The Construction of Nation in Epistolary Writings of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi:-

I

Let me hold my head high in this faith that thou art our shelter, that all fear is mean distrust of these.

Fear of man? But what man is there in this world, What king, King of kings, who is thy rival, who has hold of me for all time and in all time and in all truth?

What power is there in this world to rob me of my freedom? For do not thy arms reach the captive through the dungeon – walls, bringing unfettered release to the Soul?

And must I cling to this body in fear of death, as a miser to his barren treasure? Has not this spirit of mine the eternal call to thy feast of everlasting life?

Let me know that all pain and death are shadows of the moment, that the dark force which sweeps between me and thy truth is but the mist before the sunrise; that thou alone art mine for ever and greater than all pride of strength that dares to mock my manhood with its menace.

II

Give me the Supreme Courage of Love, this is my prayer – the courage to speak, to do, to suffer at thy will, to leave all things or be left alone.

Give me the Supreme faith of love. This is my prayer, -- the faith of the life in death, of the victory in defeat, of the power hidden in the frailness of beauty, of the dignity or pain that accepts hurt, but disclaims to return it.

-- Rabindranath Tagore

A lyrical tribute by a Nobel laureate to Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi is sufficient to save any other adjective for his introduction. Consequently, the date of such letter falls a day before when the country felt severe need of ‘Supreme Courage

and faith of love.’ A day after this letter was written, Brigadier – General Reginald Dyer displayed the real color of British Empire to the world. He ordered his troops to fire into the crowd of several thousand unarmed innocent Indians at Jalianwala Baugh. There was no warming: the medium of Communication between the two sides were bullets and screaming only. The Nobel Laureate returned his laurels and abandoned all the titles awarded by Britain. The whole world was thunder stricken after receiving the news of 530 deaths and 1200 injuries (of men, women and children).

In such time of blood – bath there stands a man who provides Supreme faith ‘of love in death, of the victory in defeat’; Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi who till the last breath of his life preached the message of Truth and non-violence. As a part of this research one should evaluate his belief in political path for emancipation, role of media in nation building, attainments from senior freedom fighters, faith in truth and non-violence, acquisitions from Indian mythologies, the faith in Satyagraha and Khadi, significance of epistolary writings, Hindu Muslim unity, Women empowerment, the need of educational advancement, social engineering for Untouchability, health and Hygiene and firm faith in better tomorrow of India.

In July 1891 Gandhi returned to India after acquiring the degree of barrister from England. In his very first brief he argued in a Bombay court he became laughing stock for others. He also tried his hands as the part-time job of a teacher in a Bombay High School, following that he returned to Rajkot to make a modest living by drafting petitions for litigants. Even this profession was closed for him when he had to face displeasure of a local British Officer. It was only after that he willingly accepted the offer of a year’s contract from an Indian firm in Natal, South Africa his professional career took the upward path.

Natal provided a kind of net practice for this champion of millennium who had in his stock end numbers of tasks to be performed for the betterment of entire humanity. The first Parliament of Natal had been pre-eminently an Indian Parliament. The Governor in his opening address to the Legislative Council and Assembly disfranchised Indians by saying that ‘they had never fit for it.’124 Mr. Gandhi could

not digest such injustice. In search of solution he uses epistolary communication with Dadabhai Naoroji, ‘the grand old man of India’, who already helped the Indians in South Africa in 1981 by placing their petitions before the British Government.

Mr. Gandhi in his letter of 5th July, 1894 earnestly requests Dadabhai for his undivided attention to the cause. He invites his intervention by saying,

The Indians look up to you as children to the father. Such is really the feeling here.125

Further, Mr. Gandhi for the first time introduces himself to Dadabhai. The introduction to Dadabhai perhaps stands as the introduction of ‘Gandhi before India.’ It provides the immature politician giving his introduction to the seasoned politician like Dadabhai as,

A word for myself and I have done. I am yet inexperienced and young and, therefore quite liable to make mistakes. The responsibility undertaken is quite out of proportion to my ability. I may mention that I am doing this without any remuneration. So you will see that I have not taken the matter up, which is beyond my ability, in order to enrich myself at the expense of the Indians.126

The self-confession of having taken ‘responsibility’ which is out of proportion and clarification of having no intention ‘to enrich’ himself ‘at the expense of the Indians’ reverberates till the day. In the same line one more self-introduction becomes necessary to be mentioned here. In 1917 Mr. Gandhi visits plantations of Motihari. After observing the conditions of the ryats he could not restrict himself from writing a letter to Mr. Maffey, Private Secretary to Viceroy Lord Chelmsford.

In that letter one can see the transaction of South African sentiments with the grievances of Indians when Mr. Gandhi reveals his identity with his intentions such as,

My motive is national service and that, too, so long as it is consistent with humanitarian dictates. I understand, because my South African

125 Ibid.
126 Ibid.
work was considered to be humanitarian that I was awarded the Kaisar–I–Hind Gold Medal.127

The award of Kaisar – I – Hind was given to him as a token of gratitude by the British crown. On the outbreak of African (Boer) War in 1899, Mr. Gandhi raised an Ambulance Corps of 1,100 volunteers out of them 300 were free Indians and the rest indentured laborers. Similar such tone flows in several of his letters particularly in his letter to W. B. Heycock written on 20th May, 1917 and a letter addressed to Every Englishman in India written on 27th October 1920. In the last letter Mr. Gandhi goes to extend by saying that in his opinion,

No Indian has co-operated with the British Government more than I have for an unbroken period of twenty-nine years of public life in the face of circumstances that might well have turned any other man into a rebel.128

He further clarifies the reason behind such ‘free and voluntary’ co-operation which according to him ‘was for the benefit of India’. For the same Empire he put his ‘life in peril four times’. He tries to convince Every Englishman of India by pleading that,

I ask you to believe me when I tell you that my co-operation was not based on the fear of the punishments provided by your laws or any other selfish motives.129

With passage of time and experiences Mr. Gandhi’s adoration for the Empire vanishes and he selects the path of Satyagraha to make his mother nation free from the bondages of the Empire. But when the time comes for him to select from Indian Princely States and British Empire, he selects the British power. ( Even though his higher education was result of benevolence of such Princely States only!) In one of his letter to the Viceroy Lord Mountbatten before two months of Indian Independence Mr. Gandhi expresses his loyalty by saying,

129 Gandhi, M.K., “To Every Englishman” Letter. Young India. 27th October 1920.
The present Princes are puppets created or tolerated for the upkeep and prestige of the British power. The unchecked powers exercised by them over their people are probably the worst blot on the British Crown.\textsuperscript{130}

A New Historical analyses would like to analyze the intention of the Crown behind ‘upkeep and prestige of the British power’ may be reflected otherwise as well.

At the same time it becomes necessary to evaluate his relationship with his family members as well. For Mr. Gandhi the Satyagraha stood above all the social bondages and similarly those who stood by him in the Satyagraha would become his first family member. In one of his personal letter to Kasturba, Mr. Gandhi exhibits his priority for national services as,

Beloved Kastur,

I know you are pinning to stay with me. I feel though, that we must go on with our tasks. At present, it is right that you remain where you are.\textsuperscript{131}

The suggestion to ‘go on with our tasks’ reveal the priorities and dedication to national activities at the sacrifices of family life. Further in the same letter Mr. Gandhi reveals his innermost concern for human service by suggesting his beloved wife as,

If you thus keep yourself busy in the service of others, believe me the mind will always be full of joy. And you must not omit to look after Punjabhai’s meals and other requirements.

MOHANDAS.

It is the ‘mind’ ‘full of joy’ only which can bear the ultimate fruit of freedom and fraternity for various people of India. Sacrifice of family life comes at height when Mr. Gandhi declares his political heir. In one of the significant letters addressed


to Jawaharlal Nehru he shares his views about their relations. Mr. Gandhi talks about two things such as,

1) ‘The bond that unites’ them ‘is not only political work’.

2) They ‘both live for the cause of India’s freedom and’ they ‘would both gladly die for it. They ‘are not in need of the world’s praise.’

It was this intimacy only which inculcate the real attachment between Mr. Gandhi and Jawaharlal and lead Mr. Gandhi to declare in the same letter that,

You are much younger in comparison and I have therefore named you as my heir.132

Such declaration stands as an ideal lesson for the contemporary politicians who are always looking forward for the growth and increase of money in their Swiss Bank accounts. In every walk of life Mr. Gandhi gave second priority to his family and first to his nation.

As a senior most member and leader of Congress Mr. Gandhi had always opposed several frictions of Indian society. He opposed the division on the name of state, Caste or Religion. In one of the most enlightening letters to Kishorelal Mashruwala133, Mr. Gandhi emphasized upon the unity among the different states of India. For him it is their ‘duty to remove the causes’ of such discordance. Further he suggests that,

Gujarati ladies should try to mix freely with the Maharashtrian ladies.
The most important thing is to see that the children make no such distinction.”134

The specific emphasis upon the ‘children’ and ‘distinction’ reveals Mr. Gandhi’s concern about next generation and its harmonious future. Similarly, Mr.

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133 Kishorelal G. Mashruwala (1890-1952) one of the most authoritative interpreter of Gandhian thought; He was life-long associate of Gandhiji, worked as an editor of Harijan (48-52); writer of Gandhi and Marx, Practical Non-Violence.
Gandhi strongly opposed the divisive policy of British Empire through which they wanted to grant separate electorate to the depressed classes. It was first time in any part of the world that such political division of the society was implemented. For Mr. Gandhi such political mischief was supposed to harm unity of the nation as he mentions that,

But I hold that separate electorate is harmful for them and for Hinduism, whatever it may be from purely political standpoint. . . . So far as Hinduism is concerned separate electorate would simply vivisect and disrupt it.  

Similarly, when the Frontier Province referendum was taken for the discussion by Lord Mountbatten there were certain differences of opinions. Mr. Gandhi in his letter of 10th June 1947 reveals eleven points against the referendum and tries to oppose such divisive plan of Britain. At the same time talking about the parliamentary system and its evils Mr. Gandhi opines that ‘the tyranny of Parliament is much greater than that of Chengiz Khan, Tamerlane and others’. 

For the best possible execution of such system he demands for the honesty and truth as,

[The] highest honesty must be introduced in the political life of the country if we are to make our work as a nation. This presupposes at the present moment a very firm and definite acceptance of the creed of Truth at any cost.

It is ‘the creed of truth’ only along with the ‘highest honesty’ required for the political and national development of India at present.

At the same time for students (who would control the future of the nation) Mr. Gandhi suggests that must obtain the concept of Swaraj not by learning only but at the same time by exhibiting certain qualities necessary for Swaraj such as, ‘Openness,
truthfulness, courage, cohesion, fellowship and self-sacrifice.’\textsuperscript{138} By acquiring all such qualities they must go back to their villages and spread them amongst others.

Similarly for the same next generation Mr. Gandhi reveals his ambition to attain self-government for India with the help of means like ‘Non-violence and Truth’. According to Mr. Gandhi such country would be blessing for the entire world as,

Therefore, Indian self-government not only means no menace to the world, but will be of the greatest benefit to humanity if she attains her end through those means (Truth and Non-violence) and those means alone.\textsuperscript{139}

The contemporary significance of Indian policies in the world justifies ‘the greatest benefit to the humanity.’ Be it is policy against terrorism or all round economic reform India has provided significant guide line for the nations of the world time by time.

Mr. Gandhi was gifted with extremely farsighted vision especially in the case of Indian politics. He had the futuristic vision about the Indian political relationship with other nations of the world. For China, one of the significant countries of Asia, he had a unique impression. In his letter to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek he reveals the future of both the countries as,

My earnest desires that our two great countries should come closer to one another and co-operate to their mutual advantage.\textsuperscript{140}

Furthermore, while talking about Indian and Chinese struggles he reiterates that,

I would not be guilty of purchasing the freedom of my country at the cost of your country’s freedom. . . . and yet our people know for

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\end{flushright}
certain that India free can play even a decisive part not only on her own behalf, but also on behalf of China and world peace.”

In the same letter Mr. Gandhi explains that Jawaharlal Nehru ‘whose love for China is only excelled’ is the central figure who keeps the Indian political leaders in ‘intimate touch with the developments of the Chinese struggle.’ In the end Mr. Gandhi reveals his aspirations by mentioning that ‘I look forward to the day when a free India and China will Co-operate together in friendship and brotherhood for their own good and for the good of Asia and the world.’ For such a political help of Jawaharlal, Mr. Gandhi reveals promising role of him in the time to come.

It becomes more important to know what was the reason that person like Mr. Gandhi joined the politics. The simple answer to this question must be the ‘service to humanity’. According to Mr. Gandhi,

...the number of years a person lives in this world is of no consequence whether to him or to the world but even a day spent in true service of mankind is of supreme and only importance.

Such vision reflects in his self-explanation given to G.S. Arundale in a personal letter. Considering him as competent person to advice himself Mr. Gandhi explains the reason behind his joining politics. The reason would be universally applicable for the every generation of politicians. Mr. Gandhi in his most humble tone reveals that,

My bent is not political but religious and I take part in politics because I feel that there is no department of life which can be divorced from religion and because politics touch the vital being of India almost at every point.

The clear cut indication about the implication of religion in politics for ‘no department of life’ ‘divorced from religion’ reveals the passion that Mr. Gandhi

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141 Ibid.
143 G. S. Arundale – A Theosophist, and editor of New India. He took active post in Annie Besant’s Home Rule League.
wanted to serve humanity in general. And at the same time he answers back to Mr. Gokhale’s perception which was,

Our politics are a pastime of our leisure hours when they are not undertaken as a stepping stone to a carrier in life.\textsuperscript{145}

It was only after the ‘pastime’ became the life mission the goal of Indian independence was achieved. There are so many other names in the list of politicians who dedicated their life for the independence of their mother nation.

For such life mission Mr. Gandhi asks for certain self-corrective aspects. According to him the person who dedicates himself for the nation must prepare for purification and self-restraints. According to him,

The one condition for fighting for peace and liberty is to acquire self-restraint. To do that, it is necessary to give up the pleasure of the world.\textsuperscript{146}

The condition to ‘give up the pleasure of the world’ relates freedom fighting with the process of indemnifying oneself against all kinds of worldly factors which can divert one’s focus from the process of nation-building. For Mr. Gandhi ‘contentment’ stood for ‘the best of riches’\textsuperscript{147}. Similarly, he alerts his followers from the excess of activities as well. According to him,

Work is prayer but it can also be madness.\textsuperscript{148}

The simplicity of idea goes beyond the worldly life and connects us at the spiritual height from where Mr. Gandhi used to take his position as a prominent politician of Indian freedom struggle. Similarly, his conditions before joining congress reveal his seriousness as a politician. In one of the most significant letter to Srinivas Shastri Mr. Gandhi reveals not only conditions but also the innermost

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{145} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
sincerity as a politician. For the matter of joining the All India Home Rule League he reveals that,

   I have told them that at my time of life and with views firmly formed on several matters I could only join an organization to affect its policy and not be affected by it.149

   The story of Indian freedom struggle in more than one way proves that how Mr. Gandhi ‘affects its policy and not be affected by it.’ His vision always remained impartial whether it was the matter of Imperialism or Nazism. In one of his letters to Carl Heath, Mr. Gandhi clearly opines that “Congress is as much anti-Nazism as anti-Imperialism.”150

   At the same time Mr. Gandhi’s peculiar political strategies, which were for the first time introduced to the world of politics confused the British officers in India. In one of his political letters Lord Linlithgow, the then Viceroy of India evaluates ‘fast for political purposes as a form of Political black mail (himsa) for which there can be no moral justification’. In answer to such an allegation Mr. Gandhi retaliates that,

   . . . it is on my part meant to be an appeal to the Highest Tribunal for justice which I have failed to secure from you. If I do not survive the ordeal I shall go to the Judgment Seat with the fullest faith in my innocence.151

   The concepts of ‘Highest Tribunal’ and ‘Judgment Seat’ reveal the spiritual conditions of Mr. Gandhi to join small political activity even at the time of being the most prominent leader of the nation.

   Likewise, Mr. Gandhi was able to calculate the expenditures made by British Empire during the period of their rule. He could compare and contrast the salaries of British Prime Minister with Indian Viceroy. Along with that he could compare their salaries with income of common Indian. Moreover he could evaluate the smallest amount of tax thrown upon the Indian citizens. In his words,

The other affects the masses. I refer to the salt tax. As a means of raising revenue, it is insignificant. As a means of harassing the masses, it is a measure of which the mischief is indescribable.152

It becomes necessary to reiterate that it was the movement of Salt March Civil Disobedience Campaign of 1930’s which shook the very foundations of the Empire in India. The revenue generated from such tax was not more than four percent of entire collection of Government. ‘But its application was wide; everyone ate salt. And it was deeply resented.’ According to Mr. Gandhi,

There is no article like salt, outside water, by taxing which the state can reach even the starving millions, the sick, the maimed and utterly helpless. The tax constitutes therefore the most inhuman tax the ingenuity of man can devise.153

At the same time Mr. Gandhi investigates one more ‘inhuman’ and aspect of the Empire. He compares and contrasts among the salaries of Indian Viceroy and the British Prime Minister. In his letter to Indian Viceroy Lord Irwin he presents the calculation as,

| Table-1 |
|------------------|------------------|
| **The Comparison and contrast among the salaries of British Viceroy and British Prime Minister** |
| **Viceroy**      | **British Prime Minister** |
| Salary Month     | Rs. 21,000/-     | Rs. 5400/-     |
| Day              | Rs. 700/- +      | Rs. 180/-      |

Further he compares them with average incomes of Great Britain and India with his painstaking calculation and accuracy as,

Table-2
The Comparison and contrast among the salaries of British Viceroy and British Prime Minister and Indian common citizen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Per Day Income</th>
<th>Viceroy</th>
<th>British Prime Minister</th>
<th>Average income of citizen in British</th>
<th>Average income of citizen in India</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rs. 700/- +</td>
<td>Rs. 180/-</td>
<td>Rs. 2/-</td>
<td>Less than 2 Annas (1 Anna = 16\textsuperscript{th} part of a rupee)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the basis of such calculation Mr. Gandhi reveals the British injustices. In his letter to Lord Irwin he categorically reveals to the Viceroy that,

Thus you are getting much over five thousand times India’s average income. The British Prime Minister is getting only ninety times Britain’s average income. On bended knee I ask you to ponder over this phenomenon.\textsuperscript{154}

As an impact of such letter we find the result in the form of Gandhi – Irwin pact. Similarly, in the letter written on 4\textsuperscript{th} May, 1930, Mr. Gandhi questions the injustice done to Bhagat Singh and his friends by expediting the judicial process by the British Government. Along with that he also asks about the injustice done to a Gujarati poet for convicting him for a crime about which he himself doesn’t know anything. Here with help of all these one can reach to the conclusion that how M.K. Gandhi initiated his political career in Africa as a loyal soldier to Empire, how he sacrificed his family life for the sake of politics, through some political acumen, how he tried to unite various segments of society, what was his opinion about the parliamentary system and honesty, what kind of changes he suggested for the next generation, politics as the mean to serve humanity, the role of self-correction, and the ultimate aim to join politics and the unjustified ways of British administration on the basis of his epistolary writing.

\textit{The Role of Media in Nation Building}

In case of Indian struggle of independence Mr. Gandhi utilized the strength of media at the maximum. Since the days of South Africa till the last days of his life Mr. Gandhi communicated with the world through media and shared his ideas with the largest population possible. Several newspapers of the world bear indelible imprint of Gandhian ideology. From the days of South Africa he communicated through Indian Opinion, New India, Young India, Hindu, Swadesha Mitra, Swarajya (or Andhra Keshari), and Harijan the quintessential ideas for freedom of India. Whenever it required he took his firm stand against the Empire for the right of the free speech as well.

In 1904, in South Africa Mr. Gandhi took over the whole responsibility and management of Indian Opinion in his hands. In one of the letters to G.K. Gokhale Mr. Gandhi requested him to write articles for the newspaper. The intention behind asking for such article would be as he mentions,

The weekly notes should give an idea of what is being done on your side with reference to the Indian question, giving extracts from notices of the question that are likely to be interesting to the Indians in South Africa.\(^ {155}\)

With ‘the Indian questions,’ Mr. Gandhi could also communicate with the world through Indian Opinion. He used to converse with best of minds through the same mode of communication. In one of his replies Leo Tolstoy himself mentions that,

I have received your Journal Indian Opinion and I am happy to know all that is written on non-resistance. I wish to communicate to you the thoughts which are aroused in me by the reading of those articles.\(^ {156}\)

On the other hand whenever it was possible for Mr. Gandhi, he used to publish certain significant writings from the world over in the language which would be convenient for the readers. One such essay on Civil disobedience by Thoreau was


\(^{156}\) Tolstoy, Leo “To M. K. Gandhi” 7\(^{th}\) September, 1910. Letter. The original letter is in Russian. The English version was prepared under Tolstoy’s Supervision. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, New Delhi: Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1971.
published by him in translated version. He himself confessed that, ‘It left a deep impression upon me. I translated a portion of that essay for the readers of Indian Opinion in South Africa which I was then editing and I made copious extracts from that essay for that paper.’\textsuperscript{157}

Moreover, G.S. Arundale, an editor of New India, in his epistolary conversation with Mr. Gandhi suggests that there must be ‘abolition of the Rowlett Act and the Press Act.’\textsuperscript{158} In response of such letter Mr. Gandhi seeks Mr. Arundale’s permission to ‘publish the letter in Young India’. Likewise, while exchanging the patriotic zeal with Jawaharlal Nehru, Mr. Gandhi demands his views so that. ‘I will print it in Young India and write a brief reply.’ At the same time while conveying his view about non-violence, keeping the incident of Chauri Chaura at the centre Mr. Gandhi reveals his attachment to Konda Venkatappayya by suggesting that,

\begin{quote}
We certainly have not suspended any item of non-co-operation. This you will see clearly brought out in Young India.\textsuperscript{159}
\end{quote}

In addition to that Mr. Gandhi would not waste his single word about his health and other day to day matters while corresponding through letters. Instead he would ask his friend ‘you don’t want me to say anything about my illness; because I see you to get Young India and read it.’\textsuperscript{160}

In the 1919, the British Government of India demanded a security of Rs. 2,000/- from The Hindu and the Swadesha Mitra (both Madras dailies) and if it was not enough it banned The Hindu for Punjab and Burma. Lord Willingdon had taken the sole responsibility for such ‘unwarranted action’. Mr. Gandhi in his letters written on 4\textsuperscript{th} August, 1919, shares his opinion about this incident as,

\begin{quote}
By it, they have not lost in prestige or popularity. They have gained in both. Surely there are judges enough in the land who would convict
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{157} Gandhi, M.K. “To Henry S. Salt” 12\textsuperscript{th} October, 1929. Letter. From a Photostat: Sabarmati Ashram, 15663.
\textsuperscript{158} Arundale, G. S. “To M. K. Gandhi” 26\textsuperscript{th} July, 1919. Young India, 6\textsuperscript{th} August 1919.
\textsuperscript{159} Gandhi, M.K. “To Konda Venkatappayya” 4th March, 1922. From a Photostat: Sabarmati Ashram, 7977.
\textsuperscript{160}Gandhi, M.K. “To Hermann Kallenbach” 13\textsuperscript{th} May, 1927. From a Photostat: Sabarmati Ashram. 12380.
\end{flushright}
where a journalist has overstepped the bounds of legitimate criticism and uttered sedition.\textsuperscript{161}

At the same time for rights of journalist and freedom of expression Mr. Gandhi makes a brave statement as,

We must be honourable friends, or equally honourable enemies. We shall be neither, unless we are manly, fearless and independent.\textsuperscript{162}

It was Mr. Gandhi’s central concern at that time to bring back the freedom of expression in India. Until it is not there, there cannot be the human voice for ears of authorities. Likewise if the authority is not listening to the voice of its subject, it cannot rule with propriety. Mr. Gandhi in one of his letter to Viceroy and Governor General of India, Lord Reading expresses his in-depth concern about the country as,

The immediate task before the country; therefore, is to rescue, from paralysis freedom of speech, freedom of association and freedom of the Press.\textsuperscript{163}

In the contemporary world politics we can see that how politics and geography of the Arabian countries have been changed after the release of press notes by Wikileaks of Julian Assanges. It has become very popular with ‘Arab Spring’. Similarly, the American International policies have been shaken from the roots by small media person like Edward Snowden. It would not be exaggeration to say that same function of media for the first time taken place in India.

Mr. Gandhi in his letter to the secretary to the Government of Bombay, (Home Department), Poona raises his voice against British injustices. In his letter he mentions nine issues, where the Government has committed injustices. The eighth and ninth issues reveals that, ‘(8) The public press has been gagged. (9) In short freedom with self respect has become impossible throughout the length and breadth of the land.’\textsuperscript{164}

\textsuperscript{161} Gandhi, M.K., “To G. S. Arundale” 4th August, 1919. Letter. Young India, 6\textsuperscript{th} August 1919.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{163} Gandhi, M.K., “To The Viceroy, Lord Reading.” 1\textsuperscript{st} February, 1922. Letter. Young India, 9-2-1922.
\textsuperscript{164} Gandhi, M.K., ”To The Secretary to the Government of Bombay, (Home Department), Poona.”26\textsuperscript{th} July, 1933.Letter. From a Photostat: Sabarmati Ashram: 21535.
Along with letters Mr. Gandhi used to communicate with the friends and officers through Telegram as well. Through telegram as well he used to convey his messages to the friends scattered world over. In one of the significant telegram, which was cabled on 27th October 1940, Mr. Gandhi writes,

ALL EFFORT FAILED INDIAN CONDITION WHOLLY DIFFERENT AND UNIQUE. PRESS GAGGED. HAVE STOPPED HARIJAN WEEKLIES. RESTRICTING CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS OF NON-VIOLENCE.165

Following that one more telegram sent in last week of December 1940 Mr. Gandhi reveals that,

M.P.S. LETTER IGNORES FACTS. FRANK OPEN COMMUNICATION MADE IMPOSSIBLE. GOD BETWEEN US ALL.166

Similarly, Mr. Gandhi was able communicator with people through epistolary writing as well as other mediums of communication. In his letter about the reform in Sanatan belief regarding untouchables he requests Pundit Mahavijayji in a most humble tone by saying, ‘And let me repeat, if it is at all necessary, what I have said in my article in Harijan that this latest difference in view point between you and me does not in the slightest degree, diminish my regard or affection for you.’167 The following incidents reflected that even at a small degree, there was improvement in treatment of untouchables in Sanatani Hindu society.

At the same time, it was Harijan only which used to convey Mr. Gandhi’s public messages to its audience. One of his last letters to the people of Gujarat was conveyed conversation of him with various editors which brought his ideas at the centre of nationalistic brain storming. One of his letters written on 7th March, 1922 was addressed to T. Prakasam, the editor of Swarajya, exemplifies the same thing.

166 Ibid.
After evaluating above mentioned communicational evidences it becomes evident that Mr. Gandhi since his days in Africa was familiar to media. In the form of *Indian Opinion, New India, Young India, The Hindu, Swadesha Mitra, Swarajya / Andhra Kesha* or *Harijan* he successfully conveyed his nationalistic concerns to the masses and at the same time whenever Government tried to gagged it he stood against it with his weapons of Truth and Non-Violence.

*Lessons from Senior Leaders*

Mr. Gandhi had been gifted with the vision of India from the three dimensions. One from India itself where he born and brought up, second from Britain, where he got his education and thirdly form South Africa, where he went for the purpose of bread and butter. At the same time he expanded his understanding about the Mother Nation and the British Empire with help of influential figures of that time. He got his political, social and spiritual lessons from Dadabhai Naoroji, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Leo Tolstoy, Rabindranath Tagore, C. Rajagopalachari and Henry David Thoreau.

In the year 1891 Dadabhai Naoroji places the petitions on behalf of Indians in South Africa before the British Government. In 1894 Mr. Gandhi seeks his guidance when Indians were disfranchised from Natal. In his most humble tone Mr. Gandhi requests him as,

> I earnestly request your undivided attention to the cause and appeal to you to use your influence that always has been and is being used on behalf of the Indians, no matter where situated. The Indians look up to you as children to their father. Such is really the feeling here. A word for myself and I have done. I am yet inexperienced and young and, therefore, quite liable to make mistakes.\(^{168}\)

Such humility to consider oneself ‘inexperienced’ and ‘liable to make mistakes’ provides Mr. Gandhi with the best of experiences that leaders of India could gathered until that period of Indian independence struggle.

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Consequently, he came into the contact of Professor Gopal Krishna Gokhale, who not only guided him in the fields of politics but also economy and sociology as well. Mr. Gandhi sought guidance of Professor Gokhale at the initial stage of *Indian Opinion*. Following that he also sought his guidance as well as personal help for opening a school on his ethics. For such school Mr. Gandhi asks for his favour as, ‘Could you induce any graduates who have an aptitude for teaching, who bear a blameless character and who would be prepared to work for a mere living?’ Along with that Mr. Gandhi sought proper guidance of Prof. Gokhale before initiate his political journey in India. As a part of pre-condition Prof. Gokhale asked him for ‘vow of silence’ at least for a year. We all know how fruitful was that vow. Mr. Gandhi in one of his letters before arriving India mentions that,

> I am entirely in your hands. I want to learn at your feet and gain the necessary experience. No matter whether I am staying somewhere under your guidance or not, I shall scrupulously observe the impact of silence for one year after my arrival in India.\(^{170}\)

Such ‘compact of silence’ bears its fruits in more than one way. One can find from the other letters of Mr. Gandhi it was not spiritual guidance only which was provided by Prof. Gokhale but it was the aspect of economical support as well. Mr. Gandhi was free enough to share with Prof. Gokhale that ‘I have no means of my own and Phoenix can hardly supply funds now’.\(^{171}\)

The third person who influenced Mr. Gandhi during his days in South Africa was Leo Tolstoy. Mr. Gandhi used to share almost all the details about South Africa with him. In the return he used to explore the possible lessons for the betterment of the slave communities of South Africa. Mr. Gandhi in one of his letters asks for suggestion of Tolstoy, as a literary person arranging an essay competition on the Ethics and Efficiency of Passive Resistance. As a part of help Mr. Gandhi asks Tolstoy ‘to give’ him ‘the names of those whom I should specially approach to write upon the subject’. As privileged with the reading Mr. Gandhi confesses that it ‘left a

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deep impression on my mind.’ In addition Mr. Gandhi also thanked Tolstoy for the vow of celibacy along with the reading of Bhagawat Gita. In one of his letter to Dhan Gopal Mukherjee Mr. Gandhi opines,

The vow of celibacy was undoubtedly taken after I had acquired considerable acquaintance with Tolstoy’s teachings.\(^{172}\)

At the same time certain letters reflects the philosophical exchange of thoughts between Mr. Gandhi and Tolstoy. For such exchanges Mr. Gandhi always asked Tolstoy to take final stand. In short, he tried to find answer for the issues which he himself could not solved as,

I have, however, who am an utter stranger to you, taken the liberty of addressing this communication in the interests of truth, and in order to have your advice on problems, the solution of which you have made your life work.

With respects,

I remain,
Your obedient servant,
M.K. Gandhi.\(^{173}\)

The ‘interests of truth’ and the humble obeisance of Mr. Gandhi lead him for search of the ultimate object of life.

Likewise, Mr. Gandhi had deep bondage with India’s only author who was a poet laureate, versatile author as well as awarded with the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913, Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore. Their epistolary conversation is a treasury for any nationalistic thinker of India. Tagore opposes the nationalism as an aspect of barbaric possessiveness where as Mr. Gandhi employed the concept for betterment of motherland. The greatness of this epistolary communication can be seen from its adaptation for various literary presentations. The greetings of Mr. Gandhi for Rabindranath reveal his gratitude towards the poet. Almost all letters of Mr. Gandhi greets Tagore with greeting of ‘Dear Gurudev’.

\(^{172}\) Gandhi, M.K., “To Dhan Gopal Mukherjee” 7\(^{th}\) September, 1928. From a Photostat: Sabarmati Ashram: 14378.

There are spiritual, philosophical and political aspects of India about which these great minds communicate through their letters. Tagore tried to share his understanding of Indian condition from the philosophical point of view where as Mr. Gandhi applied them on the practical fields of politics. Certain letters of Mr. Gandhi were written from the prison and even at three o’clock in the early morning. At the same time Mr. Gandhi tries to bring Tagore in the fields of politics indirectly. He asks Tagore’s ‘assistance’ as an ‘advisors in the various matters that will engage its (All – India Village Industry Associates) attention’\textsuperscript{174}. On the other hand Tagore seeks Mr. Gandhi’s blessings for Shantiniketan as well. The mutual respect between ‘Mahatma’ and ‘Gurudev’ reaches at the height when Mr. Gandhi wishes him as,

You are not a mere singer of the world. Your living word is a guide and an inspiration to thousands. May you be spared for many a long years yet to come.\textsuperscript{175}

Similar such respect Tagore had for Mr. Gandhi. All the visits of Shantiniketan by Mr. Gandhi considered as ‘beyond the bounds of’ ‘turmoil’ by Tagore.

Furthermore, Mr. Gandhi had similar respect for C. Rajagopalachari. He could learn so many things from this lawyer, journalist, author, statesman and first Indian governor – General of India (1948-50). One of the colonial governors once called him the ‘wisest man in India’. Mr. Gandhi described him as the ‘Keeper of my Conscience’\textsuperscript{176}. At various junctures Indian struggle of independence Mr. Gandhi enquire him for proper solution. In the year 1924 Mr. Gandhi seeks the suggestion by telling that ‘But as nothing has yet been done I would like your suggestions. Plenty of clothing has been collected. Please guide me about its disposal too.’\textsuperscript{177} In the year 1925 Mr. Gandhi wrote a unique letter to seek psychological support from C. Rajagopalachari. The letter reveals the depth of relationship between the two. Mr.

\textsuperscript{174} Gandhi, M.K., “To Rabindranath Tagore.” 15\textsuperscript{th} November, 1934. Letter. \textit{From a Photostat: Sabarmati Ashram}: 26409.
\textsuperscript{175} Gandhi, M.K., “To Rabindranath Tagore.” 23\textsuperscript{rd} September, 1937. Letter. \textit{From a Photostat: Sabarmati Ashram}: 26415.
Gandhi reveals his troublesome condition and seeks correction from C. Rajagopalachari as,

> My innermost being wants your approbation of what I am doing and thinking. I am not always succeed in getting it, but it craves for your verdict.\(^{178}\)

The ‘wants your approbation’ and ‘craves for your verdict’ clearly defines significance of C. Rajagopalachari in the life of Mr. Gandhi.

Furthermore, one can see great influence of American author Henry David Thoreau on Mr. Gandhi. He not only translated and published the essays of Thoreau in the local language but also shared his esteemed evaluation of Thoreau’s works in his letter. Apart from his essay on Civil disobedience he shares his opinion with Henry S. Salt with high esteem as,

> It left a deep impression upon me. I translated the portion of that essay for the readers. . . . That essay seemed to be so convincing and truthful that I feel the need of knowing more of Thoreau and I came across your life of him. His ‘Walden’ and other short essays all of which I read with great pleasure and equal profit.\(^{179}\)

In short, one can observe such ‘pleasure’ and ‘profit’ from all the dimensions of the world namely in form of persons like Dadabhai Naoroji, G.K. Gokhale, Leo Tolstoy, Rabindranath Tagore, C. Rajagopalachari and Henry David Thoreau, that made him a concrete stuff for becoming the ‘man of the millennium’.

*The Quest for the Truth and Its Strength*

The greatest strength of twentieth century, if it was discovered by anyone then it was by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Mr. Gandhi with his multiple ‘Experiments with Truth’ gifted mankind with strength of The Truth in twentieth century. With help of his epistolary writings one can apprehend the search of truth, the truth and law of


love, service of mankind and self-confidence in the light of truth. Along with that it is beneficial to know how Mr. Gandhi based his *Ashrams* on the foundation of truth.

The quest of truth leads Mr. Gandhi to inquire about its foundation to almost all the great minds of the then world. Be it Ruskin, Thoreau or Tolstoy he asked and tried to find proper answers from them. In one of the earliest communication with Tolstoy Mr. Gandhi beseech his grace by asking as if he as a stranger troubled him in the matter, ‘taken the liberty of addressing this communication in the interests of truth, and in order to have your advice on problems, the Solution of which you have made you life work.’ At the same time while talking about *Ahimsa* and Truth with Jamnalal Bajaj, (a prominent social worker, philanthropist, and treasurer of the Indian National Congress, significant businessman and industrialist) his ‘fifth son’, Mr. Gandhi opines that,

As I proceed in my search for truth it grows upon me that truth comprehends everything. It is not in Ahimsa, but Ahimsa is in it.

In the same letter Mr. Gandhi explains that truth emanate love, tenderness, humility. A voter of truth has to be humble as the dust. With the help of Indian mythology Mr. Gandhi tries to establish the significance of truth against egoism of human being as,

The utter extinction of the body of egoism is *moksha*. He who has achieved this will be the very image of Truth, or one may call it Brahman. Therefore the living name of God is *Dasanudasa*. (Servant of Servants).

In short, the path of truth leads to the ultimate liberty. Therefore according to Mr. Gandhi the mission of his life is to search what is ultimate truth and how to reach that level as,

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My desire is to close this life searching for truth, acting truth and thinking truth and that alone, and I request the blessings of the nation that desire of mine may be fulfilled.\(^{182}\)

In the same way, according to Tolstoy, ‘Christ who not only forbids killing but all wickedness against ones neighbors.’ Falsity in today’s world is a kind of wickedness that would be employed to raise oneself in the ladder of one’s life.

Similarly, Mr. Gandhi considered truthful behavior as the ultimate service to mankind. According to him if we don’t do anything else for betterment of humanity but only expulsion of falsity against the truth at any cost serves humanity in the best possible way. In his letter to Lord Linlithgow, Viceroy of India he writes that,

You know I returned India from South Africa at the end of 1914 with a mission which came to me in 1906, namely to spread truth and non-violence among mankind in the place of violence and falsehood in all walks of life.\(^{183}\)

To ‘spread truth and non-violence among mankind in the place of violence and falsehood’ Mr. Gandhi rejects the then popular ideologies such as Jeremy Bentham’s Utilitarianism and Nazi’s Totalitarianism. He clearly opined that,

I do not believe in the ‘greatest good of the greatest number’, nor can I agree that might is right. For human beings the object in view should be the good of all, with the weak being served first. We are two-legged men, but have still to cast away the nature of four-footed beasts.\(^{184}\)

The disagreement to believe ‘might is right’ leads Mr. Gandhi to find out the ultimate truth of life. Such truth would ultimately add to the self-confidence as he writes to Manibehn Patel, Wife of Sardar Patel on 11\(^{th}\) May 1925 as, ‘Self-confidence is that which remains unshaken even amidst disappointment. If I have faith in truth and non-violence, I will stick to them even in adversity.’\(^{185}\) Not only that for Mr.


Gandhi the very base of Satyagraha Ashram was truth as he wrote on 26th July, 1933 as,

My first constructive act on returning to India in 1915 was to found the Satyagraha Ashram for the purpose of Serving Truth.186

Thus, it becomes in the search of truth that Mr. Gandhi could go through several unknown aspect of the life. The study of epistolary writings informs us about the law of truth, service of mankind and self confidence in the light of truth, truth as the foundation of the Ashrams founded by Mr. Gandhi. Ultimately he applied all these knowledge for the better service of mankind. It reflects one of the most shining chapters of his political life where he proves himself better than anyone else in the world.

Non-Violence: A Significant Norm for the Nation.

The most successful method of twenty first century, which compelled most powerful countries of the world to change their policies, has been the method of non-violence. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi imbibed it from ancient Indian tradition. He modified it according to the need of the time. His teachings are loaded with the morals of non-violence. It is always beneficial to evaluate his epistolary writing from the point of view of non-violence. From his letters one can get the understanding about violence, non-violence and its qualities, his call for the nation to walk on the path of non-violence and the need to improve prison houses across the country to spread the message of humanity.

The present century has experienced the pros and cons of the violence more than any other century. Mr. Gandhi in one of his letters to his friend C. F. Andrews explains the broad definition of violence as,

You will note the extended meaning I have given to violence, Greed, pilfering, untruth, crooked diplomacy- all these are phases or sign of results of violent thought and action.187

The concern about violence reaches at the level of psychology and practical life as well. About the action Mr. Gandhi opined that ‘is not yet clear to me’. But ultimately at certain stage of life he provided strongest examples of non-violence for entire humanity to follow. Talking about one of the most complicated issues of Indian freedom movement, the Chauri Chaura incident, where on 5th February 1922, a mob set ablaze the local police station and twenty two constables of British Government died on the spot. Mr. Gandhi compares it with Mophlahs as,

I can still distinguish between Malabar and Gorakhpur. The Mophlahs themselves had not been touched by the non-cooperation spirit. They are not like the other Indians nor even like the other Mussalmans.

Such comparison exemplifies the quintessential role played by the preaching of non-violence in India. Even though the people of India had to shun their activities after Chauri Chaura, it ignited the unquenchable thirst for non-violence in case of Indian independence movement.

It was this firm faith in the strength of non-violence only which shook the very foundations of one of the strongest empires of the world. It empowered the weak, and strengthened the feeble. In brief it enthuse the slave population of India with mantra of Ahimsa. In one of his famous letters Mr. Gandhi categorically opines that,

The only way to conquer violence is through non-violence pure and undefiled. I have said also that every violent act, word and even thought interferes with the progress of non-violent action.

The concept of non-violence is not restrained to action only but in its wider perspective it includes word and even thought. The explanation reaches the depth of one’s soul. It ultimately liberates our soul from the worldly bandages. Finally it finds a person with the Entity which is compassionate and sympathetic for all.

Similarly, Mr. Gandhi gives an excellent definition of non-violence to his cousin Maganlal Gandhi as,

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188 A village in Gorakhpur district of Uttar Pradesh.  
You are right in what you think about non-violence. Its essentials are *daya* (compassion), *akrodha* (Freedom from anger), *aman* (freedom from the desire to be respected), etc. Satyagraha is based on Non-violence.\(^{192}\)

Along with that he also mentions significant elements of it such as ‘Renunciation’, ‘non-stealing’ and non-hoarding as well. To explain such difficult aspect of life Mr. Gandhi gives a practical example such as, ‘If five bananas are enough to keep me going, my eating a sixth one is a form of theft.’\(^{193}\) Further he connects such aspect with non-violence by saying ‘Such unnecessary consumption is also a violation of the vow of non-violence.’\(^{194}\) Likewise, talking about the truth in its widest connotation Mr. Gandhi opines that,

Non-violence and truth are convertible terms. This seems to be the idea behind the saying, ‘one must speak truth, truth that is agreeable.’ That is genuine truth which causes no pain, for that alone is non-violent truth may sound harsh but it can never result in suffering.\(^{195}\)

It is obvious that for Mr. Gandhi Truth stands for Almighty. In that sense non-violence is also the Omnipotent for him. For him the lesson of Ahimsa (Non-violence) cannot be taught to a ‘man who cannot kill’. The merit of silence cannot be appreciated by a man who is dumb. As a national leader for him non-violence stood for the base of democracy as,

Intolerance is a species of violence and therefore against our creed. 
Non-violent non co-operation is an abject lesson in democracy. The moment we are able to ensure non-violence, even under circumstances the most provoking that moment we have achieved our end…”\(^{196}\)

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191 A cousin of Mr. Gandhi and worked under him in South Africa. He left Phoenix in August 1914 with students and teachers – stayed at Shantiniketan, manager of Sabarmati Ashram, Member of All India Khadi Board- Mr. Gandhi himself felt widowed on his untimely death in 1928.


193 Ibid.

194 Ibid.

195 Ibid.

Similar spirit can be observed by his constant relationships with every Englishmen who came in his contact. In one of his open letters to ‘Every Briton’, at the time of Second World War he pleads for Non-violence. He explains that ‘this process or this method, which I have called non-violent non-co-operation, is not without considerable success in its use in India.’\textsuperscript{197} The results of the war and Indian independence are two great examples to sanctify the opinion of Mr. Gandhi. In the same letter Mr. Gandhi reveals his universal concern for betterment of humanity by appealing as,

I appeal to every Briton, wherever he may be now, to accept the method of non-violence instead of that of war for the adjustment of the relations between nations and other matters your statesmen have declared that this is a war on behalf of democracy…. I suggest that at the end of the war, whichever way it ends, there will be no democracy left to represent democracy.\textsuperscript{198}

On the other hand Mr. Gandhi became father of world’s largest democracy and tried to console hearts of millions with the ‘method of non-violence’ only.

In this way one can observe that Mr. Gandhi, throughout his life pursued the practice of Non-violence. He tried to explain what violence is and on the other hand qualities of non-violence and appealed strong nations to follow his path of \textit{Ahimsa}.

\textit{Erudition of Indian Mythologies}:

The best adjective would be welcomed by Mr. Gandhi, was of being called the religious politician. According to him religion was his first priority whereas politics stood at the second. Such quest for religious erudition was instilled in his soul by his mother by teaching him difficult lessons of Indian Mythologies in simplest possible manner in his childhood. As he grew up various mythologies of India make their impressions on his mind to make him strongly believe about supremacy of Indian Knowledge. Similarly it becomes necessary to explore how various mythologies such as Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagawat Gita and thoughts of Bhagawan Buddha helped him in sustaining himself in the whirlwinds of politics.


\textsuperscript{198} Ibid.
Ramayana is the text which Mr. Gandhi studied since his childhood. Even his talks with his near ones were full of examples from the Ramayana. The ultimate goal of his entire political endeavor for him was to establish Ram Rajya. In one of his personal letter to Maganlal Gandhi he quotes from Ramayana to explain the factors behind Sri Ram’s greatness as,

\[
\text{Siyaram prempiyushpuron hot Janmu na Bharatko I}
\]

\[
\text{Munimanaagam Yamaniyamsamdam Visham Vrat Acharatko II}
\]

(If Bharat had not been born, imbued with the ambrosia of love for Sita and Rama, then who would have practiced such self-control and strict observance, continence, restraint and rigorous vows as scarce enter the imagination of Sages? Ayoudhya Kanda (Second Book) of Tulsidas Ramayana, (Hill’s Translation)\textsuperscript{200}

In the same letter on the base of above given example Mr. Gandhi tries to teach the significance of renunciation, non-stealing and non-hoarding. For Mr. Gandhi the greatness of Sri Ram lies in having cultivated such virtues in Bharat and Lakshaman and not in killing the monsters. In his peculiar way Mr. Gandhi opines that ‘no one would think of him (Sri Ram) today if he had not had such devoted men as Lakshaman and Bharat to follow him.’\textsuperscript{201} For that he evaluates the quality of Sri Ram as,

\begin{quote}
Ramchandra possessed the power of some other kind which he could induce into Lakshaman and Bharata and in virtue of which the latter become great men of austerities.\textsuperscript{202}
\end{quote}

The lesson of Ramchandra had been practically implemented in the Indian Struggle of freedom to ‘induce’ ‘great men of austerities.’ It was only possible with the presence of such men of ‘austerities’ that Styagraha could reap its ultimate result.

\textsuperscript{199} The Kingdom of Bhagawan Sri Ram, of virtue.
\textsuperscript{201} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{202} Ibid.
Similarly, Mr. Gandhi’s strong belief in supremacy of Indian thinking process leads him to argue with Leo Tolstoy on the issue of ‘reincarnation’, which he discussed in one of his articles. In his letter to Tolstoy, Mr. Gandhi writes that,

My object in writing this is not to convince you of the truth of the doctrine, but to ask you if you will please remove the word “reincarnation” from the other things you have dissuaded your readers from.203

In reply to such object Tolstoy himself replies in a very cordial manner to Mr. Gandhi. ‘I not only reveal the victory of a person but of entire culture which stood by him in making him so confident about what he believed in’. In his answer Tolstoy writes that,

As regards rebirth I, for my part, shall leave out nothings for as it appears to me, the belief in a rebirth will never be able to strike such deep roots in and restraint mankind as the belief in the immortality of the soul and the faith in divine truth and love, of course I would accommodate you, if you so desire, to delete those passages in question.204

Mr. Gandhi’s strong belief made it possible to correct Tolstoy. At the same time his faith in Indian thinking process reflects in one of his letter to his cousin Maganlal Gandhi. In that letter he reveals his firm belief in teachings of India as,

Despite my bitter experiences in India, my conviction remains the same as ever, that we have but little to learn from the West…. I have certainly not come to feel that we shall have to introduce Western civilization.205

It is good to keep in mind that he was educated in Britain, and the environment of Britain at that time was perhaps more influential than ever for any young foreigner. But it was the study and learning of Indian Mythologies only which made him believe, *Atmavat Survabhuteshu*, that we are to regard all creatures as our own

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him to Jamnalal Bajaj, a prominent businessman and industrialist he mentions that, what is the greatest truth as,

The wonderful implication of the great truth Brama Satyam Jaganmithya (Brama is real, all else unreal) grows on me from day to day. It teaches us patience. This will purge us of harshness and add to our tolerance.207

The letter was written during Mr. Gandhi’s first imprisonment in the Sabarmati Central Prison. The ward where Mr. Gandhi was imprisoned contains the copy of same letter laminated on the wall of the prison house of Sabarmati Central Prison even today.

The ward, where Mr. Gandhi was kept has become a visiting place for believers and researchers on issues related to Mr. Gandhi and his policies. In one of his initial letters to Ms. Madeleine Slade208 or Miraben, beseeches the permission of Mr. Gandhi as,

In order to become a fit servant of your cause I feel the absolute necessity of that training and I will do my very best to be a not too unworthy pupil if you will accept me.209

The lessons and ‘training’ of Indian traditional way of living at Sabarmati Ashram converts Miss Madeleine Slade for Srimati Miraben (name of religious poetess of medieval India). Along with that letter she enclosed two little samples of wool which she had spun.

Similarly, one more student of Mr. Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru was also a fortunate one to have lessons from him. Mr. Gandhi as a father nation trained the first Prime Minister of India in multiple ways. The teaching of Karma Yoga falls in this

208 Miss Madeleine Slade (1892-1982), Smt. Miraben, daughter of admiral Sir Edmond Slade. Her interest in music of Beethoven’s works led her to Romain Rolland, who in turn contacted her in turn to Mr. Gandhi – She left Europe for Ashram in November 1925 – accompanied Mr. Gandhi to London in 1931; imprisoned in 1932-33, 1942-44, established a cattle development centre in the Rishikesh in 1947, now known as Pashulok.
category only. For practical lesson of Spinning wheel Mr. Gandhi refers to the *Karma Yoga* of Bhagawat Gita as, ‘the *Karma Yoga* of our age is the spinning wheel.’\(^{210}\) For causes of our bondages and freedom Mr. Gandhi opines that ‘It is the mind’, with reference of the Gita, which is the reason behind it. In addition to that, the concept of Satyagraha also belongs to same category as Mr. Gandhi mentions that,

> It is certainly the Bhagawat Gita’s intention that one should go on working without attachment to the fruits of work. I deduce the principle of Satyagraha from this. He who is free from such attachment will not kill the enemy but rather sacrifice himself. Killing any enemy proceeds from impatience and impatience proceeds from attachment.\(^{211}\)

The instructions given in the letter comes very close to the sixty third sloka of second chapter of Bhagawat Gita as,

\[
\text{Krodhabhavati Sammohah Sammohat Smrti-Vibhramah } \mid \\
\text{Smrti bhramsad buddhi-naso budhhi-nasat pranasyati } \mid \text{63} \mid
\]

(From anger, complete delusion arises, and from delusion bewilderment of memory. When memory is bewildered, intelligence is lost, and when the intelligence is lost one will destruct one’s own self. (Therefore falls from all the dimensions)\(^{212}\)

Similarly, it was the teachings of Bhagawat Gita only which inspired Mr. Gandhi for Satyagraha. In other words the strength and lessons of Satyagraha belongs to Bhagawat Gita only as, he himself confesses that,

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As far back as 1889, when I had my first contact with the Gita, it gave me a hint of Satyagraha and, as I read it more and more, the hint developed into a full revelation of Satyagraha.213

The practical results of Satyagraha are being reaped by entire nation even today. Whether it is Anna Movement for Lokpal bill or political uprising of Aam Aadmi party of Aravind Kejriwal, Satyagraha always stood as the voice of humanity. For Mr. Gandhi such message of Lord Krishna must reach at the bottom of the society. For him, ‘The real way to pray Lord Krishna is to do in his name some little service to those who are less fortunate than ourselves and when we show the spirit of service in daily life, unbelieving neighbors will begin to believe in God.’214

Moreover, the influence of Mahabharata can be observed when Mr. Gandhi instructs the members of Sabarmati Ashram about the significance of the spinning wheel as,

Therefore we sing our hymns about Draupadi215 for whom ‘God took the form of raiment’. Anyone who desires to see God today may see him in the form of the spinning-wheel.216

Moreover, Mr. Gandhi’s last addressed to ‘The People of Gujarat’ was also issued in the form of letter. The date of that letter reveals its significance to keep the lessons and the events of Mahabharata in mind. The letter was written on 14th January 1948. The date resembles the date of Bhismapitamaha’s 217 last delivery to his predecessors. The message and the tone of letter reveals Mr. Gandhi’s concern about India and pain that he felt (as Bhismapitamaha) when he heard of Hindu-Muslim riots.

Therefore, it is obvious to observe the significant influence of Indian Mythologies to understand the comprehensive personality of Mr. Gandhi. Since his

\[ \text{\footnotesize \cite{214} Gandhi, M.K., Selected Letters – II, p.25, 14th November 1932. Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1960.} \]
\[ \text{\footnotesize \cite{215} A significant character of Mahabharata, who was a woman of great purity and devotion. She was rescued by Lord Krishna himself by supplying garments while her garments were forcibly tried to remove by Duhsasan in the assembly of Duryodhan.} \]
\[ \text{\footnotesize \cite{216} Gandhi, M.K., Bapu’s letters to Ashram Sisters, p. 7, 20th December 1926. Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1960.} \]
\[ \text{\footnotesize \cite{217} Son of river Ganga sacrificed his whole life to protect the crown of Hatinapur. In war of Mahabharata he was killed by his own beloved grandson Arjuna. His death is being celebrated as Makarsankranti on 14th January every year.} \]
childhood till death one can observe how Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagawat Gita and lessons from other mythologies played their significant role in carving the unique character for humanity to cherish for years to come.

The Role of Epistolary Writing in The Process of Nation Building:

It would not be exaggeration to say that Mr. Gandhi occupies his unique space among the significant leaders of the world that used the mode of epistolary writing for the sake of their nation building. Certain letter by him occupies their space in various archives world over. He possessed unique communicative skills to convey his ideas through the art of letter writing. Various aspects of his letters such as unique way to greet someone, use of innovative salutation, the use of particular tone on the particular occasions and using epistolary mode for revelation of affection exemplifies his elegance as an epistolary writer.

As a matter of fact Mr. Gandhi himself had high regards for epistolary writing. For him letter filled his physical absence whenever he used to be inside the prison. In one of his letters addressed to Jawaharlal Nehru while talking about the importance of open hearted journalism he opines that,

I consider that letter to be a frank and honest document.218

For such frank and honest document Mr. Gandhi always had high regards. At the same time when there was no possibility open for him, Mr. Gandhi used the medium of epistolary writing to express himself. In December 1921 whole India joined the first jail going period in the Non-Co-operation movement. Tens and thousands of Satyagrahis were sent to prison for some technical breach of the law. All of a sudden Mr. Gandhi withdraws such movement. The reason given was that an excited crowd of peasants (protesting against the crown) at Chauri Chaura in Gorakhpur District of the U.P. had attacked a police outpost, set it to fire and killed members of police station who were inside. All the leaders of Congress were greatly distressed at that sudden withdrawal of a significant movement because of the mischief committed by group of people in Chauri Chaura. On that occasion Mr.

Gandhi employs epistolary communication to convey his message to those who were behind the bars. In his letter to Jawaharlal Nehru he reveals his own condition as,

I received letters both from Hindus and Mohammedans from Calcutta, Allahabad and the Punjab, all these before the Gorakhpur incident, telling me that the wrong was not all on the Government side, that our people were becoming aggressive, defiant and threatening that they were getting out of hand and were not non-violent in demeanor.\textsuperscript{219}

In short, ‘letters’ provided significant information of the whole nation to its leaders. With the help of such information Mr. Gandhi could execute his powers to shun the burning cauldron. The decision though hurt so many leaders at that time but later on everyone has appreciated it.

Likewise, Mr. Gandhi was fortunate enough to have friends from all over the world. Moreover he was lucky enough to have companions like Madeleine Slade or Miraben who used to translate letters of various languages into English for Mr. Gandhi. The epistolary conversation with French Nobel Prize winning author Rolland Romain used to be translated by Miraben. Rolland had raised the question of Mr. Gandhi’s participation in the late war. Considering it as a legitimate question Mr. Gandhi replies that,

I had answered it in the last autobiographical chapter as if in anticipation of your question. Please read it carefully and tell me at your leisure what you think of the argument. I shall treasure your opinion.\textsuperscript{220}

In answer to that letter Romain Rolland immediately reciprocates and replies in his typical way that,


Pardon me if I say to you that, in spite of all my desire to enter into your thought and to approve of them, I simply cannot do so...  

But ultimately the thought of Mr. Gandhi conquers the materialistic mindset of British Government and brings freedom for the nation. Similar such examples can be found in his epistolary conversation with Lord Irwin, Reginald Reynolds, Richard Gregg, Sir Samuel Hoare and Ramsay Macdonald (A British Politician) to whom in particular Mr. Gandhi discussed the issue of the representation of the depressed class from Yerawada Prison as,

I have to resist your decision with my life. The only way I can do so is by declaring a perpetual fast unto death from food of any kind. Save water with or without salt or soda. This fast will cease if during its progress the British Government of its own motion or under the pressure of public opinion revise their decision and their schemes of communal electorates for the depressed classes, whose representatives should be elected by general electorate under common franchise no matter how wide it is.

We would discuss about this issue in length in the following chapter that this ‘Fast unto Death’ was strongly opposed not only by British Government but also by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. The solution of such matter became the biggest issue of that time. Unfortunately, till today in India on the name such privileged status governments are achieving their political mileages and not justifying its duty cater every citizen equally.

Furthermore, Mr. Gandhi’s use of distinctive greetings and salutations also grabs the attention of common reader. For a person of specific category Mr. Gandhi would apply a unique greetings or salutation. For familiar characters we find familiar greetings and salutations. Such as,

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Greeting</th>
<th>Salutation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kasturba Gandhi</td>
<td>Beloved Kastur,</td>
<td>Mohandas$^{223}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarojini Naidu</td>
<td>Dear Sister,</td>
<td>M.K.Gandhi$^{224}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.F. Andrews</td>
<td>My Dear Charlie,</td>
<td>Mohan$^{225}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabindranath Tagore</td>
<td>Dear Gurudev,</td>
<td>M.K.G.$^{226}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamnalal Bajaj</td>
<td>Chi. Jamnalal</td>
<td>Bapuna Ashirvad$^{227}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahomed Ali</td>
<td>My Dear Friend and Brother</td>
<td>Your sincere friend and brother.$^{228}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dear Mr. Jinnah</td>
<td>Yours sincerely.$^{229}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dear Quid-I-Azam</td>
<td>Yours sincerely.$^{230}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subhas Chandra Bose</td>
<td>My Dear Subhas,</td>
<td>Love, Bapu.$^{231}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord Linlithgow</td>
<td>Dear Lord Linlithgow,</td>
<td>Heaven guide soul.$^{232}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yours Sincerely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shriman Narayan</td>
<td>Bhai Shriman,</td>
<td>Bapuke Ashirvad.$^{233}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sardar Patel</td>
<td>Chi. Vallabhbhai,</td>
<td>Blessing, Bapu.$^{234}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madame</td>
<td>Dear Bhakti,</td>
<td>Bapu$^{235}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmond Privat</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


It becomes interesting to know about the use of such exquisite greetings and salutation by one person only. At some time one finds more than one greetings and salutations for the same person on different occasions. It reflects Mr. Gandhi’s art of Epistolary writing as well as art to address a particular person in particular way, which is quintessential in the diplomatic world in which he was communicating his vision for construction of mother nation.

At the same time letter becomes a medium to reveal his affection for his dear and near ones. And as a unique politician Mr. Gandhi do not detach his affectionate relations from his concerns about nation. In a way one can say that his relations were always based on his concerns about the nation. In one of his letters to Mahomed Ali, concerned about the communal harmony and Swaraj, he reveals how ‘telegrams of congratulations’ can reveal ‘affection of our countrymen for me.’\(^{236}\) At the same time, through letters only Mr. Gandhi strengthened his personal-political relations. In one of his letters to Motilal Nehru he shares his concerns about Jawaharlal by saying, ‘He is one of the loneliest young man of my acquaintance in India.’\(^{237}\) On the other hand his habit to reply promptly makes him win several hearts. Madeleine Slade in one of her letters thanks him as,

Most Dear Master,

I thank you profoundly for having answered my first letter to you – I had never dared to hope such a thing!\(^{238}\)

Due to her contact with Mr. Gandhi, she left Europe for India and accompanied Mr. Gandhi in his Satyagraha moment. She later on established a small Ashram and Cattle Development Centre now known as Pashulok in the forest area of Rishikesh. On the other hand Mr. Gandhi asks certain people to express their thoughts in writing only. When a personal talk fails Mr. Gandhi prefers the epistolary mode of communication. One of his letters to Mohamed Ali begins with the same tone as,

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Dear Qaid-I-Azam,

Last evening’s talk has left a bad taste in the mouth. Our talks and our correspondence seem to run in parallel lines and never touch one another.239

Further in at the end of the communication Mr. Gandhi requests Jinnah by asking that,

I would like you to give me in writing what precisely on your part you would want me to put my signature to.240

Similarly, Mr. Gandhi’s epistolary communication with people from other countries reveals one simple method of Mr. Gandhi which can be divided in three different steps. Such as,

(1) To build the intimacy or develop relationship.
(2) By revealing his own international identity.
(3) Discuss about receiver’s grievances and experiences.

His letters such as to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek, ‘To Every Japanese’, ‘to Every Briton’ and Viceroy of India exemplifies his quality to communicate, his idea in a distinctive way of letter writing.

At the same time as a leader of nation and a son of a businessman, Mr. Gandhi used to have minute details about his mode of communication. His letter to Every Briton reveals his in-depth concern about public property of India as,

…I pay two pice as war tax on every letter I post, one pice on every postcard, and two annas on every wire I send. This is the lightest side of the dismal picture. But it shows British ingenuity.241

In this way one may say that by having unique understanding and ability to employ epistolary writing, by applying various greetings and salutations Mr. Gandhi could share not only his personal information but at the same time he could employ it

240 Ibid.
for the sake of nation building in more than one way. Perhaps it wouldn’t be wrong to say it stood as one of the supporting pillars to his political life.

*The Vision for Better Tomorrow:*

The British Government considered Mr. Gandhi as the only significant politician and as a responsible leader of India. Mr. Gandhi was fortunate enough to share his immediate concerns about nation with the Empire. It wouldn’t be wrong to say that he was perhaps the only politician of India who could visualize and took part in shaping the nation in a real sense. The British Government at each and every administrative decision kept Mr. Gandhi along with them as a voice of the nation. It is beneficial to observe his vision for India as a nation, village development, self-purification and for the youth which will be the driving force for the time to come.

Mr. Gandhi had experienced varieties of life on the Globe. He began his life from small town called Porbandar from there to Rajkot – from Rajkot for educational purpose shifted to Bhavnagar – from Bhavnagar to Britain – from Britain to Bombay – from Bombay to Ahmadabad – from Ahmadabad to Rajkot – from Rajkot to Natal (South Africa – from South Africa to Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmadabad. The gist of all these lives leads him to raise his voice against injustices of the Empire. Therefore the very first thing that he wished for his mother nation was its freedom from the British Empire. In one of his letters to Indian Viceroy Lord Irvin he shares his concerns as,

> If India is to live as a nation, if the slow death by starvation of her people is to stop, some remedy must be found for immediate relief… India must consequently evolve force enough to free herself from that embrace of death.\(^{242}\)

As a concerned leader he investigates and reaches to the roots of ‘The Slow death by Starvation’ and prescribes the panacea for ‘that embrace of death’ as,

> If the British commerce with India is purified of greed, you will have no difficulty in recognizing our independence. I invite you then to have the way for immediate removal of those evils.

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The process to be ‘purified of greed’ leads him to the quintessential problem of the nation. Therefore he diagnoses the malady and the perfect medicine for it as he described that,

As the independent movement is essentially for the poorest in the land, the beginning will be made with this evil (greed of British Commerce).

Therefore, the first project before Mr. Gandhi was to enhance the project of Swadeshi. At various Round Table Conferences he propagated nothing else but the use and proliferation of Indian Products. Keeping the example of cloth in focus Mr. Gandhi observes that how a nation economically and politically drowns itself by importing ‘fine-count calico both from England and Japan.’ He directly raises the question that if India gets its freedom ‘How the whole of England can benefit in every way.’ As a conclusion of his study about political and economical observation Mr. Gandhi visualizes that,

The more I study the villages of India the more intensely do I realize that India has no need to be a pauper country if she can get chance to grow without the fetters that today prevent her natural growth.

The contemporary economic rise of India in the world economy gives sufficient proof for what Mr. Gandhi visualized before Indian independence. But even for such rise Mr. Gandhi put on condition that ‘if her sons and daughters behave themselves and prove worthy of her freedom.’

Similarly, in his letter written on 8th May, 1947 to the Viceroy Lord Mountbatten, he categorically warns about the division of the nation. He particularly terms the demand of division as ‘a needless irritant for the League.’ If there are certain unwelcomed incidents then after he writes that British power ‘must be held principally responsible’ for that as,

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244 Ibid.
245 Ibid.
246 Ibid.
248 Ibid.
If you are not to leave a legacy of chaos behind, you have to make your choice and leave the government of the whole of India including the States to one party.\textsuperscript{249}

Following blood-bath and killing of millions of lives along with largest human migration on earth justifies the worth and value of the letter.

On the other hand for the youth of India Mr. Gandhi had a practical vision. He instructed them with realistic lessons. He wanted to make them strong not only physically but also spiritually. In one of his letters he specifically mentions that,

The first and the last thing we have to attend to is to reform ourselves.

In trying to reform, we seem to be judging.\textsuperscript{250}

Along with the lessons to reform Mr. Gandhi had clear cut practical suggestions for Indian Youth. He wanted them to become representative of India in all possible sense. According to him if they ‘are mistaken for a fool’\textsuperscript{251} when they are experimenting something new, ’but don’t take the risk of going wrong as a result of your ignorance.’\textsuperscript{252} For Mr. Gandhi ‘ignorance’ is greater folly than being considered as ‘a fool’. Likewise, Mr. Gandhi corrects day to day habits of the youth by advising them unique lessons of their real life such as,

One who rises early should make no exception on Sundays. If we do, we shall anxiously await the coming of a Sunday.\textsuperscript{253}

He not only compels the young person to live healthy but also punctual life for better tomorrow. Similarly, he was equally worried about villages of the nation. For the development of villages Mr. Gandhi instigated the Indian National Congress to establish the All-India Village Industries Association. At the same time he requested Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore to assist it as an expert adviser. As the matters that mentioned for the expert advice such as,

\textsuperscript{249} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{252} Ibid.
(1) Chemical analysis.
(2) Food Values.
(3) Sanitation.
(4) Distribution of Village manufactures.
(5) Improved methods of developing village industries.
(6) Cooperation.
(7) Disposal of Village waste as manure.
(8) Methods of village transport.
(9) Education (adult and other).
(10) Care for Infants and many other things.

It reveals the in-depth study of village life and commitment to improve the life in villages of India. In his utmost humble tone he asks Mr. Tagore that,

Will you please allow your name to appear among such advisers of the All-India Village Industries Association? Naturally I approach you in the belief that the object of the Association and the method of approach to its task have your approval.²⁵⁴

The vision and attitude with which Mr. Gandhi approached various people of the nation exemplified the village transformation in India for times to come. More than that Mr. Gandhi strongly believed in equal standards of living between the Town-dwellers and Villagers. For him ‘there should be an equal right and opportunity for all.’²⁵⁵ To elucidate it he strongly emphasizes that,

…there should be equality between the town-dwellers and the villagers in the standard of food and drink, clothing and other living conditions.²⁵⁶

The Government policies of consequent administrators of India have always endeavored to bridge such gaps. It reflects the foresighted vision of Mr. Gandhi.

In this way with the help of significant letters of Mr. Gandhi one can observe his vision for India as a nation, the role of youth for responsibilities of such nation and

²⁵⁶ Ibid.
all pervading and equal development in each and every section of India. All these letters not only reveals his vision but at the same time exemplifies his concerns about the people from whom he is emerging.

*Women Empowerment in the letters:

Twentieth Century India was still struggling to make it free from rigid social traditions and rituals. Mr. Gandhi, since his childhood experienced the injustices towards women in India. To empower such section of society Mr. Gandhi made it the mission of his life. At the same time he emphasized upon the need to improve whole society, men’s responsibility towards woman and the status of prostitute in the country.

According to Mr. Gandhi the issue of women empowerment is the need of the nation. For him if this half of national population is strengthen it will ultimately strengthen the nation as a whole as,

Women are the very incarnation of service, but at present they minister only to their own families. Why should they not extend the field of their ministry so as to embrace the whole of India? A truly religious person becomes a citizen of the world, but the service of one’s own country is stepping-stone to the service of humanity.\(^{257}\)

In his perception such ‘Service of humanity’ ultimately ‘leads to self-realization (*Moksha*).’\(^{258}\) For every human being it must be the final destination to reach. Similarly, at the same time he mentions about man’s duty for woman in a typical manner as,

Man has kept woman in state of helplessness and dependence; so it continues to be his duty to protect her.\(^{259}\)

On the other hand Mr. Gandhi gets distressed when he observes that woman is stuffed with ornaments and as a unique observer he claims that ‘who will explain to

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\(^{258}\) Ibid.

them that real beauty lies in the heart and not in these ornaments?\textsuperscript{260} To put this thought properly he illustrates that it is but of a men who degrade woman and teach them the ways of dressing and behaving, whereby woman might excite or tempt them. According to Mr. Gandhi,

The woman did not see this in the sense of her own enslavement and degradation. She also harbored lust and so she bored her nose, bored her ears and put on shackles (in the form of ornaments) on the feet and became a slave.\textsuperscript{261}

By decoding the entire stratagem of enslavement of a woman in Indian Society Mr. Gandhi produces Panacea for feminist problems. His concerns about woman in the society include prostitutes as well. For him they are the mirrors of our society, the injustice and wrong behavior, leads them to join the profession. According to him,

So long as there are beasts in man’s shape there must be beasts in woman’s shape too. If such women give up their vile occupation and turn over a new leaf, respectable men would certainly marry them. Once a prostitute, always a prostitute – is not a sound proposition.\textsuperscript{262}

The unique thought to rehabilitate one of most proscribed section of the society Mr. Gandhi reveals largeness of his heart for each and every person of the society. Including the prostitute as a part of the society he justifies that they are in the profession only because the society wants it.

In one of his letters to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur Mr. Gandhi asks for women’s duty for social empowerment as well. For him women are also equally responsible for degradation of humanity as,

If you women would only realize your dignity and privilege and make full use of it for mankind, you will make it much better than it is. My


\textsuperscript{261} Gandhi, M.K., \textit{Bapu’s letter to Ashram Sisters}, p.90. 9\textsuperscript{th} December 1929. Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1960.

special function from childhood, you might say, has been to make woman realize their dignity.\textsuperscript{263}

In a sense his mission of Empowerment of women had been finalized from his childhood. Therefore at maturity he could understand the worth of woman for the nation, the society and equally men’s responsibility towards women to fit in the picture of humanity.

\textit{Social Engineering for Untouchability}

As a leader of the slave nation Mr. Gandhi knew it very well that if this nation wants to stand up on its own it has to generate and focus its energy from every section of the society. Similar to women empowerment Mr. Gandhi conceive the urgent need of social engineering for Untouchables. According to him it was need of the time to learn lessons from Indian tradition to remove such social evil and bring together an essential part of Hindu society. For him the freedom of nation would only be possible when there would be a proper respect for \textit{Daridranarayan}.

The argument about the status of Untouchables in Indian Society was the issue where Mr. Gandhi and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar intersected each other. They agreed on some issues at the same time disagreed on the other. But the ultimate goal of both was to empower the downtrodden. In one of his letters to Hakim Ajmal Khan, President of Indian National Congress Mr. Gandhi emphasizes upon the need of removal of untouchability as,

\begin{quote}
I have refrained from mentioning untouchability. I am sure every good Hindu believes that it has got to go. Its removal is as necessary as the realization of Hindu-Muslim unity.\textsuperscript{264}
\end{quote}

Categorizing the removal of Untouchability as the need of an hour Mr. Gandhi compares it with one’s relation with Christian and Muslims. He asks the question that ‘If we don’t mind contact with a Christians or a Muslim, why should we mind it with


one belonging to our own religion?" He argues that there ‘cannot be any argument regarding untouchability either from the point of view of justice or that of practical common sense.’ He suggests that,

…I think we are committing a great sin in treating a whole class of people as untouchable and it is owing to the existence of this class that we have still some revolting practices among us. Not to eat in company with a particular person and not to touch him are two very different things. No one is untouchable now.

He categorizes the untouchability as a worn out – out dated social ritual. Mr. Gandhi considers it as one of the darkest chapter of Hindu society. For him it was one of the biggest issues because of which he would forsake his religion as,

It has been a passion of my life to serve the untouchables because I have felt that I could not remain a Hindu if it was true that untouchability was a part of Hinduism.

The readiness to forsake one’s own religion for the removal of a social evil reflects his commitment to the downtrodden section of the Indian society. Considering purity as the state of mind Mr. Gandhi emphasizes upon spiritual piety and terms such nuisance as,

Untouchability is a soul-destroying sin. Caste is a social evil…

Furthermore he reaches at the root of the Untouchability in the form of Varna. Taking cue from the Bhagawat Gita he reminds that when a person abandons one’s own hereditary profession he falls from Varna. The ‘Utter Confusion’ of caste is only because of that lost treasure as he observes,

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Ibid.

Ibid.


Ibid. p. 40.
Varna stands on a different footing, and it means profession. It has nothing to do with inter-dining and inter-marriage. People belonging to the four professions used formerly to inter-dine and even to intermarry and by so doing they naturally could not and did not leave their Varna… 271

At the same time he appeals to the untouchables to reform themselves as well. According to him as a part of the whole society they are also not beyond the contamination of Indian Social Customs. For him in the days of self-purification ‘Harijans ought to know that they are to avoid all the bad customs of caste Hindus,’ 272 On the other hand he considers the greatest worship of mankind as in the form of worship of Daridranarayan.

In this way, Mr. Gandhi as the chief architecture of the nation could visualize the need of time to remove the social evil of untouchability and considered the worship of Daridranarayan as the highest mode of worshiping one’s own Almighty. In pragmatic way he visualized the structure of nation which would be seamless and strong to absorb any disaster in the time to come.

Opinion About Education For Nation:

If one closely observes the entire panorama of Indian freedom fighters it is easy to observe that majority of them were highly qualified from the prospect of education. Most of them were educated abroad and having good reputation in their specific fields. Along with that it is easy to observe that if any sector of India has given optimum result after independence then it is education. Mr. Gandhi as graduated from Britain himself knew the significance of education more than anything else. For him the goal of education was to build a character. He never opposed English as a medium of teaching but at the same time given equal importance to the native language of a student.

According to Mr. Gandhi education is not a process that can be performed in the seclusion. For him education is linked with life in each and every walk. For him education should not be the process of awarding degrees only but at the same time it

271 Ibid.
should help a human being to face any challenge in the walk of life. An educated person, according to Mr. Gandhi, should always be open to help the people around. In one of his discourses he opined that,

Learning should be acquired only with a view to service. But service is full of inexhaustible joy. Therefore, we may say that learning is an aid to blessedness. Mere learning without service has never been known to lead eternal bliss.\(^{273}\)

In a sense, Mr. Gandhi attached knowledge with the process of ‘eternal bliss’, which is ultimate goal of human life. Along with that he also attaches education with the process of character building as well. In one of his letters he mentions the meaning of education in Gujarati as,

Education does not mean a knowledge of letters but it means character-building, it means a knowledge of duty. Our own word literally means ‘training’.\(^{274}\)

Similar to other thought of Mr. Gandhi, his perception of knowledge belongs to age old tradition of Indian knowledge system, particularly to the *Gurukul Parampara*. According to that tradition the faculty of observation occupies the significant place in the process of education. In the same pattern he defines the essential components of education as,

A student means one who is hungry of learning. Learning is knowledge of what is worth knowing about. The only thing worth knowing about is the *atman*. True knowledge is thus knowledge of the self. But in order to attain this knowledge, one has to know literature, history, geography, mathematics etc.\(^{275}\)

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Such observation of *atman* (self) develops a strong faculty of observation in one’s life. The whole world becomes teacher to such person and the need of different teachers would be essential.

Similarly, Mr. Gandhi had high regards for English as the medium of education. He considered it as the window to the world. He himself faced difficulties in understanding English at the initial stage of his education, especially of Shamaldas College, Bhavnagar. But the credit of his strong understanding of the then problems of the world goes to his knowledge of English only. In one of his letter to his one of good friends (Probably Card Health) he shares his deficiency to communicate in English as,

Please do not look at my bad imperfect English but consider the heart of my meaning.\(^{276}\)

At the same time it is obvious that through the medium of English it was he who could communicate with great people of the world. Similarly, for him it was difficult for every Indians to cop-up with English as the medium of language. To solve such practical problem he suggested unique way out as,

Why should every lad have to know English? Is it not enough if some men are specially trained in English in each province so that they may diffuse among the nation through the vernaculars a knowledge of new discoveries and researches? So doing, our boys and girls will become saturated with the new knowledge and we may expect a rejuvenation such as we have never witnessed during the past sixty years. I feel more and more that, if our boys are to assimilate facts of different sciences, they will only do so if they receive their training through the vernaculars.\(^{277}\)

The contemporary education system follows the same pattern suggested by Mr. Gandhi still today. Even scientifically it has been proved that the primary education in one’s own vernacular helps the education of a child more than in any


other medium. Therefore, one may say that for Mr. Gandhi, the best of education was to build a strong character and at the same time it must be in vernacular language.

**Concern about Communal Harmony:**

As a matter fact if any matter complicated the Indian independence movement the most in 1947, then it was the matter of Indo-Pak division. The strong desire of Muslim League (to have their separate nation) and diplomatic malevolence of British Government lead humanity to witness largest human migration and brutal communal massacre on earth. As being the most senior leader of the nation Mr. Gandhi tried his level best to convince Mr. Jinnah for peace and brotherhood. Here one can witness some of his letters which reflects his hope and belief for unity and if nothing else than considering communal harmony as the political need of the time.

Mr. Gandhi’s political aspirations for communal harmony in India began with Khilafat Moment where he prepared Indians to raise their voice against British administration which dethroned the Khalipa of Iran. But on the contrary it resulted in the communal riots of Mophla in Kerala. In one of his letters to Srinivas Sashtri Mr. Gandhi suggested some of the significant issues. In one of the issues he mentions that, ‘Hindu-Mohomedan Unity in its essence and from a political and religious stand point is an unalterable article of faith.’

278 Such was the magic of Mr. Gandhi that Nobel laureate Sri Rabindranath Tagore in one of his letters exclaimed with the joy that,

Mahatmaji,

Our people are wonderstruck at the impossible being made possible in these few days and there is a universal feeling of immense relief at your being saved for us. Now is the opportune moment when a definite command from you will rouse the Hindu community to make a desperate effort to win over Mohomedans to our common cause.279

Such a ‘universal feeling of immense relief’ of Rabindranath Tagore was result of unprecedented show of communal harmony caused after the efforts of Mr. Gandhi. Such efforts Mr. Gandhi initiated since his first imprisonment in India. One

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of his letters addressed to Hakim Ajmal Khan reflects such a mindset since the earliest tenure of his political life in India. In his letter he opines that,

Hindu-Muslim unity must be our creed to last for all time and under all circumstances.\(^{280}\)

Significance and worth of such ‘creed’ can be evaluated when in the 16th Loksabha poll of India all the parties are of same opinion as Mr. Gandhi made approximately ninety years ago. For Mr. Gandhi without such harmony in the nation ‘all talks of Swaraj is idle.’

Likewise, he did not leave the British administrators who were looking for political gain by dividing Hindus and Muslims from each other. In one of his letters to Viceroy, Lord Irwin he clearly reprimanded that,

You have unnecessarily laid stress upon communal problems that unhappily affect this land.\(^{281}\)

Such unnecessary ‘Stress upon communal problems,’ ultimately emerged as the demand of Pakistan. It has been witnessed by the entire world be it is partition of India, Mumbai Terrorist attacks or 9/11 the major blood-bath since Indian independence was a result of such political malevolence only. In one of the most effective letter to M.A. Jinnah, Mr. Gandhi categorically warns him that,

I appeal to you once more to revise your policy and programme, as the future of this subcontinent and the welfare of the people of India demand that you should face realities.

It is obvious to observe that entire political turmoil of the ‘subcontinent’ was result of such immature decision only. The contemporary twists and turmoil of South-Asia are the result of such wrong decision only.

By observing some of the significant letters by Mr. Gandhi it becomes obvious to find that he could evaluate the need of time and accordingly hoped for the


communal harmony between Hindus and Muslims in India. On the basis of such letters one can justify the foresighted political acumen of Mr. Gandhi. In short, he could see the future of India and Pakistan along with their impact upon the entire world well in advance.

Thus, the reading and analysis of the letters by Mr. Gandhi becomes fruitful experience for everyone who wants to investigate the factual documents behind the construction of India as a nation. The issues like selection of the political path for emancipation, role of media in nation building, lessons from the senior leader, the quest of truth and non-violence, the lessons from India mythologies, the significance of Epistolary writing, the importance of communal harmony, the need of women empowerment, the spread of education, social engineering for untouchability and above all his vision for better India becomes easy to understand with the help of the letters. The letters bring us very close to the Indian freedom struggle. They make us one with people who worked under Mr. Gandhi in South Africa during his first Satyagraha. They enlighten us about Mr. Gandhi’s personal terms with Leo Tolstoy, Rabindranath Tagore, Kakasaheb Kalelkar and many other significant literary writers. At the same time his letters to Subhas Chandra Bose, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel, Sarojini Naidu, C. Rajagopalachari and Mahomed Ali Jinnah familiarized us with his political stratagems to make the motherland free. At the same time his letters to Winston Churchill, Adolf Hitler, Lord Irvin, Lord Mountbatten and open letters to every Briton, Americans and Japanese reveal his awareness and exactitude about world politics keeping the better future of India at the centre. In the same way his letters to Kasturba, Madeleine Slade or Miraben, to Ashram sisters and Madame Edmond Privat reflect his personal concern about female members of the society. Evaluating such multiple sections of Mr. Gandhi’s epistolary writings one naturally becomes his student, at the same time, as a researcher one has to evaluate the documents from neutral gaze. In such difficult situation one may say that Mr. Gandhi as a man had greatest skill to communicate his ideas through the letters. He stood not only as man of good political intelligence of the time but at the same time he could also express his feelings and emotions exactly with the help of letters as well. His letters open altogether a new avenue for the observers of Indian freedom struggle. They bring us at the roots of actual events and actions taken by our leaders. As the central most figure of India’s movement of independence the letters by Mr. Gandhi
familiarizes us with significant persons and their view at the particular event of the India’s struggle of independence. Moreover, the written document by a concern person strongly provides evidence for the historical research. In short, the vision of nation building by Mr. Gandhi becomes obvious when one goes through his letters from the point of view of research.