CHAPTER-VII

CONCLUSION

In the foregoing chapters of this thesis, I have tried to explore the fundamentals of the ethico-religious concept of ahiṃsā and its relevance to the contemporary situation. The thoughts of the different philosophers come within our purview. The applications of ahiṃsā in various contexts and their relevant issues have been mentioned. The concept of ahiṃsā found in traditional Indian philosophy, its influence on Gandhi, and Gandhi’s own interpretation of it and its great influence on the contemporary leaders notably Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela and other world leaders more have been discussed.

In its significance, the Sanskrit term ‘ahiṃsā’ is opposed to ‘hiṃsā’. The term “ahiṃsā” connotes that one should not kill or destroy the life of others and not injure or harm others in body, mind or speech. Since the ancient times, many concepts in relation to ahiṃsā have continuously been developed. From the Vedic period (1500 BC to 600 BC), the concept of ahimsa is developed. Na hiṃsyāt sarvā bhūtāni (Do not kill any living being) was the popular preaching of the Vedas.
Gandhi was a true religious person and he inherited moral and spiritual values from his parents, Rambha-housemaid, Raychand Bai and many different persons from different religions. His concept of religion implies service to God and it would turn into service of humanity. He also believed in the Jaina doctrine of *ahimsā*, that human beings who are the most sensible of all living beings must take care of all the beings. He said that ‘man is superior to the system he propounds’. Due to this firm belief in *ahimsā* he applied the principle of non-violence as a positive force in different conflicts and different problems of man’s world. He developed his concept of *ahimsā* in accordance with the conditions and needs of his life and its mission.

Gandhi’s principle of *ahimsā* is not merely the abstention of killing, but also involves love. *Love*, according to him, is the power which helps to clean one’s inner feeling and it includes idea of compassion, forgiveness, tolerance, generosity, kindness etc. His concept of ahimsa was deeply rooted in the traditional Indian concept. But its similarity has been found in Christianity. From the Christian teaching, ‘Love your enemies ... Do Good to them that hate you ...’, he applied non-violence as a soul-force which tried to convert evil by the good deeds.

In the study of his life, we find that through the proper application of non-violence i.e. love, he became successful in several spheres of his activities. On three particular occasions, he used non-
violent actions. They are – Non-cooperation Movement (1920), Civil Disobedience Movement (1930) and Quit India Movement (1942). Gandhi's main objective is the reconstruction of society based on mutual love. His sole aim is to rehabilitate man in the very field of morality, politics, society and economy. His boundless love and service for humanity could bring about a change in human outlook. He was the only person who changed the lives of the sixty million untouchables of India. These deprived people subsequently attained equal citizenship rights at par with other citizens of the country.

The world is very vast. There are different opinions, different behaviours, different ways of life, different nature etc. Human beings fundamentally desire material pleasure and wealth. The rich capitalists want to establish large scale industries for higher productivity and profit. It has raised competitive tendency at the cost of the interest of the poor. In such a state of affair, at internal and external levels, conflicts and disputes are caused. Conflict or dispute is created by man. There will be some way to solve it. What would be the way to solve them? And how can it be possible? There are two ways to solve conflict. One is violence and the other is non-violence.

Violence can never establish peaceful solution. It can suppress the problem for a short duration but it cannot be long lasting. Violence implies injury, war, killing, ill-will, jealousy, malevolence and hatred. Love, charity and *agape* are the positive nature of non-
violence. We have found in the books of history that there were disputes, struggles and wars. History indicates the clear evidence that the use of violence has never given any pleasurable, permanent solution. The use of violence affects millions of innocent people. It results in restless, disturbance, anxiety, threat, fear, etc. All human beings do recognize that non-violence can give a satisfactory, permanent and peaceful solution. Violence will beget violence. It never brings good to mankind. It proliferates further ominous endlessly. Since the advent of man on earth till today, we have known the importance of non-violence. We can realize that non-violence not only saves the existence of all being but it also paves the way towards the development and glorification of human being. Louis Fischer states, “If man is to survive, if civilization is to survive and flower in freedom, truth and decency, the remainder of the twentieth century and what lies beyond must belong not to Lenin or Trotsky, not to Marx or Mao, but to Mahatma Gandhi”.

Gandhi tries to advocate a positive solution of various problems. The solution must be acceptable and universally applicable. Non-violence is the only positive means to resolve complicated problems. Physical force is the weapon of violence, while soul force is the weapon of non-violence. Under certain conditions Gandhi accepts the use of violence. Even the Hindu scriptures had permitted the use of violence for self-defense against an armed attacker. As a human being, it is impossible to follow absolute or complete non-violence. There are
some activities which necessitate violence. We should try to minimize the use of violence. Extreme violence should be totally ruled out. Even if the violent act appears to be good, the good is not permanent but only temporary.

Non-violence is the best instrument in order to solve all kinds of conflicts. The non-violent action is done on the basis of truth. “Truth is the Law of our being.” One of the essential beliefs of Hinduism on the concept of truth is ‘there is no religion greater than truth (Satyāmnāsti paro dharmah). Truth always prevails’ (Satyameva jayate). Everybody should work on the basis of truth. It is our duty to persist in truth and not to yield to untruth. Gandhi considers that truth is the ‘philosopher’s stone.’

Truth has supreme value in all fields, and it has ultimate source of all existence. Even the atheist also accepts the value and importance of truth. Gandhi regarded truth as paramārthsatya – the ultimate individual end. In Indian philosophy and Indian ethics, mokṣa is regarded as paramapuruṣārtha. Except Carvaka all the Inmdian systems regarded dharma (moral law or righteousness), artha (material welfare) and kāma (human affections and happiness) as the means for achieving mokṣa (liberation). Gandhi has placed truth at the topmost position trancending all puruṣārtha. He strictly holds that ‘nothing exist in reality except truth’.
In his philosophical thought, truth is regarded as God. He believed that he could see God face to face in truth. The terms "self-realization", "seeing God face to face" and "mokṣa" are one and same. He directed and moulded all his works with this objective in view. God is the Absolute Truth. God is manifest as well as unmanifest in nature. *Ahimsā* is the manifested part of truth. This absolute truth can be attained through *love* or *ahimsā*. *Ahimsā* is the only means for the realization of truth. Without *Ahimsā* truth can never be achieved. *Satya* leads to *Ahimsā*. *Ahimsā* implies *Satya*. The close relationship between the two shows that truth is hidden in *ahimsā* and *ahimsā* is hidden in truth. For Gandhi, truth is the highest law, and *ahimsā* is the highest duty.

The world today is facing multi-dimensional crisis. The main causes of all crisis come from hatred, self-centricity, unlimited desire, deprivation of human value, lack of respect for seniors, etc. In this chaotic atmosphere all over the world it must be admitted that Gandhi’s doctrine of *ahimsā* is very much relevant. Gandhi wanted to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, *Ramrajya* where there is freedom from violence. Gandhi says, ‘My mission is to convert every Indian and finally the world, to non-violence for regulating mutual relations whether political, economics, religious or social.’

Thus, we have discussed the relevance of Gandhi’s concept of *ahimsā* in different contexts. Conflicts in the society have arisen from
religious bigotry, political crimes, economic power, social injustice etc. Today in India, there is no integration. India is multi-religious, multi-cultural, multi-racial, and as such, there is no composite feeling among different communities. The internal conflicts have occurred frequently on the basis of religion. To prevent such conflict, Gandhi suggested Sarva Dharma Sambhāva. All religions are one and same in preaching ahiṃsā, love, peace etc. Gandhi recommended the attitude of respect and tolerance towards other religions. Gandhian philosophy of non-violence is a good enough answer to the present day problem of disintegration in India. His message on religion is that all human beings are basically alike. In the political context, he has given the message that every politician must work with dignity and dedicate for the welfare of all. Due to the absence of morality and spirituality in political sphere, the political disputes or conflicts come out. When someone thinks or feels that there should be justice in the society, it may be assumed that he has followed at least Gandhi’s principle of non-violence. Gandhi’s greatest contribution in the field of economics is his deep concern for unemployment problems and the scheme for the eradication of poverty. Man is the most valuable wealth of a country. In order to eradicate unemployment problem and poverty we should take up economic programmes for the best utilization of manpower. Gandhi was a champion of swadeshi, bread labour, khadi, small-scale and cottage industries. Khadi is a symbol of the decentralization of the economy in India. He wanted to provide large number of employment to millions of people in India. Man must earn
his bread by labouring with his own hands. Gandhi advocated the
dignity of labour. His mission is to bring mutual love, co-operation
and peaceful living between the individuals. All these are greatly
influenced by his concept of non-violence. In the field of education, he
advocated *Nai Talim* (vocational training). He tried to establish a work
culture from the lowest level. His basic principle of education is the
combination of personality development and work culture. Such a
mission was to give light and food to the starving millions. It may be
said that one of the fountainheads of all conflicts is the separation of
knowledge from work.

In these different contexts, he applied *ahimsa* as a soul-force for
establishing peace. *Ahimsā* is an ethical and moral solution which
does not injure anyone. Lord Buddha taught to replace ‘evil by good
and anger by love.’ Like Buddha, Gandhi teaches ‘Hate the sin but not
the sinner’. His message is to love the enemies. Violence never brings
about everlasting peace. It solves no problem. It merely creates new
and more complicated ones. It destroys communal harmony, social
fabric and the sense of brotherhood. Whether in the past or the
present, we never get peace by indulging in violence. In future too,
nothing has to be gained by it. On the contrary, everything can be
conveniently achieved through non-violence. Gandhi’s experiments in
the non-violent *Satyāgraha* in South Africa proved successful.
Similarly his struggle for independence of India by the use of
Satyagraha proved successful. Every problem, whether big or small, local or global can be solved by taking resort to non-violence.

Wars bring about destruction, not peace. It is understood that the World War I and II, in which millions of people were killed, brought about mass devastation and disastrous consequences. The League of Nations and United Nations Organization were founded after these world wars. These two organizations have confirmed that there is the imperative need for peace through non-violence in every sphere.

The importance of non-violence has been understood by everybody. Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and many more thinkers and social activists have been greatly influenced by the Gandhian concept of non-violence in their struggles against injustice. They had brought about peaceful solution to the problems through non-violence in different complicated situations. In recognition of their efforts for peace and non-violence, they were awarded Nobel Peace Prize. Dalai Lama was awarded such a prize in 1989; and the chairman of the committee said that this was 'in part a tribute to the memory of Mahatma Gandhi'. All Nobel Peace Laureates have proudly acknowledged their debt to Gandhi’s spiritual approach towards non-violence.

Non-violence has been preached and practiced in many countries and it has been realized that 'violence cannot be overcome
by violence’. Non-violence has, thus, become a very effective tool for solving all kinds of conflicts in society. The present scenario of violence and exploitation has raised an important issue before us. In this situation, non-violence is needed with a view to facing the challenges of a violent world.

Non-violence is man's supreme duty. It is the first article of the Gandhian faith and the last article of his creed. Gandhi distinguished himself by giving a new dimension to the meaning of truth and non-violence, and adopted these two as means for solving the complicated problems of the world. Gandhi's greatest contribution to non-violence has been summed up in an article in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in the words:

“Gandhi was one of the very few who have set the stamp of an idea on an epoch. That idea is non-violence.”

Gandhi breathed his last on 30th January, 1948. Though he is not physically present in our midst, his teachings and dedicated works have left indelible marks for the future generations to imbibe in order to bring about lasting peace in this strife-torn world. Since 1964, in Spain his death anniversary i.e., 30th January, every year, has been observed in schools as the *School Day of Non-violence and Peace*. In the *United Kingdom*, this day is commemorated as the
National Gandhi Remembrance Day. The United Nations General Assembly has declared 2nd October, as the International Day of Non-violence. Today, people all over the world have realized the importance of Gandhism for international peace and social harmony. They have paid respect to this Mahatma. The greatest tribute to Mahatma Gandhi, however, will be only through the observance of the values and ideals that this great man had cherished through thoughts, words and deeds, and through the translation of his vision and mission into works for human welfare and peace.