness and Beauty. A continual process of refinement of sensibilities will allow him to see into the purity and perfection of everything in which he is involved. He cannot, therefore, but evaluate himself in terms of Goodness awaiting better exploration and identification with Truth and Beauty. The aesthetics of soul-force as Gandhi visualizes in his concept of non-violence forewarns man against demolishing conscience which hinders him from being led astray. It is also an acid test for every person in the face of violence, when the aesthetics of serenity and calmness of mind elevates him from man the animal to man the divine and a part inseparable of the All Beautiful. Gandhi also heightens the concept of man in his aesthetic role in negotiating violence by non-violence from two other vital perspectives. First, to err is human and to forgive and forget, divine. Herein lies the beauty of non-violence that enables man to rise above petty self-interest and self-glory. Second, violence replaced by non-violence shows the indomitable power of man who knows how to win over crudities and littleness in his very approach to evaluating the antecedents and consequences of violence. Moreover, it also indicates that by dint of application of the aesthetics of goodness for one and all in course of following the principles of non-violence; he restrains himself from being unjust and indecisive by means of violent actions and even of contemplation.

That focal point of interest in Gandhian religion is man. Bereft of man, religion as Gandhi considers, turns out to be a dogma. Here, too, he adorns man not merely as a religious being, but obviously as an aesthetically religious being. Religion, therefore, becomes an aesthetics life force for man with inner poignance of Truth. The religion of man, as Gandhi advocates, is the religion of compassion, of living together, and never torment the orgy of irreligion in apathy and hatred for man. Gandhian religion also re-ensures the fact that man is never brutal but always friendly

and benevolent. 'Brutalization of human nature', as he thinks, can be encountered most successfully not by brutal force or violence, but by admitting the divine essence of man, which is beyond destruction and, therefore, always alive and inspiring and stimulating to anyone who cares for the muse of the glory of man. Man, the apparently brutal being, frantically seeks an antidote to his animal passion, which is always to be had within himself only when he is allowed to identify and eliminate his brutal behavioural designs and spurts. Gandhi also reminds man of the fact that as a human being each man is an indivisible part of God. All men are, according to him, the sons of God and, as such, the wrong committed by one man is also the wrong of the other.

Man: A manifestation of God

In keeping with his religious beliefs he modestly accepted the Hindu view which states that "man is a complex, multi-dimensional being including within him different elements of matter, life, consciousness, intelligence and the divine spark". But Gandhi did not rest content with accepting blindly the Hindu concept of man. He gave it a revolutionary thrust by uncovering the dynamism inherent in it. Basic to Gandhi's concept of the human self is the belief that man is essentially a manifestation of God. Gandhi understood and acknowledged the physical, psychological, intellectual and moral dimensions of the human self. But underlying all these, as the informing principle, is the spirit or the soul which is 'original and co-eternal with God' though part of God and as such dependent on God. It is clear that this view is logically connected to his view of the world also. As everything in the universe is a manifestation of God man cannot be otherwise. He says, if the world is but a reflection of *Brahman*, the individual self is but a spark of the Universal effulgence. Indeed both are one, but for the limiting conditions. For quite some time this *Upanishadic* vision that *atman* the individual self, and *Paramatman*, the Imperishable, Unmanifest, Exhaustless and Supreme Brahman, are not two but one. So, in order to describe his concept of the self especially the relationship between God and the individual soul, Gandhi used to quote an Urdu couplet which means "Adam is not God, but he is a spark of the divine". But later the *Upanishadic* vision became clearer to him and he whole-heartedly subscribed to that view of non-dualism between the universal self and the individual self. In a letter to Mira Behn, Gandhi confessed that the meaning of the last two lines of the first verse of the morning prayer in the Ashram, which means: "I am that immaculate *Brahman* which ever notes the states of dream, wakefulness. and deep sleep, not this body, the compound made of elements", upset him. He wrote, "Formerly I used to shudder to utter this verse, thinking the claim made therein was arrogant. But when I saw the meaning more clearly. I perceived at once that... we are the Being, the witness pervading the countless bodies".

What actually Gandhi wants man to have it to undergo trying transcendence in order to be a global partner of One World. One man, one great family of man. Let the *Upanishadic* spirit, the spirit of oneness of mankind, be the guiding spirit of man. Let man march ahead to fulfill the global mission of man: *Vasudhaiva kutumbakam*—the endearing relationship between man and man.

3.4 IMPLICATIONS

The doctrine of man's oneness with God and humanity has several implications. First of all, this doctrine is incompatible with the belief that an individual may gain spiritually and those that surround him suffer. Gandhi believed that if one man gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him and, if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent. There is not a single virtue which aims at or is content with the welfare of the individual alone. Conversely, there is not a single moral offense which does not, directly or indirectly, affect many others besides the actual offender. Hence, whether an individual is good or bad is not merely his own concern, but really the concern of the whole community, indeed of the whole world. Secondly, the monistic doctrine implies that all human beings are working consciously or unconsciously towards the realization of that identity. Thirdly, what one man is capable of achieving is possible for all to attain. The soul is one in all. Its possibilities are the same for everyone. Fourthly, it is quite proper to resist and attack a system, but to attack and resist the author is tantamount to resisting and attacking oneself. Fifthly, man's ultimate aim is the realization of God, and all his activities, social, political, religious, have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavor, simply because the only way to find God is to see God in creation and be one with it. This can only be done by service of all, as he says, "I am a part and parcel of the whole, and I cannot find Him apart from the rest of humanity."

Oneness of man and of all life:

Another implication of the conviction that man is the manifestation of the Supreme is the belief that all life is one. And like an *advaitin*, Gandhi did believe in the essential oneness of everything, sentient and non-sentient. This belief further implies that the universe is a harmonious whole whose parts should naturally and spontaneously function together. So everything and everyone has its role or duty, value and significance. Thus equality comes up as a natural corollary to this belief. It follows that inequality, segregation, discrimination, violence or exploitation of any sort is unnatural and against the law of God, world and man. Gandhi's proclaimed stand against exploitation and injustice of any kind, whether it be untouchability, racism, or suppression of women, is in keeping with this belief that all life is one. In short, a whole set of new attitudes and values are born out of this vision and they serve as the foundation on which a new order in tune with the perception of oneness is to be evolved.

The sense of oneness of the entire humanity and non-human nature has another insight to offer regarding the impact of human action on society and the natural environment. Since all life is one and man is gregarious every single act of the individual whether intentional or otherwise, exerts its impact on society. So Gandhi considers it the bounden duty of every one to exercise his reason and will carefully and cautiously and modulate his behaviour in such a way that the whole community, nay, the whole world gains out of it.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) How are Man and God related ?

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2) Reflect on the implications that flow from Gandhi's concept of human nature.

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3.5 LET US SUM UP

We have attempted to have a bird's-eye-view of Gandhian understanding of human nature and its essence. The significance of the Gandhian views on the condition of man is the preparedness for error in our endeavors and the readiness to take large risks, checked by a continuous exercise of self-analysis and the willingness to make amends for mistakes made through weakness of will. Such involvement in the affairs of the world combined with the discipline that comes with the cultivation of inwardness merges the ideal of individual enlightenment and collective welfare. One should strive towards this awareness which can only be the outcome of one's realization of self and its nature.

3.6 KEY WORDS

Cosmos: a well-coordinated whole whose parts were all interdependent.

Brahmanirvana: self-realization through the service of men.

Consciously-divine: endowed with the potential of divinity.

3.7 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 4 ETHICAL TEACHINGS OF GANDHI

Contents

- 4.0 Objectives
 - 4.1 Introduction
 - 4.2 Non-Violence
 - 4.3 Truth
 - 4.4 Non-stealing
 - 4.5 Celibacy
 - 4.6 Non-possessiveness
 - 4.7 Character
 - 4.8 Life Moral Teachings
 - 4.9 Let Us Sum Up
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4.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you should be able to;

- Explain the Gandhi concept of non-violence
 - Interpret the Gandhi idea of truth
 - Discuss the Gandhi conception of non-stealing
 - Know the Gandhi view on non-possessiveness
 - Elucidate the Gandhi vision on Celibacy
 - Understand the Gandhi ideas on character
 - Know the Gandhi life moral teachings
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4.1 INTRODUCTION

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) is a father of our nation. Ethical teachings are the central philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi is a universally accepted as an exemplary model of ethical and moral life, with a rare blending of personal and public life, the principles and practices, the immediate and the eternal. He considered life to be an integrated whole, growing from truth to truth every day in moral and spiritual status. He believed in a single standard of conduct founded on dharma of truth and nonviolence. He successfully led nonviolent struggles against racial discrimination, colonial rule, economic and social exploitation and moral degradation. So long as these manifestations of violence remain, Gandhi will remain relevant. Gandhi was a good man in a world where few resist the corroding influence of power, wealth and vanity.

Among the vital messages of Gandhi's leadership are: even one person can make a difference; strength comes not from physical capacity but from an indomitable will. Mahatma Gandhi was not an armchair academician or a cloistered visionary. He was deeply concerned with the world around him. He disclaimed being a visionary. Gandhi spoke in a low tone and was a hesitant public speaker. Yet people of all classes were drawn to him and instinctively felt him to be a leader of deeply spiritual and moral perceptions, which he sought to realize through the pursuit of Truth. Over 54 years of Gandhi's public life were lived as an open book. He lived in South Africa for 21 years and then in India from 1915. All through his life he remained a seeker after Truth.

A central quality of his leadership was its natural evolution through intense interaction with the people and the events. Gandhi single-handedly made nonviolence a universal substitute for violence and the bed-rock of his leadership. His nonviolence was the way to counter injustice and exploitation, and not run away from a righteous battle. He associated the qualities of humility, compassion, forgiveness and tolerance as corollaries of nonviolence. To Gandhi the spirit of service and sacrifice was the key to leadership. For the spirit of service to materialize we must lay stress on our responsibilities and duties and not on rights. He illustrated it through the example of concentric circles: one starts with service of those nearest to one and expands the circle of service until it covers the universe, no circle thriving at the cost of the circles beyond. Service to him implied self-sacrifice. He said that Sacrifice is the law of life. It runs through and governs every walk of life. We can do nothing or get nothing without paying a price for it, in other words, without sacrifice.

The commitment to service, however demands a strong sense of conscience (moral imperative), courage (fearlessness, bravery, initiative), and character (integrity). To Mahatma Gandhi, 'inner voice' was synonymous with conscience. Leaders need to develop and follow their conscience even more than ordinary people as they set the path for others. Hence, he wrote: None of us, especially no leader should allow himself to disobey the inner voice in the face of pressure from outside, any leader who succumbs in this way forfeits his right of leadership. For a leader to follow the right path requires courage and its associated qualities: Courage, endurance and above all, fearlessness and spirit of willing sacrifices are the qualities that are required today in India for leadership.

Gandhi in his time wielded more power over the minds of people than any other individual but it was not the power of weapons, or terror or violence; it was the power of his convictions, his pursuit of truth and nonviolence, fearlessness, love and justice, working through incessant service and sacrifice for fellow human beings. His power came from empowering the weak, to lead the masses in the fight against injustice, exploitation, violence and discrimination. Satyagraha elevated the struggle for survival to the highest moral-spiritual levels and ordinary, emaciated people turned heroes. His power arose through the people whom he gave a sense of self-respect, purpose and moral strength.

Mahatma Gandhi expresses that morality is quite inseparable with the conception of God and religion. Morality is the core essence or religion. For Mahatma Gandhi, spiritual is the highest goal of man and all else must be sub-servant to that goal. Mahatma Gandhi said that there are seven deadly sins in human life. The following seven sins are deadly sins according to Gandhi. They are 1. Wealth without work. 2. Pleasure without conscience. 3. Knowledge without character. 4. Commerce without morality. 5. Science without humanity. 6. Religion without sacrifice. 7. Politics without principle. Ethical teachings of Gandhi are the great source for right, peaceful, healthy and blissful living in the world.

4.2 NON-VIOLENCE

Mahatma Gandhi says that Non-violence means to keep oneself completely away from such action which may hurt others physically or mentally. Violence is a behavior involving physical force intending to hurting, damaging or killing. Non-violence is to bear distresses by oneself to make others happy. Non-violence is the most effective means to fight against discrimination and falsehood. Non-violence is not the outward strength. Non-violence is the internal power. Non-violence promotes vegetarianism and reverence for all life. Non-violence prevents murder, war, capital punishment in the world. Non-violence avoids abortion, mercy killing, suicide and infanticide in human society. Non-violence creates freedom from physical and psychological violence, exploitation, injustice, inequality and discrimination. Non-violence develops love, co-operation, forgiving, help, and kindness in humanity. Non-violence is fundamental to the discovery of truth. Truth is God and non-violence is God's love. Truth is the ultimate goal of human life and non-violence is the means to achieve ultimate goal. Without violence it is not possible to seek and find truth. Non-violence and truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disintegrate and separate them. They are like the two sides of the same coin. Mahatma Gandhi expresses that the first step in non-violence is that we cultivate in our daily life, as between ourselves, truthfulness, humility, tolerance, loving, and kindness. Honesty, they say in English, is the best policy. But in terms of non-violence is an unchangeable creed. It has to be pursued in face of violence raging around you. Non-violence with a non-violent man is no merit. In fact, it is become difficult to say whether it is non-violent at all. But when it is pitted against violence, then one realizes the difference between the two. This we cannot do unless we are ever wakeful, ever vigilant and striving.

The power of non-violence is the power of internal force. According to Mahatma Gandhi It is no non-violence if we merely love those who love us. It is non-violence only when we love those who hate us. Non-violence to be a potent force must begin with the mind. Non-violence of the body without co-operation of mind is the non-violence of the weak or the cowardly, and has therefore, no potency. It is a degrading performance. If we bear the malice and hatred in our bosoms and pretend not to retaliate it must recoil upon us and to destruction. It follows, therefore, that if non-violence becomes successfully established in one place, its influence will spread everywhere. The basic principle on which non-violence rests is that holds good in respect of oneself equally applies to the whole universe.

Mahatma Gandhi tells that the non-violence of my conception is a more active and more real fighting against wickedness than retaliation whose very nature is to increase wickedness. Non-violence is one of the major moral qualities of human being. Non-violence is a power force than

violence because it is linked with the bravery of mind. Non-violence is a powerful weapon of the strong. Mahatma Gandhi used non-violence not only for the purification of his soul, but to purify the conduct of the human society. He practiced non-violence in mass action and devised means to fight out injustice.

Check your progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What is your understanding on the concept of non-violence of Gandhi?

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2) What is the difference between violence and non-violence in the views of Gandhi?

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4.3 TRUTH

Mahatma Gandhi says that truth is the law of our being. Truth is God. Truth is which is. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills. Truth is a virtue. Truth is in fact self-revealing, but that we have become blind on account of our ignorance. Ignorance, according to Mahatma Gandhi, is not necessary or natural to the self. Mahatma Gandhi says that moral degradation or perversion of one kind or cause ignorance. He explicitly mentions the six deadly enemies which cause prejudice, malice and ill-will to arise, on account of which the person is unable to see or feel the truth. These deadly enemies are desire, anger, greed, attachment, pride and jealousy. Therefore, in order to practice truth one must constantly endeavor to oneself from these evils, one must cultivate moral purity and courage and must not allow these enemies to cloud his vision.

Mahatma Gandhi is also aware that in the present day world falsehood appears to be more paying and beneficial. By speaking lies people do get success. Mahatma Gandhi is aware of it, but very logically he demonstrates the superiority of truth over falsehood. There is one condition regarding the speaking of the truth which Mahatma Gandhi accepts because of its pragmatic value. Even in accepting this Mahatma Gandhi is trying to be faithful to the ancient Indian teaching. The condition is that the truth should be spoken in a pleasant way. If the truth is expressed in an unpleasant, blunt and rough manner, it may be socially injurious as it might give rise to anger and quarrels. In fact, in the ancient Indian philosophy there is a maxim which says, 'speak the truth, and speak the pleasant; but do not speak the unpleasant truth'. Mahatma Gandhi

seems to be influenced by the element of practically contained in this maxim. Therefore, he says that truthfulness has to be practiced, that it is an art which has to be developed by rigorous and constant discipline and practice.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What is meant by truth according to Gandhi?

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2) What are the inner deadly enemies to prevent to see the truth?

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4.4 NON-STEALING

Mahatma Gandhi tells that Non-stealing is not to steal. Non-stealing is not to take by thought, word and action anything to which one is not entitled. There are two senses of the word non-stealing; it popularly means the observance of the rule of not taking away the belonging or the property of anybody unless it is given by that person. But, there is a more rigorous meaning of the word non-stealing; it forbids the keeping or holding in possession of such things that are not needed.

Mahatma Gandhi uses the non-stealing in both these senses. In fact, in conceiving the nature of this virtue he is influenced by Jainism which believes that stealing is also a kind of violence. Property is, in fact, outer life, because bodily existence depends upon property. Therefore, to rob one of his properties is to take away his outer life. Non-stealing is a virtue also because stealing is not compatible with the highest virtue of love. Therefore Mahatma Gandhi recommends that a truly moral individual has to take a solemn vow to cultivate the virtue of non-stealing.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What is your understanding on the principle of non-stealing of Gandhi?

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2) What is the difference between stealing and non-stealing in the ideas of Gandhi?

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4.5 CELIBACY

Mahatma Gandhi expresses that Celibacy is abstention from self-indulgence by thought, speech and action. Self-indulgence means indulging one's desires excessively. Celibacy is restricted to chastity. Celibacy means abstinence from sexual relations or at least physical control over the organ of generation. Mahatma Gandhi uses the celibacy both in its popular sense, and in its traditional sense. He emphasizes the importance of sexual control. Celibacy is putting a check and restraint over all the senses and the mind. Senses often delude us and misguide us. Immorality is basically born out of a desire to satisfy the demands of the senses. Therefore, we must cultivate a discipline by which we, instead of being led astray by the senses, may be able to keep the senses under control. In fact, even sexual control cannot be practiced unless senses are put in check. For example, Mahatma Gandhi feels that our food habits have to be changed. The palate is responsible for our taking delicious and rich food, which, in its turn, causes sexual urge to arise. Therefore, Mahatma Gandhi experimented with different kinds of food, just in order to evolve a food pattern, which, without reducing the health value of food, would not allow amorous and undesirable urges to arise. The name celibacy is given to a discipline of this kind.

4.6 NON-POSSESSIVENESS

Mahatma Gandhi says that Non-possessiveness is renunciation of possessions by thought, word and deed. Non-possessiveness is restricted to contentment. Non-possessiveness is non-acceptance. Possessiveness is unwilling to share one's possessions. Mahatma Gandhi feels that the tendency to possess things is the cause of all evils. Therefore, one must cultivate the discipline of living with what one has. Mahatma Gandhi is aware that it is not possible to practice this virtue in the absolute way, because absolute non-possession is impossible in life; even the body is a possession- the things needed for the preservation of the body are also possessions, and therefore, so long as we are alive we cannot completely do away with possessions. Even so, non-possessiveness has to be practiced to the best of one's capacity because this does away with the cause of rift in social life and provides a solid foundation for a universal love to flourish.

4.7 CHARACTER

Mahatma Gandhi expresses that Character is moral and ethical strength. Character comes from within. Character is the key to success. A man of character will make himself worthy of any position he is given. Character, not brains, will count at the crucial moment. Character is any day more eloquent than speech. Character must be above suspicion and truthful and self-controlled.

What will tell in the end will be character and not a knowledge of letters. What we start receiving education through our own language, our relations in the home will take on a different character. The real property that a parent can transmit to all equally is his or her character and educational facilities. The truest test of civilization, culture and dignity is character and not clothing. Success is the certain result of suffering of the extremist character voluntarily undergone. Sorrow and suffering make for character if they are voluntarily borne, but not if they are imposed. Men of stainless character and self-purification will easily inspire confidence and automatically purify the atmosphere around them. In the times to come the people will not judge us by the creed we profess or the label we wear or the slogans we shout but by our work, industry, sacrifice, honesty and purity of character. If you express the requisite purity of character in action, you cannot do it better than through the spinning wheel. If you have no character to lose, people will have no faith in you. Character alone will have real effect on masses.

Mahatma Gandhi tells that all your scholarship, all your study of Shakespeare and Wordsworth would be vain if at the same time you do not build your character and attain mastery over your thoughts and your actions. A vow imparts stability, ballast and firmness to one's character. A language is an exact reflection of the character and growth of its speakers. A dissolute character is more dissolute in thought than in deed, and the same is true of violence. Literary training by itself adds not an inch to one's moral height and character building is independent of literary training. Character cannot be built with mortar and stone. It cannot be built by other hands than your own. The principal and professors cannot give you character from the pages of books. Character building comes from their very lives and really speaking it must come from within you. Mahatma says that if wealth is lost nothing is lost; if health is lost something is lost; if character is lost everything is lost.

4.8 LIFE MORAL TEACHINGS

Mahatma Gandhi expressed life moral teachings in his writings and speeches. Life moral teachings Presented here are drawn from Gandhi's writings and speeches. Perhaps in our time there will be even greater opportunities to put them to good use. They are, 1. Our aim is the establishment of the kingdom of Righteousness on earth. 2. Peace has its victories more glorious than those of war. 3. Real disarmament cannot come unless the nations of the world cease to exploit one another. 4. No matter how insignificant the thing you have to do, do it as well as you can, give it as much of your care and attention as you would give to the thing you regard as most important. 5. Nonviolence, in the very nature of things, is of no assistance in the defense of ill-gotten gains and immoral acts. 6. Nonviolence is never a method of coercion, it is one of conversion. 7. Nonviolent struggle is impossible without capital in the form of character. 8. Recall the face of the poorest and the most helpless man whom you may have seen and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he be able to gain

anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? 9. Religions are different roads converging on the same point. 10. Religion which takes no account of practical affairs and does not help to solve them is no religion. 11. Rights that do not flow directly from duty well performed are not worth having. 12. Satisfaction lies in the effort, not in the attainment. Full effort is full victory. 13. No human being is so bad as to be beyond redemption. 14. Silence becomes cowardice when occasion demands speaking out the whole truth and acting accordingly. 15. Strength of numbers is the delight of the timid. The valiant in spirit glories in fighting alone. 16. Terrorism and deception are weapons not of the strong but of the weak. 17. That line of action is alone justice which does not harm either party to a dispute. 18. The acquisition of the spirit of nonresistance changes one's outlook upon life. It puts different values upon things and upsets previous calculations. And when it is set in motion, its effect can overtake the whole world. It is the greatest force because it is the highest expression of the soul. 19. The best politics is right action. 20. The danger is greatest when victory seems nearest. 21. The fabled godly Elephant King was saved only when he thought he was at his last gasp. 22. The first principle of nonviolent action is that of noncooperation with everything humiliating. 23. The fullest life is impossible without an immovable belief in a Living Law in obedience to which the whole universe moves. 24. The highest moral law is that we should unremittingly work for the good of mankind. 25. The movement of noncooperation, if it may be considered a revolution, is not an armed revolt; it is an evolutionary revolution, it is a bloodless revolution. The movement is a revolution of thought, or spirit. 26. The problem is a world problem. No nation can find its own salvation by breaking away from others. We must all be saved or we must all perish together. 27. There is a power now slumbering within us, which if awakened would do to evil what light does to darkness. 28. The right to err, which means the freedom to try experiments, is the universal condition of all progress. 29. To believe that what has not occurred in history will not occur at all is to argue disbelief in the dignity of man. 30. To benefit by others' killing and delude oneself into the belief that one is being very religious and nonviolent is sheer self-deception. 31. True morality consists not in following the beaten track, but in finding out the true path for us and fearlessly following it. 32. Truth never damages a cause that is just. 33. Violence is suicide. 34. We are all children of one and the same God and, therefore, absolutely equal. 35. We hug the chains that bind us. 36. We leave things to Fate after exhausting all the remedies. 37. We may attack measures and systems. We may not, we must not, attack people. Imperfect ourselves, we must be tender toward others and slow to impute their motives. 38. We may not be God but we are of God -- even as a little drop of water is of the ocean. 39. We must combat the wrong by ceasing to assist the wrongdoer, directly or indirectly. 40. Western democracy as it functions today is diluted Nazism or fascism. At best it is merely a cloak to hide the Nazi and fascist tendencies of imperialism.

41. What is possible for one is possible for all. 42. When we disobey a law, it is not for want of respect for lawful authority, but in obedience to the higher law of our being, the voice of conscience. 43. Where Love is, there God is also. 44. Where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence. 45. Conscience is a good guide for individual conduct, imposition of that conduct upon others would be an insufferable interference with their freedom of conscience. 46. Whomsoever you follow, howsoever great he might be, see to it that you follow the spirit of the master and not imitate him mechanically.

47. You should be pioneers in presenting a living faith to the world and not the dry bones of a traditional faith which the world will not grasp. 48. A Government that is evil has no room for good men and women except in its prisons. 49. All faiths constitute a revelation of Truth, but all are imperfect. 50. All fear is a want of faith. 51. All other pleasures and possessions pale into nothingness before service which is rendered in a spirit of joy. 52. A nonviolent resister cannot wait or delay action till perfect conditions are forthcoming. 53. A nonviolent revolution is not a program for the seizure of power. It is a program for the transformation of relationships ending in a peaceful transfer of power. 54. A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history. 55. By our actions we mean to show that physical force is nothing compared (to) moral force. 56. Capital as such is not evil; it is its wrong use that is evil. 57. Civil disobedience without constructive programs is bound to fail. 58. Cooperation with good is as much a duty as noncooperation with evil. 59. Do not undertake anything beyond your capacity, and at the same time do not harbor the wish to do less than you can. One who takes up tasks beyond his powers is proud and attached. On the other hand, one who does less than he can is a thief. 60. Do not worry about what others are doing. Each of us should turn the searchlight inward and purify our own hearts as much as possible.

61. Each step upward makes me feel stronger and fit for the next step. 62. Every one of my failures has been a steppingstone. 63. Every right carries with it a corresponding duty. 64. Everything is done openly and aboveboard, for truth hates secrecy. 65. Evil can only be sustained by violence. 66. Exploitation is the essence of violence. 67. Faith does not admit of telling. It has to be lived and then it becomes self-propagating. 68. Faith is nothing but a living, wide-awake consciousness of God within. 69. Fearlessness is the first requisite of spirituality. Cowards can never be moral. 70. For a nonviolent person the whole world is one family. He will thus fear none, nor will others fear him. 71. Freedom won through bloodshed or fraud is no freedom. 72. Given the opportunity, every human being has the same possibility for spiritual growth. 73. God is conscience. 74. God reveals Himself daily to every human being but we shut our ears to "the still small voice." 75. Good government is no substitute for self-government. 76. He who is ever brooding over results often loses nerve in the performance of duty. 77. I am a Christian and a Hindu and a Moslem and a Jew. 78. I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the noblest of causes. 79. I believe in the essential unity of man and, for that matter, all that lives. Therefore, I believe that if one man gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him; and, if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent. 80. I believe that no government can exist for a single moment without the cooperation of the people, willing or forced, and if people suddenly withdraw their cooperation in every detail, the government will come to a standstill.

81. I can retain neither respect nor affection for a government which has been moving from wrong to wrong in order to defend its immorality. 82. I did not move a muscle when I first heard that the atom bomb had wiped out Hiroshima. On the contrary, I said to me, "unless now the world adopts non-violence, it will spell certain suicide for mankind." 83. If a father does an injustice, it is the duty of his children to leave the parental roof. If the headmaster of a school conducts his institution on an immoral basis, the pupils must leave the school. If the chairman of a corporation is corrupt, the members thereof must wash their hands clean of his corruption by withdrawing from it; even so, if a Government does a grave injustice, the subjects must withdraw

cooperation wholly or partially, sufficiently to wean the ruler from his wickedness. 84. If one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself. 85. I hate privilege and monopoly. Whatever cannot be shared with the masses is taboo to me. 86. Individuals or nations, who would practice nonviolence, must be prepared to sacrifice [everything] except honor.

87. In matters of conscience, the law of majority has no place. 88. In nonviolent resistance, success is possible even if there is only one nonviolent resister of the proper stamp. 89. In the secret of my heart I am in perpetual quarrel with God that He should allow such to go on (Written in September 1939 at the start of World War II). 90). Intolerance betrays want of faith in one's cause. 91. It has always been a mystery to me how men can feel themselves by humiliation of their fellow beings. 92. It is a million times better to appear untrue before the world than to be untrue to ourselves. 93. It is not nonviolence if we love merely those who love us. It is nonviolence only when we love those who hate us. 94. It is sinful to buy and use articles made by sweated labor. 95. I want freedom for the full expression of my personality. 96. A civilization is to be judged by its treatment of minorities. 97. Love is the law of life. 98. Love never claims it ever gives. 99. Nothing enduring can be built on violence.

Check Your Progress IV

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What is celibacy according to Gandhi?

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2) What are the unique contents on life moral teachings of Gandhi?

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3) What is your understanding on character in view of Gandhi?

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4.9 LET US SUM UP

Mahatma Gandhi is a great ethical values philosopher. Let us sum up this unit with brief essence of ethical teachings of Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi expresses that non-violence is free from physical and psychological violence in living. Violence is hurting killing damaging physical and psychological sense. Non-violence develops vegetarianism and respect for all life. Non-violence prevents wars murders, exploitations, inequalities and injustices in the world. Non-violence is a discovery of truth. Non-violence is the means to truth. Truth is the law of our being. Truth is God. Truth is which is. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills. Truth is a virtue. Truth is in fact self-revealing, but that we have become blind on account of our ignorance. Mahatma Gandhi explicitly mentions the six deadly enemies which cause prejudice, malice and ill-will to arise, on account of which the person is unable to see or feel the truth. These deadly enemies are desire, anger, greed, attachment, pride and jealousy. Therefore, in order to practice truth one must constantly endeavor to oneself from these evils, one must cultivate moral purity and courage and must not allow these enemies to cloud his vision. Non-stealing is not to take by thought, word and action anything to which one is not entitled. Non-stealing is a good moral quality. Mahatma Gandhi expresses that Celibacy is abstention from self-indulgence by thought, speech and action. Self-indulgence means indulging one's desires excessively. Celibacy means abstinence from sexual relations or at least physical control over the organ of generation. Celibacy is restricted to chastity. Non-possessiveness is renunciation by thought, word and deed. Non-possessiveness is restricted to contentment. Non-possessiveness is non-acceptance. Mahatma Gandhi feels that the tendency to possess things is the cause of all evils. Therefore, one must cultivate the discipline of living with what one has. Mahatma Gandhi expresses that Character is moral and ethical strength. Character comes from within. Character is the key to success. A man of character will make himself worthy of any position he is given. Character, not brains, will count at the crucial moment. Character is any day more eloquent than speech. Character must be above suspicion and truthful and self-controlled. True disarmament cannot come unless the nations of the world cease to exploit one another. Morality is finding out the true path and fearlessly following it.

4.10 KEY WORDS

Non-violence: Nonviolence is tolerance and love. Non-violence is non-injury in thought, word and deed, including negative abstention from inflicting positive injury to any being, as well as positive help to any suffering creature.

Truth: Truth is God. Truth is which is. Truth is truth in thought, word and deed.

Non-stealing: Non-stealing is not to steal, in example not to take by thought, word and action, anything to which one is not entitled.

Celibacy: Celibacy is abstention from self-indulgence by thought, speech and action. It is restricted to chastity.

Non-possessiveness: Non-possessiveness is renunciation by thought, word and deed. It is restricted to contentment.

Character: Character is moral and ethical strength. Character comes from within. Character is inner and outer goodness.

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