CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

In this concluding Chapter, it is necessary to collect together ideas and summarise the points of view of Gandhiji regarding various social and political organisations. It is also proposed to provide a summary account of work so far done on Gandhiji's philosophy and its practical implications emphasized by him. Even though no full justice can be done to the subject, it is proper to make an attempt to give a rounded view of Gandhiji's approach. As is shown, Gandhiji touched all areas of life and considered individual as a member of the society. In the Hindu view of life an individual can attain salvation through renunciation of worldly life. Gandhiji, on the other hand, made the removal of poverty as his life's goal and his renunciation was not of society but of life that was based on the exploitation of people. Thus he gave a new orientation to Hindu religion. Even Buddha renounced the world. Gandhiji was of this world and very much in it and yet out of it. That makes him a modern Saviour- a saint of Sevagram. Gandhiji thus made service and sacrifice the basis of living in any society. He added richness and dynamism to Hindu religion and showed intimate relationship between the individual and the society. To him society was the foundation of man's life and a man in order to fulfil his responsibilities
towards society must always subordinate his individual needs to the social organisation. Gandhiji thus was a sociologist par excellence.

In the first and second chapters the background factors and forces are analysed in the context of the existing situation. It is clear that the circumstances in pre-independent India were very favourable for the emergence of a charismatic leader who could inspire and provide leadership on right lines. Gandhiji was a charismatic leader who had qualities that distinguished him from ordinary people. He was very much influenced by the earlier social reform movements though they were not hoisted on a nation-wide scale. It is to the credit of Gandhiji that a nation-wide reform movement came to be launched with the main purpose of transforming the Indian social life on all fronts. He successfully combined the political movement for freedom with social reform and social welfare. Whether Gandhiji was successful on all the fronts is a matter to be seen with reference to changes that have occurred during and after Gandhian era.

Though Gandhiji gave new direction to social, economic and political forces, there was no radical break from the past. This is very well reflected in his reactions and the way that he made use of the traditional idiom and language in educating the masses. However, he was not averse to accept new ideas from the west, if they seemed to him necessary. In fact, he was much impressed by the western liberal ethic and this enabled him to provide perspectives for an equalitarian social order.
In the third chapter an analysis of Gandhiji's views on religion and morals is carried out. It is shown that Gandhiji was primarily a man of religion. But religion in and through him became a hand-maid of change for Indian society. His achievement as a leader at the helm of affairs in India for more than three decades was to modernise the traditional religious beliefs through interpretation, make religion a factor to be reckoned along with others in social life and utilise religious traditions for bringing about change in the Indian society.

In chapter IV Gandhiji's views on education are spoilt out and it is shown how Gandhiji looked upon education as in close relation to life.

On the sphere of education, it was Gandhiji who visualised the need for making education purposeful and relevant to the economic conditions of India. His aversion to the prevalent system of education was in tune with realities. The system alienated the educated from the masses and it was in no way capable of solving the problems of a vast majority of Indians who lived in villages. His programme of basic education was primarily meant for the poor Indians who formed a vast majority and for whom costly education was beyond reach. His emphasis on making education more practical has to be perceived with the existent economic problems of India. Such problems have as yet not completely disappeared from the national scene. Basic education might not have found favour with many. But that may not imply that Gandhiji's basic ideas on education are inherently wrong. Considering
the persisting economic problems in the country despite nationwide planned effort, there seems to be no choice except to implement Gandhian ideas with necessary modifications.

In the next chapter i.e., chapter V, Gandhiji's efforts to eradicate untouchability and to make caste a purposeful institution are delineated.

Gandhiji's interpretation of caste was not influenced by recent sociological thinking but was essentially traditional and showed the impact of his socialization within a traditional social structure. Despite the fact that he has made contradictory remarks on caste, his point of view is to be seen with reference to the evolution in his thinking. He himself has stated that if one were to understand his later pronouncements much misunderstanding of his views will not be there. However, in his later life, Gandhiji stood for a casteless and classless society where the practice of untouchability and other segregating tendencies would have disappeared. It is in the sphere of eradication of untouchability that his influence is widely seen. His approach to the problem of untouchability was pragmatic. For, he believed that as long as Harijans are not absorbed with the rest of the community, the evils of segregation will persist in some form or the other. He gave utmost importance to widespread education to change the beliefs and attitudes of Indians which are the root cause of the problem. What the Indian government has done to eradicate the evil practice is much to the credit of Gandhiji.
In chapter VI it is shown that in the area of women's welfare, Gandhiji's contribution is significant and constructive. Under his leadership Indian women came out freely and participated in the struggle for freedom as well as in eradication of social evils. The passing of the Hindu Code Bill and recognition of Woman's rights without the need for any separate struggle on the part of woman vindicates Gandhiji's impact.

As regards Ganinhian approach to politics, chapter VII puts together his ideas.

Gandhiji's conception of politics was governed by ethical considerations as it is the case with other aspects. His efforts to spiritualise the Indian political life were not fruitful. His emphasis on politics of service rather than politics of power has not found much support. His Satyagraha technique, despite its popularity during India's freedom struggle, appears to have lost much of its relevance after independence. Today Satyagraha is identified with every form of protest especially with strikes and hartals, fasts and threats of self-immolation, dharna and pen-down campaigns, and bandhs and gheraos. As these involve symbolic violence, they can be identified with duragraha, but not Satyagraha. Gandhiji had to employ the Satyagraha technique in abnormal situations. But in the context of parliamentary democracy, Gandhiji's Satyagraha techniques have to be reinterpreted and used in such a way that the spirit of democracy is kept up and not destroyed. This needs restoration of faith in Gandhian
techniques and the people need to be properly educated and trained in the philosophy of peaceful protest.

The need for moral foundations for Indian society cannot be questioned and especially in the hour of crisis. Probably Gandhi was ahead of his times; it can be argued that a society in order to maintain its dynamism cannot for all time denounce moral values; it may do so for some time. When the whole world is in a chaotic state because the earlier values founded on the narrow group life, be it caste, tribe or state, have become dysfunctional and the values appropriate to the space-age are slow to evolve, there appears some sort of personal and social anomie turning individual into a fragmented person. Our ambivalence to Gandhian ideals springs from our political imperatives resulting from international developments. Left to ourselves we may choose Gandhian methods of reconstruction. But they are slow to give results and we have no time if we want to survive as a nation. However, we have to recognize that it is to the credit of Gandhi that peaceful methods of persuasion and change have come to influence and prevail upon even the Marxists in India who were protagonists of violence and conflict.

To come to Gandhi's view of economic activities, Gandhi's economic ideas symbolise his reactions to the economic situation in India during his time. Some of his solutions to the economic ills may appear simplistic unless they are perceived with reference to time and circumstances. His economics is ethics-oriented and is
centred around resuscitation of rural life and economy. His distrust of large-scale mechanisation and mass production, his call for simplicity as against conspicuous consumption, seem to be naive unless they are perceived in the context of what was possible with limited economic resources at our disposal. He believed that human welfare cannot be achieved through violence and conflict. His enormous faith in the efficacy of peaceful persuasion made him choose the idea of trusteeship and eliminate economic inequalities. This much is certain that Gandhi was not an Utopian. That he did not succeed in solving all the problems of India is nothing strange. What he did not achieve in his life-time may be achieved in future. Despite government's bias for centralised planning, decentralised economic development has come to have its own place and significance. Modern, urban, rural industrialisation, promotion of khadi and village industries on a nation-wide scale are part of Gandhian economics and they are very much with us. We have to recognise that it is to the credit of Gandhi that a nationwide movement for rural welfare came to be launched. Hitherto such programmes were localised here and there. Programmes evolved for rural development in independent India are directly traceable to Gandhi's insistent advocacy for the cause of India's down-trodden millions.

In chapter IX Satyagraha and constructive programme, the twin techniques of social change that Gandhi evolved are discussed as related to the social situation.
Gandhiji wanted to transform the then existing Indian social structure as radically as possible. For this, he evolved the techniques of Satyagraha and constructive programme. He believed that a simultaneous change in all spheres will overcome the problems arising out of cultural lag. For him, political freedom devoid of economic equality was meaningless. Accordingly, he chalked out programmes for the liberation of the country from foreign rule as well as liberation of the masses from the clutches of poverty and ignorance. Satyagraha was used to pull down the then existing order and constructive programme for the development of a new one. The circumstances in pre-independent India were such that Satyagraha became very popular and constructive programme lagged behind. The effects of such an eventuality came to be seen in the poor response of Indias towards constructive work. However, this much is certain that the constructive programme that Gandhiji chalked out already had the seeds of modern social work comprising the two goals of social work viz., social reform and individual adjustment.

In all these fields Gandhiji gave importance to the 'social' as against the 'individual well-being'. It was through society that the individual has to find his highest and the best. In this Gandhiji was almost a sociologist—for to Durkheim society is the basis of analysis and not the individual. Gandhiji's ideal society was Sarvodaya, and that itself emphasises social good,
through the organisation of various activities by individuals. In Gandhiji's scheme, individual had a place, but only in relation to society.

Gandhiji's ideas to a great extent reflect the circumstances of pre-independent India. Since then lots of changes have occurred which are in no way Gandhian in character. On that ground, we may not be able to conclude that Gandhiji's ideas have become irrelevant for our times. It may be rather difficult to implement all his ideas as some of them are contextual. It is by sifting the elements that are permanent and circumstantial that we will be able to gain a correct perspective of his ideas. For, some of his ideas and solutions to problems were not of short-term character but had a long-range view. In fact, many problems present in pre-independent India have not disappeared and some of them continue to pose a threatening posture.

Gandhiji, as a staunch believer in the non-violent approach tried his best to diffuse certain values which he considered fundamental for radical change in the Indian social structure. But later developments have proved that what he wanted to achieve remained unfulfilled as many of his followers and the Indians at large did not internalise the Gandhian ideals and as such they had only a marginal effect after independence. On the whole, Gandhiji's ideas may seem to be idealistic but they do
indicate the direction in which India could move in the face of disasters. A critical appraisal of Gandhiji's ideas with special reference to time and circumstances would reveal that they are relevant not only for today but for a long time to come. For, his ideas are two-dimensional. Some of them have permanent value or universal significance and some were circumstantial and relevant with reference to a particular time and ethos.

"...A truly significant tribute to Gandhiji's memory would be an effort critically to sift his ideas and programmes and to reject that which was valid enough in his own lifetime, but which has lost its relevance in the radically altered perspectives, a quarter of a century after his death. There is, of course, no room for dogmatism and idolatry in such an exercise, which is intended to stimulate a careful reappraisal. To ignore Gandhiji's unique contribution to the understanding of our people's problems, just because our minds are unused to his quaint idiom which was deliberately fashioned to communicate with his contemporary Indian villager and townsman, is to disown a priceless heritage, which would leave the present generation woefully ill-equipped to cope with its overwhelming crisis."

Universal ethics that Gandhiji has postulated is applicable for all climes and situations. Truth and

non-violence, the basic principles of Gandhiji's philosophy will remain with the world and continue to inspire men towards a civilized alternative for settling conflicts at various levels. "The validity of non-violence is not merely a Gandhian tenet but the imperative of world history. In spite of appearances to the contrary, and paradoxical as it might seem, the world is moving steadily towards non-violence. Non-violence, today, may mean disarmament and settling issues by negotiation. It might mean much more, in the years to come viz., equi-distribution of world's resources."2

In a study of social change, sociologists have propounded certain theories. We have not used these theories to interpret Gandhian approach because to understand Gandhiji, what is needed is not a conceptual tool, but an open mind. We have not gone beyond explaining these theories of social change. The most outstanding among these have been:

1. Structural-functional approach;
2. Evolutionary theories;
3. Dialectical and conflict theories.

Our main concern is to focus on Gandhian approach to social change and as such the study is limited to the perspectives- Gandhiji's ideas which provide for change in the Indian society.

2. Extract taken from the interview with Shri G. Ramachandran. See appendix.
The present study has not presumed that social change in India is primarily due to Gandhian influences. Social change has been rather due to various coalescing forces. Among these certain changes in the Indian social structure do reflect Gandhian influence. But many changes have been due to trans-systemic influences. The most pervasive among them has been westernization.

Today greater importance is given to tradition as a factor of social change. Gandhiji did much to utilise the traditional norms and values for purposes of modernising the Indian social system by way of review and re-interpretation. The compendium of writings of Gandhiji suggest that he was not enamoured of the word 'modernization'. No where we find him using the word. On the contrary he was modern enough in being receptive to the West. Gandhiji was a modern Indian, not a westernized modern Indian. His Indianness stood out in his approach to change. He accepted things both from tradition and modernity. That was how he brought about a synthesis of the best things of the past and the present, the traditional and the modern. Out of such a synthesis emerged his deeper convictions about the issues confronting India and the world at large.

Gandhiji felt the need for a radical change in the rigidly stratified, hierarchically ordered Indian society. He strongly held that a casteless and classless society alone will be able to improve the socio-economic conditions of a vast majority of Indians.
He was highly critical of the Indian economic structure where a few rich enjoyed and the poor majority suffered. He was certain that changes could be brought about through peaceful ways. He was averse to technical culture of the west, for, it was not capable of solving the economic ills of a vast majority of Indians.

To bring about change in any society, it is necessary to bring about institutional, ideological and attitudinal change. Gandhiji emphasized all these aspects but he relied more on persuasion and to that extent his approach can be considered 'voluntaristic'. It is a moot question, if Gandhiji had relied on force would he have succeeded? In matters like this, one cannot apply force beyond a certain point. One cannot create a moral society; one can make an individual accept certain values, by convincing him of their importance. Gandhiji did this and he made the individual the agent of change. He believed that purified individuals alone will be able to create ferment and bring about desirable changes in the society. Such purified individuals even if they are few will necessarily do have their impact on the society. Satyagraha and constructive programme were meant for individuals to reform themselves and in turn transform the social structure. Gandhiji's approach is thus ethics-oriented and as long as the moral values are not internalised by as many as possible, total revolution will be a far-off goal. The logic of deviant behaviour affected only a small group of people, but these are the ones who initiate change.
Without being dogmatic, Gandhiji persevered to diffuse certain values in Indian society which he believed to be of fundamental importance for bringing about radical changes in the Indian society. In this process, he had to make compromises for his followers were not ready to accept his ideas with full faith and conviction. It is a matter of history that how the Indian National Congress accepted non-violence as a policy but not as a creed. Thus far and no further was the essence of the support Gandhiji got for all his ideas and programmes. As a realist he attuned to the situations even where his fundamentals were not accepted. For Gandhiji was broad-minded enough to understand the other person's viewpoint. It would have been unwise on his part to insist on implementation of certain ideas when others were not ready to accept them. Gandhiji gave importance to compromise as part of non-violent approach. He viewed compromise as the soul of non-violence.

An important compromise that Gandhiji had to make was with regard to his ideal of a stateless society. So far he accepted the State with certain limits; he was not adverse to State action or legislation in bringing about changes in the Indian society. But he preferred reform to precede legislation. So far he championed the cause of individual liberty, he showed great concern for the authoritarianism of the State. He believed that so long as public opinion and people's actions were not properly mobilised, the authoritarianism of the State
either in its parliamentary form or in any other variety will become intense. To safeguard the interests of individuals, he started a number of voluntary organisations through which he wanted to educate the masses and make them more conscious of their rights and duties.

Since 1915 and up to 1947, Gandhiji was beaconlight and a guiding star. His ideas were held in high esteem. At his call individuals belonging to diverse walks of life were ready to sacrifice everything of theirs in the interests of the nation. His ideal of social service received much support. But with the dawn of independence, things began to change in a different direction. A review of developments in independent India forces one to conclude that social change that has taken place in India is not basically the result of the ideas and forces engendered by Gandhiji through his beliefs and practices. It may rather be strange to expect a single person, whatever might be his charisma, to influence diverse cross-sectional interests of Indian society. However, it will be unhistorical to forget the role that Gandhiji played at a crucial moment in the history of Indian society.

Gandhiji symbolised India in transition and his contributions towards modernization of Indian society will have to be recognized in order to have a clear perspective of social change in India. He was a great synthesist. He symbolised the best in the East and the West. He was realistic to accept good things from all quarters. That was how he was able to reinterpret the traditional
values and at the same time accept certain things from
the west depending on their relevance to the needs and
genius of Indian society. Of course, he preferred things
indigenous to the imported ones.

Thus social change that has taken place in India
is neither completely pro-Gandhian nor anti-Gandhian. The
break from the Gandhian approach is not complete. Due to
circumstances in India and outside, the Indian society
could not more completely on the lines suggested by
Gandhiji. It is too much to expect quick results to take
place in such a short span of time especially within the
moral sphere. Most of his ideas have yet to be experi­
mented. As such there is greater scope for their reali­
zation in the future than what has been realised. Develop­
ments in and outside India such as crises in moral and
economic spheres is a pointer to the fact that India
and the world at large will have to move on Gandhian
lines with modifications wherever necessary.

Social change in India after independence has been
mostly institutional change, planned and implemented by
the Government. As such occasions to experiment with
Gandhiji's techniques have been rare. Of course, the
Sarvodaya movement launched by Gandhiji's followers has
one aim of establishing a non-violent social order
(ahimsak Samaj) where the cherished ideals of Gandhiji
would be realised. How far this goal will be reached is
to be seen in the future.