At the very beginning the individual has unveiled many mysteries, but has perhaps been unable so far in unveiling the mystery of his own nature. Great thinkers like Comte, Neibuhr, Sartre, Marx and many others have made attempts to understand human nature, but perhaps none of them has been able to understand it perfectly.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi’s concept of man and society was formulated essentially in the light of religious beliefs. As he was a deeply religious man, his concept of individual was shaped by his religious attitudes which carried the impressions of the various religions of the world.

Gandhi measured progress in terms of ‘human happiness’. He endorsed neither the utilitarian views of the greatest good of the greatest number nor the modern view of an affluent society in which material development is the sole criterion of progress. Gandhi wanted a social order which would secure the greatest good of all i.e Sarvodaya. So Gandhi wanted a society in which everyman would have equal status, opportunity and freedom to develop. Gandhi wanted a simple society in which economic progress and social justice would go together. Gandhi also taught us the beauty of truth and the sublimity of the human spirit.
Individual and society are the focal points of present day society. In this thesis Gandhi's concept of Individual and Society are analysed from a very general stand-point. The development of a scientific outlook, the change in people's consciousness, the growing creative activity of the individual and the society are discussed and focussed in this thesis.

According to Gandhi, individuals owed their existence to their parents, without whose countless sacrifices they would neither survive nor grow into sane human beings. They realized their potential in a stable and peaceful society, made possible by the efforts of thousands of anonymous men and women. They became rational, reflective, moral beings within a rich civilization created by scores of sages, saints, savants and scientists. Every human being owed his humanity to others and benefited from a world to which he contributed very less. For Gandhi human beings were 'born debtors'. Even a whole lifetime was not enough to pay back what they owed to their parents.

Man is a complex being. His body is a part and product of nature and it grows and decays according to the laws of nature. But man is not all physical. Man has consciousness, reason, conscience, will, emotion and similar qualities and powers which are the expressions of the spirit. Gandhi cautioned people against laying too much emphasis upon the evil nature of man. He always opposed the theory that man had essentially a degrading tendency and that he was always going downwards. Of course, man according to him had an animal side.
also and that sometimes he had tendencies to go down, but that was not his essential nature and it was utterly false to say that the animal tendencies were predominant in him. The moment man is reminded of his true nature and is awakened to his true spirit, his animal side is subdued and he becomes a perfect man.

In course of our study, we will try to know the exact sense in which Gandhi wanted Individual to be a necessary part of the society, but the more important thing that I could gather as a student of philosophy from my studies of Gandhi's thought was that almost all his important concepts like Truth and Non-violence, Religion etc. were formed under the primary impact of his concept of Individual and Society.

Gandhi was certainly a creative thinker, a political leader, a social reformer, a deeply religious person, and so on, and in each role he had his strengths and weaknesses, some of which were indicated in the various chapters of my thesis.

The aim of my thesis is to investigate how far Gandhi's concept of Individual and Society is relevant in the context of new perspectives. In this thesis I am trying to focus Gandhi's fundamental principles of his faith and concept which will help to make Gandhi's position clear to the modern mind. Gandhi was not only a spiritual seeker but also a social philosopher and reformer.
Mahatma Gandhi's ideas have been dealt by many scholars of India. I must admit that I had chosen a subject on Gandhi which is full of controversies in the present times. Hence the subject involves risk and responsibility. As a student of philosophy I prepared a scheme of study which would entail the philosophical and religious approach to understand the idea of Individual and Society.

My thesis is divided into nine chapters

In the Introductory chapter, I tried to describe the overall situation of Individual and Society. My aim is to show how Gandhi's concept of individual tries to solve the various problems regarding the relation between individual and society. We have the presence of two cultures side by side in India now, one have its roots in the traditional modes of living with emphasis on one's identity and the other with advanced technology with emphasis on social status where the primary sources of one's identity are the formal work groups and organisations. Gandhi's concept is in support of the former.

Chapter II deals with the definition of religion in general and its various doctrines, the meaning of religion and above all these the philosophical and religious background of Gandhi's thought.

Chapter III deals with the discussion on the Truth and Non-violence. Some critiques say that the law of non-violence emphasised by Gandhi was found not to be universal, rather it was found to be circumstantial. The theory of non-violence worked very well with the English. The English never faced such type of non-violent opposition and having some respect for the law
of non violence, it had no other choice but to give up India.

Chapter IV deals with the discussion on Gandhi’s concept of Individual where we have tried to show that human beings are an integral part of the cosmos. Secondly, they are necessarily interdependent and developed. And thirdly, they are four-dimensional beings made up of the body, the manas, the atman and swabhava whose interplay explained their behaviour and formed the basis of morality.

Chapter V is related with Gandhi’s concept of society, a discussion on the reformative, practical and dynamic interpretation of Gandhi’s ideas of society. Some critiques said that his conception of Panchayats had caused panic and misgivings even in his life time. Many members and leaders of Indian National Congress opposed his idea and he faced stiff opposition. His concept of Rama-Rajya in the modern context became a source of many unpleasant connotations. But his concept of society were formulated in the Indian context which is the guiding principle of the Indian society.

Chapter VI deals with the discussion of the relation between Individual and Society. As we saw, human beings were for him the trustees of the rest of creation, interdependent, they should so organise their collective life that it respected the latter’s integrity, diversity, rhythm, and inner balance.

Chapter VII is a comparative study of both Gandhi and Marx. Here our aim is to show how their thoughts are relevant and can be applied to social and political level specially in India.
In Chapter VIII I have discussed how as a man of thought Gandhi saw through the madness of modernity and offered an alternative vision that combined the best of both the pre-modern and modern world views while avoiding the self-indulgent individualism and moral complacency of the currently fashionable post-modernism. Search for a better society was his aim.

In the conclusion chapter the various ideas of the thesis has been placed together and presented in a brief form. It is also a summary of the forgoing chapters and then we have our conclusions.

For the purpose of the present study, major sources of informations were gathered from Gandhi Smarak Sangrahlaya, New Delhi, National Gandhi Museum & Library, Rajghat, New Delhi. Apart from these, contemporary Gandhian works are also used as source of our information for the preparation of the work. Secondary sources include published books and articles and journals. I have visited many educational institutions and reasearch instiutions in connection with collecting materials for my research. These are the University of Delhi, PBK Ishwariya Vishwavidyalya International Head Quarter, Mount Abu, Rajasthan, NEHU, Shillong, Kamrup Anusandhan Samiti, Guwahati, Amiya Kumar Das library, Guwahati, District library, Guwahati, National library, Calcutta, Gauhati University library, Dibrugarh University library, Sibsagar College and District library, Sivasagar. A good number of experts in the relevant fields were also
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