CHAPTER- II

GANDHISM – THE BASIC CONCEPT

The term ‘Gandhism’ encompasses what Gandhi’s ideas, words and actions mean to people around the world, and how they used them for guidance in building their own future. Gandhism also permeates into the realm of the individual human being, non-political and non-social.

However, Gandhi did not approve of 'Gandhism', as Gandhi told the members of the Gandhi Sangh at Saoli in March 1936: “There is no such thing as ‘Gandhism’ and I do not want to leave any sect after me. I do not claim to have originated any new principle or doctrine. I have simply tried in my own way to apply the eternal truths to our daily life and problems. The opinions I have formed and conclusions I have arrived at are not final. I may change them tomorrow…. I have nothing to teach to the world. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills. All I have done is to try experiments in both on as vast a scale as I could do. In doing so I have sometimes erred and learnt by my error….Well, all my philosophy, if it may be called by that pretentious name, is contained in what I have said. You will not call it ‘Gandhism’; there is no ism about it.” (Harijan, 28-3-1936, vol-II, P- 49)

Gandhi never claimed to have any particular philosophy of life. He said that he has only tried to give some eternal truth to the society which is very practical and useful to day to day life. Gandhi advises to all not to place his philosophy as Gandhism. Of course, his experience of truth has given a new philosophical outlook. But Gandhi’s ideas, thoughts and philosophy are so comprehensive that there is no any aspects of human life which is excluded from his dimension. He was not only a national figure but also an international one. Therefore, it is very difficult to find out the areas of his thoughts and
ideas of Gandhi. But yet we can find out the following aspects of characteristics for our understanding which are- God, Truth, Ahimsa (Non-violence), Satyagraha (Adherence to truth) Polities, Religion, Education, Economic & Social concepts etc. Gandhi’s ideas or concepts are very permanent and it has its validity in any time and ages. Even it is not out dated in the scientific and technological age also. Whatever the ideas or thoughts given by Gandhi are related to our practical life. Gandhi’s thoughts and ideas are as follows ----

2.01 GOD:

Gandhi was a firm believer of God. The fundamental element of Gandhi’s thought was the existence of God. According to Gandhi, “----- He is no God who merely satisfies the intellectual if He ever does. God to be God must rule the heart and transform it.” (Young India, 31-12-1931, Vol-II, P- 427). He said God is not the material objects of the external world; it is a destructive mysterious power whose existence is always found in the heart of man. Who don’t have faith in God is as like as rudderless boat in the ocean of life. This mysterious power can be realized but not seen. There are many roots of his existence but nothing helps for his proofs; it has given the power only to realize this power.

According to Gandhi God is life, truth and light. He is love and lord Shiba. Any explanation cannot help to realize the nature and scope of God. God is indescribable. Gandhi says God is truth and truth is God. God is described as truth because God alone is real. Again he says truth is God. In this reference Gandhi says “But deep down in me I used to say that though God may be God, God is truth above all-------- but two year ago I went a step further and said truths is God. You will see the fine distinction between the two statements, viz-that God is truth and truth is God and I come to the
conclusion after a continuous and relentless search after truth------” (Young India, 11-10-1928, Vol-II, P- 310).

There may be many reasons on saying truth is God. One may be that if it is said truth is God in place of God is truth then everybody will come under the same belief. Somebody may not believe in God but nobody can distrust on truth. He says, “I don’t care for God if He is anything but truth.” (Gandhi, M.K., My Experiment with truth, P- 615)

According to Gandhi self purification is the first condition to realize God. It is quite impossible to meet with other creatures without self purification. Without this, Ahimsa is as like as useless dream. It is impossible to realize God without self purification. The fundamental source of the power of Gandhi is his firm belief in God. Gandhi’s aim was to realize God through service to society. He says “My Ram is (God) not the historical Ram. My Ram is eternal. He is eternal and one. I worship only him.” (Bose, N.K, selection from Gandhiji, P- 26-27). Gandhi has further said, “You may believe in any ideal. You may implement the same in life and say that this (the ideal) is my God. Then I shall consider it as adequate.” (Harijan, Vol-I, 11th February, 1933, P- 260)

Thus Gandhi’s God is not only transcendent or unseen God; He is in us and a real one. Gandhi believed that God is living in every body’s heart. He is not far from us. But we have to know how to realize his feelings and consciousness. According to Gandhi God is all in all. He is love and truth. He is all pervading without his grace nothing is possible. God is the source of life and light but yet He is above all. God is our inner strength. The source of reasoning and speech of Gandhi was also God.
2.02 TRUTH AND NON-VIOLENCE:

Gandhi was in favour of non-violent path. Gandhi himself says, “I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills. All I have done is to try experiments in both on as vast a scales as I could. In doing so I have sometimes erred and learnt by my errors. Life and its problems have thus become to me so many experiments in the perfect of truth and non-violence—In-fact it was in courses of my pursuit of truth that 1discovered non-violence.” (Bose, N. K. Selections From Gandhi, P- 13). So, to Gandhi truth and non violence are not different. They are synonymous. One cannot be possible without other. They are like the two sides of the same coin. Ahimsa (non-violence) is the means. Truth is the end. Gandhi never connected the means with the end. He said that for achieving an end the means must be moral. Gandhi believes that one should take care of means. If the means are moral, the end will become moral. He said “the gem of non-violence was found in search of truth.” (Kriplani, J.B, Gandhi is forward to the Gandhian way P- 197). He thinks if any one neglects truth, he can never follow the path of non-violence. He regarded “Truth as the supreme law and “non-violence as the most sacred duty.” (Gandhi, M.K., An Autobiography or The Story of my Experiments with Truth-II, P- 476). Gandhi regards non-violence is eternal and synonym to God.

According to Gandhi, to attain the path of truth or Godhood non-violence is very important. He says Ahimsa is nothing but love. Love is a kind of feelings of oneness. It is an energy that cleanses one’s inner life and uplifts him and as such, love comprehends such noble feelings are as - benevolence, compassion, forgiveness, tolerance, generosity kindness, sympathy etc. Therefore Gandhi requested to love all. Even one should try to change the heart of evil by giving limitless love. Hate the sin, not the sinner. Non-violence is the search for truths. Truth, love, unity, brotherhood and justice are
the quality of non-violence. Gandhi believes that violence is a physical power. It may have the appearance of strength but it is born out of fear and is therefore a sign of weakness. Non-violence is a soul force, whenever soul force emerges in once non-violence became active in man. To practice non-violence one must be selfless. The primary conditions to attain non-violence are - honesty, tolerance, and the present of God in heart and any kind of sacrifices that makes a sound moral character.

According to Gandhi non-violence means to be away from anger, malice, hatred, revenge, jealousy etc. Gandhi says that “non-violence cannot be taught to that person who fears death and has no courage to oppose.” (Young India, Vol- III, P- 312) rather it is a weapon of the strong and courageous and not of the weak and coward. This is much superior to violence. Gandhi through his own life has shown to the world that the idea of truth and non-violence can be utilized in all the sphere of human life. It is also shown that truth and non-violence may be the most powerful weapon in the hand of individual.

2.03 THE TECHNIQUE OF AHIMSA –SATYAGRAHA :

The most fundamental technique of Gandhism is Satyagraha and theories of Gandhi have been developed on the basis of this theory of Satyagraha. To follow the path of truth lays in the significance of Satyagraha. To stand against the untrue, impurity, superstition, unjustified, exploitation; of the present rule of society is Satyagraha.

Satyagraha is a powerful weapon of a non-violent one. One can never be non-violent without being practice Satyagraha which means holding fast to truth. It therefore, demands a deep sincerity and a vigorous love to truth. It works on the conviction that truth represents the will and the way of God.
Therefore, the path of truth has to be followed in a vigorous manner for no other consideration except the fact that it is God way that is the way of truth.

Gandhi for the first time used the method of Satyagraha in South Africa in his struggle against racial discrimination such as non-cooperation and Ahimsa movement. After come back from Africa with vast experiment and experience, Gandhi could carry the Indian freedom struggle successfully on the line of Satyagraha, non-cooperation and non-violence. Gandhi took free India from the powerful British rule by using the method of Satyagraha. But Satyagrahi should not be cowardice and fearful. It is a matter of courageous one. Gandhi describes Satyagraha as a force against violence, tyranny and injustice. According to Gandhi there are number of qualities which Satyagraha must possess-

1. A Satyagrahi must be honest and sincere.
2. He must not have any mental reservations, he must be opening minded.
3. A Satyagrahi must be a discipline soldier.
4. He should be completely fearless.
5. Sacrifice is another quality of a Satyagrahi.
6. Gandhi asserts that Satyagrahi is required to practice truth and non-violence not only in action but also in thought and speech.
7. A Satyagrahi must be firm in his dealing and behavior.
8. Gandhi says a Satyagrahi must know how to control himself. He must beforgiver.
9. He must follow the path of self-restraint, non-stealing, tolerance and contentment.
(10) A Satyagrahi must also have tolerance in him. Punctuality and order is another quality of a Satyagrahi.

Thus in this way Gandhi used the method of Satyagraha which is not an easy task. It is not possible for all. It is only possible to those persons who could conquer himself.

Though there are many methods of Satyagraha but yet it can be divided into three very broadly—

(1) Civil Disobedience

(2) Non-cooperation.

(3) Fasting and prayer.

2.3.1: CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE:

Civil Disobedience is considered to be a protest against unjust laws. Gandhi restored to this technique chiefly in South Africa when he protested against the unjust, discriminatory and racial laws. He also used the method of Disobedience in India’s freedom struggle. A Satyagrahi must follow the truthful path. He is always ready to face any kind of punishment with laugh.

2.3.2: NON-COOPERATION:

It is a cleansing process; it affects the Satyagrahi more than the other party and able to give to the Satyagrahi a power to face evil and to endure suffering. Non-cooperation, as Gandhi conceives it, amounts to a kind of a refusal on the part of the exploit to be exploited. Strike, Picketing, Dharna, non-payment of taxes etc come under the province of non-cooperation.
2.3.3: FASTING AND PRAYER:

The fundamental method of Satyagraha is fasting and prayer. It is the most effective form of Satyagraha. Fasting works in a double way. It aims at self-purification and also by honestly choice the way of death. Fasting concentrates the energy of the soul and forces the opponent to see reason. He says, “It is my firm belief that the strength of the soul grows in proportion as you subdue the flesh” (Young India, 23-10-24, Vol- IV, P- 314) He further says, “my religion teaches me that whenever there is distress which one cannot remove, one must fast and pray” (Young India, 25-9-24, Vol- IV, P-313)

2.04: POLITICS AND RELIGION:

Though Gandhi was a modern thinker yet he never saw religion and politics from different angles. According to him politics is an integral part of morality and religion. Gandhi tried to introduce morality and religion in politics and that he does by presupposing that even political activity is an aspect of the spiritual pattern that guides the world. According to him the relation between politics and religion is as like as the relation of soul and body. Politics and religion is interdependent to each other.

Gandhi was a Hindu and he proclaimed himself as a Hindu such. But perhaps Gandhi’s most impressive achievement was his ability to unite desperate religions in the name of freedom and justice. Gandhi even convinced India’s Muslims to unite with Hindus, Jains, and Buddhists in non-violent protests against the British Empire in India. According to Gandhi Religion is a universal law and that law is pervading in every body’s heart. He says “Let me explain what I mean by religion. It is not the Hindu Religion but the religion which transcends, Hinduism which changes one’s very nature, which binds one indissolubly to the truth within and whichever purifies. It is the permanent
element in human nature which counts no cost too great in order to find full expression and which leaves the soul utterly restless until it has found itself, known its maker and appreciated the truth correspondence between the maker and itself. (Young India, 12-05-20, Vol-I, P- 625) Whatever is saying by Gandhi about religion is common to all religion. To Gandhi religion is nothing more than to realize the truth.

According to Gandhi there is no fundamental difference amongst different religion. Men’s internal behaviour may be different but internally all are same. The purpose of all are to purify once own self. Gandhi says truth or God realization is the ultimate end of human life and that is possible through non-violence. So, if the path of supreme end is immoral than the path of truth is also will be immoral.

According to Gandhi, the inspiration of the relation of religion and God is include the inspiration of politics. Gandhi said, religion cannot be far from politics. Religion is pervading in every aspects in reality. To him real religion never teaches to hate other. In this sense politics should be based on religion. He works out his political ideals strictly in accordance with his religious and metaphysical believes. All men are essentially one and there is an element of essential goodness in every man, and therefore, even in politics distrust, hatred, immorality etc should not have any place.

2.05: EDUCATION:

Education is the backbone of society and is largely responsible for upliftment. According to Gandhi, education does not mean only read and write, it means all round development. Gandhi defines education in this way- “By education I mean an all round drawing out of the best in child and man’s body, mind and spirit” (Harijan, 31st July 1937, Vol- III, P- 448). Thus, the meaning of education is to promote the physical, mental and spiritual
development of an individual. Gandhi was not believer of modern Education. He says that modern education is not only useless, but also harmful as well. It cannot make our children vocational. Gandhi says that he wants to educate each child in some such vocational art through which he may start earning from the very starting of his education. He believed that such an education would educate both the body and mind. *(Harijan, 31st July, 1937, Vol- III, P- 253)*

Gandhi was not satisfied with the foreign culture and education. Therefore, he gave importance on character building or moral education, self-realization and the cultivation of a conviction that one should forget everything selfish in working towards great aim. Therefore Gandhi gifted to Indian nation a new educational system which is called Basic Education (Buniyadi Siksha) through which he wanted to transform the Indian educational system.

2.5.1: THE METHOD OF BASIC EDUCATION:

Gandhi opposed British education because colonial system of education is fully equated with schooling and literary training. The learning through text books are considered as the sole means of education. Therefore, Gandhi vehemently criticized British educational system. According to Gandhi such education is concentrated only on head but not on heart and hand. In this regard Gandhi writes, “In my opinion the existing system of education is defective, apart from its association with an utterly unjust Government, in three most important matters.” *(Patel, M.S.: The Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, P- 70).* One among there is that it ignores the culture of the heart and hand and confines itself simply to the head”. And even the education was incomplete as it is exclusively concentrated on filling the minds of
children with mere information. Reflecting on this Gandhi writes “We have up to now concentrated on stuffing children’s minds with all kinds of information, without ever thinking of stimulating and developing them”. (Sheen, Vincent: Mahatma Gandhi, A Great Life in Brief, 1955, P- 62). Therefore Gandhi started new system of national education for the development of nation. He established many social organization and finally settled at Sevagram near Wardha where he proposed his basic education in 1937.

The fundamental characteristic of the basic education are:-

(1) This education is action centered education.

(2) The base of basic education is the life of Indian national ideology.

(3) This education should make the children self-reliance and productive.

(4) This education is basically suitable for village life.

(5) This education is craft-centered education.

(6) This education is related with various activities and interest of an individual.

(7) The expenditure of such an education is expended from the handicrafts.

(8) It gives importance on art and culture.

(9) This education is related with playing.

(10) This system of education gives importance on the all round development of the students.
Thus Gandhi’s educational philosophy of basic education is very comprehensive, because the key note of the basic education is to develop the socio-economic, physical, mental and moral aspects. Gandhi essentially was a believer in building a civil society; a society of smaller, autonomous, self-sufficient closely knit communities. Therefore, Gandhi while taking about good education says, “it is no education, if it fails to make the son of the farmer better farmer.” *(Gandhi, M.K. Problems of Education, P- 227)*. This is the main educational ideology of Gandhi.

### 2.5.2: ADULT EDUCATION:

Gandhi urged to develop a scheme of adult education which he considered as an important aspect of national reconstruction. According to Gandhi adult education means not only to read and write and do arithmetic but also to develop the life of villagers physically, economically, socially, politically and also it should be suitable to throw all the ignorance’s, related to adult. It gives the importance on the education of the entire personality. He wanted that during the summer vacation, the student of colleges and universities should go to the villages and educate the villagers in reading, writing and arithmetic and make them to learn how to be a hygienic. Therefore it can be said that Gandhi, the greatest educators of adult all the time.

### 2.5.3: HIGHER EDUCATION OR UNIVERSITY EDUCATION:

Gandhi was not in-favor of such a university education which produces a student a job oriented. According to Gandhi the education which makes a student laborless should not be the criteria of education. He said that university should produce good engineers, medical doctors and experts in other areas of human activities. He was not in favor of state university. Gandhi
wants to reorganize university education in the country. He says university should be vocationally oriented that young may have economic independence.

2.5.4: WOMEN EDUCATION:

Gandhi accepted women as a mother of the Nation. According to Gandhi, the British system of education is not suitable for women at all. He wanted such an education for women which can make a woman fit to maintain their own responsibilities. Gandhi was of the view that women have to perform their separate responsibilities which are as important as those of men. He says, both men and women are not superior to one another but are complementary to each other. So, women also should be given education according to their particular roles in life. They have not to compete with men, but there should be no bar for them to any avenue. (Gandhi, M. K., Speeches and Writings, P- 426) Gandhi believes that need basis education is very important for women. Gandhi was very much worried about the condition of women of our country. Therefore he said, education of women should not be stopped after tenth or twelve classes rather their education should be to continue up to independence.

2.06: SOCIAL IDEAS:

Gandhi wanted a classless society where everybody will get equal status in every sphere of life. He was not in favour of any kind of differences between higher and lower, rich and poor, urban and rural, literate and illiterate. He wanted such a new society where everybody will feel that this is my India. He wanted an ethical basis of society. The origin of society lies in man’s realization that complete selfishness has no place in life.
The core aspects of Gandhi’s ideal society are -

(1) Brotherhood
(2) Citizenship
(3) Economic equality
(4) Sarvodaya Samaj.

1. Gandhi believed that the feelings of brotherhood can bind all human being together. It is above the castes and creeds. Therefore Gandhi hated such social system which can make differ society in the name of castes, creeds, religions, untouchability etc. Gandhi boldly stood against the untouchability as a foe of society.

2. Gandhi aimed at the establishment of such a society where every citizen will get the equal justice, freedom and equality. In such a society every citizen must have got the proper training so that they can do their duties properly. In an ideal society duties and functions are distributed not only among the different Varna’s but also among the men and women. According to Gandhi both men and women have the same soul and therefore they are equal. The Wardha Scheme wants to inculcate the spirit of ideal citizenship, self-importance and self efficiency. In order that a co-operative society might be evolved.

3. Gandhi gives importance on economic equality in society. Gandhi says that though complete economic equality is an unattainable ideal yet he was in favor of economic equality. According to Gandhi, the factor of individual differences is very important; men do differ in their capacities and talents. Therefore, though equal opportunities are given to individuals the output will be different from person to person as
their talents and capacity. So, Gandhi believed that economic basis of society must be moral. Society must be based on love and trust.

4. The aim of the Sarvodaya Samaj is that where everybody will be able to get equal opportunity and comfort. The base of Gandhi’s social ideals is morality, humanity and equality. The society should be based on such an ideal in which no individual is neglected or overlooked. Everybody should get the equal status in every field. Gandhi wanted such a Country where poorest also could feel that ‘this is my Country’ and where everybody will get the equal opportunity. It is such a country where there is no class on the basis of ratio of wealth and where every caste will live together with brotherhood.

The characteristic of Gandhi’s Sarvodaya Samaj is love, ahimsa, truth and justice. The purpose of such a society is the development of all. But this is not possible without service to society. It is necessarily connected with Sarvodaya the greatest good of all. It is a society which is out of any kind of exploitation. Gandhi did not accept excess of control over the individuals by the military force. Gandhi said that we need military force but pattern and character should be different. They should be real servants of society dedicated to the task of reforming the wrong doers. In this society rights of men and women are equal.

Thus, Gandhi wanted such an India which is above the caste, color, creed, high and low, rich and poor. There cannot be any distinction in the name of caste in such a society. According to him untouchability is a disease which should not be allowed in a society. So, there are no needs of army. The welfare of the public will be the above of everything. (Young India, Sept. 10, 1931, Vol- IV, P- 1)
2.07: ECONOMICAL IDEOLOGY:

Gandhi had given his own economic theory in Indian Society. His economic philosophy was very simple. Gandhi was a believer of simple living and high thinking. Gandhi’s economical ideology was based on the welfare of the poorest class. Gandhi’s whole philosophy is confined in love, non-violence, Satyagraha etc. According to Gandhi the economic basis of society must be a moral one. It must be based on love and trust. Economical equality is very important. For him all should get the same wages. Gandhi never accepted any kind of force for economic equality. Though Gandhi thought that there is difference between capitalist and the labor class but this difference cannot be solved by any kind of force. No classes are higher or lower. Of course, Gandhi regarded the labors are superior to capitalist. Gandhi, therefore, advocated a friendly relationship between capital class and the labor class. He wanted such a society where the capital class themselves distributed their excess of wealth to the poorest or labor class.

Mahatma Gandhi laid more importance on building the base of rural economy. His cry was for return to village. He laid importance on small cottage industries and handicrafts for the development of rural economy. Gandhi wanted that the chosen handicrafts should be rural and useful for the common man. (Basic National Education, with a forward by M. Gandhi, 4th edition, Wardha; Hindustani, Tamil Sangh, 1939, P-11) Gandhi wants a self sufficient economy. He was not in favor of industrialization. He believed, “People can take the charge only if the units are small. But if units are big then it will led to the concentration of power in the hands of the few and to the risk of exploitation. Gandhi agreed that there must be mass production but mass production in peoples home.” (Young India, 2nd January, Vol- II, 1934, P-301). In an industrial society the towns prospered at the expanse of villages. Instead of this, “The proper function of cities is to serve as clearing houses for village products.” (Young India, 28th January, Vol- II, 1939, P-438). Therefore, Gandhi laid more importance on small
industries for the development of rural economy such as Agriculture, Spinning, Weaving, Carpentry, Metal Work, Leather work etc.

Mahatma Gandhi to solve the unemployment problems laid importance on the development of Khadi industries and Cottage industries. He wanted to develop these industries by using new technology and new research. He believed that the necessity of Government help is very important for developing the small industries.

Gandhi supported to buy foreign goods but it should be for the growth of our country. He said, if foreign goods hamper the economic status of home industry then it would not be acceptable. Gandhi believed that the object which are good for health and society should not export to other country. Though Gandhi believed in socialism yet he wanted to control on the distribution of wealth in a natural way.

In this way, Mahatma Gandhi’s significant aspects of thinking are reflected in his life.

2.08 CONCLUSION:

Gandhi himself did not speak about his ideals and thinking as an “ism”. But still with these above mentioned of ideas of Gandhiji, the intellectual society of India considered his ideas as an “ism” and stated it as Gandhism.