CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION
6.1 : Human Freedom :

To talk of human freedom is also to talk of suppressing some of the other elements of nature and rising above it. Freedom may be worthwhile in its own right, however, its real worth lies in its instrumentality, its usefulness for seeking certain substantive end. In this sense, the search for freedom is basically a quest for getting release from causal determination that constitutes an important characteristic of what is called nature. The quest for freedom is indicative of the fact that while man as a physical and living being is strictly subject to natural law, he is above causal determination. To express and ground human freedom in naturalistic term, thus comes to end. Man has to be treated, therefore, in more than biological and sociological terms. The notion of person has to do with man not only as an empirical phenomenon but also as a being that seeks perfectibility.

Gandhi denies the double origin of human freedom - one from within and one from without. He also refuses to accept the empirical self as true self while recognizing the brute in man. He calls for self perfection. For him, while man is rooted in and springs from the animal world, he has the capacity to rise above it and can, only if he so recognizes and wills, set on a journey to give free play to his moral and
spiritual propensity for self-development. In his view, the attributes of being uniquely human are neither fixed for all times nor immutable. He believes that goodness in man can be articulated, strengthened and perfected. Once the good in man is aroused, man can move on the path of self-realization. Self-realization, according to Gandhi, is the essence of human freedom. The exploration of the true nature of self is inexorably linked up with the extent to which these realities are transcended. In this perspective man is the subject to the laws of nature but he possesses self awareness and is capable of creating the forms of his own existence independent of the environing conditions. Gandhi, unlike any other political philosophers championing the causes of human rights, recognizes the importance of certain internal transformation of individual through the process of self-development.

Every historical epoch articulates and centres on a specific vision of man, Although the vision is never monolithic, the variations revolve around and their parameter is circumscribed by its central principles and assumptions. It highlights and gives pride of place to specific human capacities, emotions, aspirations, activities, areas of life and ways of understanding the human condition, and ignores, suppresses, trivialises and assign a subordinate status to the others. No vision of man is ever without its legitimate and pampered as well as ill treated
step - children and its systematically harassed victims. As a creative thinker intensely sensitive to the political victims of the currently dominated view of man, Gandhi's great contribution consists in taking up the cudgels on behalf of the victimised human faculties and emotions, restoring the suppressed sensibilities and breathing new meanings into the ideals and aspirations it has systematically stifled, scorned, ridiculed or misinterpreted.

Gandhi challenges the anthropocentric view that man enjoys absolute ontological superiority to and the consequent right of unrestrained domination over the non-human world. He argues that the grounds on which such claims rest are philosophically suspect and that the havoc they cause ultimately rebounds on man himself. By radically creating the non-human world in his own image and subordinating it to his interests, he alters the basic conditions of his earthly existence, denies himself the regulating presence of the other and perpetrates massive and often wholly unjustified violence on other living beings:

The sense of 'I' is at cross-roads; it has a double reference. It shares at once two orders of being, the conditioned and the unconditioned; it is at once a universalizing as well as particulararizing tendency. It can works as much for liberation
as for bondage, it can work nonclingingly as well as by clinging.¹

For Gandhi, human freedom is inherent in self-development. Self-development is learning to be human, a learning that is characteristic by a ceaseless process of inner illumination and self-transformation. It is basically an understanding of one's true being and setting that being unfold itself. Since presumably a genuine knowledge of self entails a transforming act upon the self, to know in this sense is not only to reflect and comprehended, but also to shape and create. For to know oneself is simultaneously to perfect oneself.

Self-transformation is an inner experience and underlines inwardness. However, it is this principle of inwardness that externalizes itself once the necessity of self-transformation in the world of here and now is accepted. In Maritain's words "Because of the very fact that I am a person and that I express myself to myself, I seek to communicate with that which is other and with others, in order of knowledge and love. It is essential to personality to ask for a dialogue and for a dialogue wherein I really give myself, and wherein , I am really

received". This necessarily imposes the necessity of liberation not through conquest of rights but through harmonizing oneself with an ever-enlarging network of relationships, calling for going beyond the restrictions of anthropocentrism. Harmony, in this perspective, becomes not only a personal aspiration, but also societal goal and cosmic ideal.

Even as Gandhi locates man in the cosmos, he locates him in a historically grounded social order and gives a new and deeper meaning to the much debated concept of man's social nature. He rightly argues that every man owes his humanity to others, that he is a recipient of unsolicited but indispensable and non-repayable gifts from countless anonymous individuals and that his inherently unspecifiable moral duties and obligations extend far beyond those based on consent, promise, contract and the membership of a specific community. Indeed, only a small cluster of moral relationships subsist between identifiable individuals and are deliberately incurred. and even these are embedded in and shadowed by a large range of invisible and conveniently unnoticed relations with others. Gandhi's profound analysis of morality places many new and important questions of right on the agenda of

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moral and political philosophy. He asks how a moral being should respond to involuntarily incurred and inherited debts and give moral articulation to the profound sense of gratitude they inspire, whether and to what extent morality is matter of choice at all, and whether it is ever a relationship between two individuals unmediated by the silent and invisible presence of others. He asks too whether the currently dominant individualistic conception of man has the necessary philosophical resources to give an adequate account of morality and to resist the attempts to reduce it to reciprocal egoism and enlightened self-interest and rights.

At a different level Gandhi asks what new concepts should replace the traditional litany of rights, duties, claims interests and obligations which are all too superficial and atomic to conceptualise and probe the depth and complexity of moral life, and whether moral relationship is autonomous enough to be analysed in terms of moral categories. Like his analysis of moral life Gandhi's concept of indivisible humanity contains important insights and gives a new meaning to the elusive and much discussed idea of human unity and human rights. In the course of their attempts to understand the nature of man's relations with his fellow-men, philosophers have argued that they are all similar, members of a common species, species-beings,
equal, brothers or members of a community. Gandhi advances the highly original thesis that they are all one. By this he means that whatever a man does to others he does to himself as well, that his relation to them is only the obverse of his relation to himself, that men can only be human together and that their humanity is indivisible.

As Gandhi concludes, when all the relevant factors are taken into account, oppressive and exploitative system do not admit of winners. He is therefore able to attack them from the standpoint of their victims as well as their alleged beneficiaries. He takes a stand on their shared humanity and common interests and shows why it is in the interests of all to fight against inequalities and injustices, and why the fight should be so conducted that the future victors do not brutalise themselves and forget their shared humanity with their erstwhile masters. Unlike the crude versions of the Marxist and other theories of liberation, Gandhi’s has a built-in theoretical protection against misuse and perversion.

On the basis of his theory of man Gandhi proposes that a well-considered philosophy of rights must find ways of reconciling the claims of the individual, the political community and mankind, the three fundamental axes of moral life for him. every human being is necessarily an individual, uniquely constituted, self-determining agent
coming to terms with himself and the world in his own way and at his own pace. He is the architect and centre of a unique world of relationships structuring and organising it in his own distinct manner. To take over his life and run it for him is to violate his integrity, destroy his wholeness and perpetrate a most unacceptable form of moral violence. Gandhi grounded human uniqueness in his theory of rebirth.

The necessity of harmonizing one-self with an ever-enlarging circle of relationship is only the other name of integration. Such an integration becomes possible only by extending the boundary of the self, not for absorption of everything else to oneself but for giving oneself to others. Thus this extended self becomes the ground for sociality. Society then turns out to be a network of extended selves rather than a mechanical aggregate or an all-consuming totality. It then retains the primacy of the person but treats him as a drop of the ocean.

Recognizing the frailty of human nature and its attachments, such a perspective does emphasize the desirability of universalizing one's basic value commitments but insists on choosing a concrete path of making it possible for the basic value commitments to be universally manifested. Such a concrete path offers itself in the principle of swadeshi, that is, concern for immediate neighbourhood. This is, again
not an event of exclusiveness or narrow parochialism. Each individual or unit has to strike the universal concrete in terms of the milieu of its own cultural heritage. Only by proceeding from whereever we are - geographically, spiritually or emotionally - can we make the integral effort needed for the progress and peace of the whole of humanity.

If self-transformation is process that turns one inward, whose external manifestations result concretely in the basic value commitments then the process must start from the individual himself. Without self-effort, no amount of social reordering will yield any result. As Gandhi says:

In the West, when they talk of the amelioration of the lot of the masses, they talk of raising the standard of life ... how can an outsider raise the standard, when the standard is within everyone of us? We can only strive to increase man's opportunities of realizing and fulfilling his duties and getting nearer to God.3

6.2 : Human Rights

There is a weak and a strong sense in which human rights may be said to have a part in this scheme of things. The weak sense consists simply in the application of the logic of legal language. If there is rule against the use of violence, then the people to whom it applies can be said to have a duty to observe it, and also a right (in virtue of the existence of the same rule) not to be the victims of violence. But here the notion of a right is not doing any work; it is merely a different way of expressing a rule. It is plain, 'that neither the law nor the accepted morality of societies need extend their minimal protection and benefits to all within their scope, and often they have not done so'. And he illustrates this by reference to slave-owning societies in which to be a slave was to be more an object of use than a subject of rights. Our strong sense of a human right may consist in the criticism of this situation and in the protest against it on the grounds that natural principles ought to apply to all human beings and not, arbitrarily, for a section of humanity only. The appeal here is to the universality and to the equality integral to the idea of human rights.

It this evidence shows the vitality of that political theory which is disposed to take human rights seriously, theory critical of this position is no less alive. Michael Oakeshott reaches Burkean heights in his denunciation of rationalism in politics, not only in the sweep of his description of all politics today as rationalist or near-rationalist, but also in his conviction that moral education consists more in the acquisition of a habit of behaviour than in the explanation of principles.¹

Abstractness, what Burke called metaphysics, is perhaps the central difficulty with the theory of human rights. It is a feature of the theory which threatens to drive humna rights out of the political world altogether. Here is universality and equality but in the kingdom of God, not in that of man. And this doctrine has its secular counterpart in Kant. The freedom of each member of society in a civil state was founded on his humanity.² And the moral law which he was bound to obey was found not in the circumstances in which he was placed, but ‘a


priori in the concepts of pure reason'. The universalism of this formula, as Hegel said resulted in emptiness. The moral law stood over against society rather than being part of it.

The integration of society does not take place on the global scale that is required in order to match the universalism of the doctrine. What, in these circumstances is the function of the theory of human rights? It might be to pull the world in the right direction by the strength of moral exhortation: a function that Marx ridiculed. Or it might be to point out the direction in which the species ought to go, as Kant thought, whether or not there was any prospect of it actually getting there.8

But all this is about the positive role that the theory of human rights might play in the construction of some future world society. Meanwhile, there is the critical role. The 'mind of man', wrote Ernest Barker, 'will always demand that the core of justice should be beyond


time and space - quod semper, quod ubique. And though it is not beyond time and space, the theory of human rights reflects this demand by providing a body of doctrine which suggests a standard against which what is, what happens to be, can be judged. Its own claim to be authoritative, and not just another variety of 'what is', relies on the observation that it stands outside any particular society or culture and that it endures beyond a single generation.

6.3 : Synthesis

Human rights, have been said to express 'virtually all the requirements of practical reasonableness'. The principles of practical reasonableness are those which make possible the achievement of the end of the basic goods of 'human flourishing' by connecting up nature and reason. These basic goods include life, knowledge, play, aesthetic experience, sociability and religion. Knowledge can be taken as the


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paradigm explanation of what it is to be a basic good. The good of knowledges is self-evident. We show this when we accept ‘finding out’ as a sufficient answer to the question of what someone is up to when he or she is pursuing knowledge. And we confirm it by the observation that the sceptical assertion that knowledge is not a good is operationally self-refuting: anyone who, intending to be taken seriously, asserted that knowledge was not a good, must himself or herself believe it to be true but the proposition asserts that the truth is not worth knowing and therefore there is a contradiction.

Human rights have a part in this account of human flourishing by providing the infrastructure by means of which it is achieved, and they can be accepted as part of natural law doctrine, despite their rather unfortunate associations with ‘fanatics, adventures, and self-interested persons’, for three reasons. They stress equality, and make justice a prominent political issue. They are anti-consequentialist by their insistence that moral worth is to be judged not by the effect of an action, but by whether or not it would be right to do it in the first place according to certain ends that must be respected. And they provide, together a checklist of the aspects of human flourishing.

13. Ibid, p.221.
Human rights, in this account, not only belong in the tradition of natural law but also, and more importantly, are part of the working out of the law of nature in the contemporary world. A theory of human rights can also be derived from Gandhi's idea of the 'minimum need and self-development'.

A certain degree of physical harmony and comfort is necessary, but above a certain level it becomes a hindrance instead of help. Therefore the ideal of creating an unlimited number of wants and satisfying them seems to be a delusion and a share. The satisfaction of one's physical needs, even the intellectual needs of one's narrow self must meet at a certain point a dead stop, before it degenerates into physical and intellectual voluptuousness.\(^\text{14}\)

Given a numbers of elementary generalizations about men and the world in which they live, however, it is possible to deduce certain rules of conduct without whose observation in some degree social organisation would disintegrate. Thus, in the eyes of Gandhi, because of human vulnerability, there must be rules which protect the property on which

industry is based, and the institutions of exchange involved in the division of labour necessary for the survival of all but for the smallest societies. And because of men's limited understanding and strength of will, there must be sanctions to discipline those who would not voluntarily obey the rules.

From Gandhian interpretation of the relationship between society and the individual the arguments can be inferred that society does not make the individual. The individual makes themself, and makes their society. They can choose their modes of behaviour and so they can select the pattern of rights and living which they need. The Gandhian techniques are thoroughly relevant in attaining the human freedoms world wide.