"My faith in truth and non-violence is ever growing, and as I am ever trying to follow them in my life I too am growing every moment. I see new implications about them. I see them in a newer light every day and read in them a newer meaning."

M.K. GANDHI

Harijan, 1-5-1937.
There are moments in every man's life, when certain forces seem to drive him to change his lifestyle. This is true in the case of Gandhi. Mohinder Singh portrays Gandhi as a lithe figure, smartly dressed, a lively conversationalist beaming with cheer and good will followed by a man with nerves of steel and packing a moral punch, emerging as the unchallenged leader of the vast country. This figure poses a question as to what the different forces were and the media that made him act and how they changed his idiom of life. The different forces here mean the influencing factors that strengthen the horizontal and vertical dimensions of development by providing direct, contrived and symbolic experiences.

Article 1

HORIZONTAL DIMENSION OF DEVELOPMENT: DIFFERENT INFLUENCES

The horizontal dimension of the development of Gandhi was enriched by various influences of his immediate environment. Among these some of the significant ones are selected. They may be grouped into two categories - early influences and the influence of Western writers.

1. Early Influences

In this section the profound influence on the personality of
Gandhi, of his Mother Putlibai, Rambha the servant maid and the plays 'Shravana Pritibhakti' and 'Harishchandra' are discussed.

Putlibai, who was deeply religious and morally upright left an indelible imprint on the impressionable mind of young Gandhi. This had a shaping influence over his religious perspectives such as his faith in God, respect for vows, belief in the efficacy of fast and devotion to high ideals. His mother's heroic devotion had evoked in him a tremendous admiration for her. In his Autobiography, he wrote:

The outstanding impression my mother has left on my memory is that of saintliness. She was deeply religious. She would not think of taking her meals without her daily prayers. Going to Haveli - the Vaishnava temple - was one of her daily duties. As far as my memory can go back, I do not remember her having ever missed the Chaturmas. Illness was no excuse for relaxing them.

Though she could not always satisfy his curiosity, her deep love and endless austerities left a permanent impression upon him. "These qualities proved an undying source of inspiration for one whose life was to be one long struggle for self-mastery, and whose battles were to be waged and won in the hearts of men."

Gandhi imbibed from his mother the image of woman as the embodiment of "love and sacrifice." At the age of sixty two he recalled 'whatever purity you see in me, is derived from my mother, not from my father.' N.K. Bose observes:

This mother-cult of Gandhi's boyhood days remained throughout his life a very strong element in his philosophy, and he tried to enlist men and women in private as well as in public life to his cult of purity, love and self-suffering. This mission of
civilization, which was Gandhi's greatest contribution to modern life, was thus, in the last analysis, an external projection on the larger canvas of the world's life of the saintliness which was embodied in that noble woman who shone like a pole star over her son's great life. 7

Another person who had a great influence on Gandhiji's life was his old servant-maid Rambha. Gandhi did not set much store by the ceremonies and rituals of religion. He writes in his Autobiography. "I did not like its glitter and pomp. Also I heard rumours of immorality practised there and lost all interest in it." 8 He received from the old servant, Rambha, certain inspirations of religion.

The young Gandhi was in perpetual dread of ghosts, thieves and serpents. He was afraid to sleep alone without a light during nights. For breaking this strange hold of fear on him Rambha suggested the frequent recitation of Ramanama. 9 Gandhi had more faith in her than in her remedy, but he tested out the suggestion and found out that it worked! He writes: "...the good seed sown in childhood was not sown in vain. I think it is due to the seed sown by that good woman Rambha that today Ramanama is an infallible remedy for me." 10 So religion came into his life as if through the backdoor.

As Gandhi advanced in years, this practice of the recitation of Ramanama became so habitual that he recommended it as a safeguard to the satyagrahi who took the vow of Brahmacharya. If the taking of the name has become a habit, according to Gandhi, its recitation through the heart becomes as natural as the heart beat. 11 Rama and Truth became synonymous interchangeable terms in Gandhi's mind. 12
Years later he looked back and acknowledged this debt to "that good woman Rambha."  

To repeat Ramanama whenever he felt miserable became with him a kind of second nature. Gandhi claimed: "The Word is in my heart, if not actually on my lips, all the twenty-four hours. It has been my saviour and I am ever stayed on it." It may be recalled that when he was beaten brutally on a South African street he fell down unconscious with the name of Ram on his lips. The fact that 'Ram, He Ram' were the last words that slipped out of his lips at the fatal moment when the assassin's bullet pierced his chest, clearly shows that Rambha's advice had sunk deep into his being.

Apart from the direct experiences he had with persons, the plays, 'Shravana Pitribhakti' and 'Harishchandra' formed a contrived experience with a great impact on his life. The play 'Shravana Pitribhakti' portrays the boundless love of Shravana for his blind parents. The picture of Shravana carrying his parents by means of slings fitted to his shoulders, on a pilgrimage, was indelibly printed on Mohan's mind. Thereafter Shravana became his model and obedience to parents became his motto.

The play 'Harishchandra' also influenced him to lead a truthful and sincere life. It is a story of a King of rare goodness called Harishchandra. The gods wanting to test him, sent a Brahmin to him. The Brahmin asked for alms and would not be satisfied until the King gave him all he had including his kingdom. Harishchandra, true to his dharma, parted with all his possessions, became a slave and was put in charge of the cremation grounds. His wife left him after taking their
son with her. After a while, when the son died the wife brought the corpse to Harishchandra for cremation. But, he insisted on the customary fee which the woman was unable to pay. The gods pleased at the truthfulness of Harishchandra and intervened to restore the kingdom to him.

Gandhi literally believed in the story of Harishchandra and considered him as a living reality. The very thought of Harishchandra made him weep unashamedly. The impact of the play was so great that he began to identify himself mentally with Harishchandra and developed a total devotion to truth. About this experience he writes:

"This play - Harishchandra - captured my heart. I could never be tired of seeing it. But how often should I be permitted to go? It haunted me and I must have acted Harishchandra to myself times without number. To follow truth and to go through all the ordeals Harishchandra went through was the one ideal it inspired in me."

There was a deep urge in his young mind to emulate Harishchandra and Shravana. He decided to follow truth and love unmindful of the consequences. Thus was born his passion for truth and love.

2. **Influence of Western thinkers**

Among the Western thinkers, who had a deep and lasting influence upon Gandhi's personality were Tolstoy, Ruskin and Thoreau.

2.1 **Influence of Tolstoy**

Gandhi's association with Tolstoyan philosophy was spread over a long period. As a member of the Vegetarian Society in London, he was familiar with Tolstoy's name, but it was his book, 'The Kingdom
of God Is Within You' that impressed him most. When he had read that
book, he felt he had learnt more from it than from other books which
his friends had given him.\(^{18}\) The central idea of the book, Gandhi
perceived, was the core of the Christian gospel which was passive
resistance of evil. This seemed to come so close to the Jain doctrine
of ahimsa and Gandhi embraced it with open arms.

Gandhi became a passionate reader of the other works of Tolstoy
like 'Gospels in Brief'. 'What to Do', 'The First Step', 'How Shall
We Escape' and 'Slavery of our Times'. He found a basic idea, common
to all the works, that a true Christian is one who eschews violence,
avoids conflicts with his neighbour, gains freedom for himself and
helps to liberate the world. Pyarela is of the view that Gandhi's
reading of Tolstoy's writings had given "a definite social colouring
to his religious thought."\(^{19}\) Gandhi entered into personal correspondence
with Tolstoy and the two became life-long friends.

The idea of satyagraha was sown in Gandhi's mind when he
grasped the Tolstoyan philosophy that an oppressor's efforts will be
in vain if the oppressed refuses to submit to the tyranny. Tolstoy had
no opportunity to translate this idea into practice, but it was tested
by Mahatma Gandhi, first in South Africa and then on a grand scale
in India. Gandhi was the first man in history who unified thought and
action, ideal and practice, means and ends into a continuous process
of transformation.

Gandhi was an eminent and faithful follower of Tolstoy, for it
was he who put into practice the master's idea of non-violence and
universal love. His tribute to Tolstoy was issued during the centenary
celebration of this great Russian. He said:

Tolstoy was the greatest apostle of non-violence that the present age has produced. No one in the West, before him or since, has written and spoken as he...true ahimsa should mean complete freedom from ill-will and anger and overflowing love for all. For inculcating this true and higher type of ahimsa amongst us, Tolstoy's life with its ocean-like love should serve as a beacon light and never-failing source of inspiration.

2.2 **Influence of Ruskin**

Another great writer who had a part in shaping Gandhi's thinking was John Ruskin (1819-1900). Ruskin's 'Unto This Last' was the single book that shattered and recast the whole priorities of Gandhian life. It made a revolutionary impact on his mind during a train journey overnight. He came upon this book by chance; it was given to him by his vegetarian friend, Henry Polak. Gandhi was so fascinated by the book that he completed the reading in a single sitting. He described 'the spell as magical.' He firmly decided to organise his life in accordance with the ideas set forth in the book. It became practically a blueprint for what he wished to do. That was why it held so much power over him and led him towards an entirely new order of life.

The book 'Unto This Last' was translated into Gujarati under the heading Sarvodaya which literally means 'Welfare of all.' Explaining his indebtedness to Ruskin, Gandhi writes: The teachings of 'Unto This Last' I understood to be:

1. That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.  
2. That a lawyer's work has the same value
as the barber's, in as much as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.

3. That a life of labour, i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living. The first of these I knew. The second I had dimly realized. The third had never occurred to me....I arose with the dawn, ready to reduce these principles to practice.25

Thus after reading the book Gandhi took a firm decision to change his style of life in accordance with the ideals presented by Ruskin. Gandhi's ultimate goal was the welfare of the individual based on the individual worth of every man. To achieve this goal he postulated a technique of direct action with the uniqueness of provision of means to achieve the end. Gandhi wrote:

If mankind was to progress and to realise the ideal of equality and brotherhood it must adopt and act on the principle of 'Unto This Last' a book written with blood and tears.27

The epitome of his philosophy is a continuous synthesis of thought and conduct, target and deed and of harmony attained between words, beliefs and works. Gandhi has proved that man can become an integrated personality by constant striving with pure peace in the depth of his being.

Gandhi, however, did not accept all the ideas of Ruskin. In Ruskin's scheme of things, the ordinary toiling masses had no place and he never considered them as ends. But Gandhi recognized the power of the common man and placed before him the means for it. What appealed to Gandhi most in Ruskin's works was the set of economic principles that supported his own concept of an Ashram organization where each one received according to his needs. The Phoenix
settlement founded in 1904, was an experiment to translate the economic principles of Ruskin into active living reality. Gandhi lived with the co-workers of his press as the members of his family in a farm where everyone laboured, drawing the same living wages and attending to the press work in spare time. He used to say later that the Phoenix settlement transformed him overnight from a city lawyer living in luxury in Durban into a poor rustic farmer living away from the city. Thus it marked the first decisive step in his progress towards the doctrine of voluntary action of non-possession to achieve the required end.

Thus the teaching of Ruskin touched the depth of Gandhi's heart and made a revolutionary impact on his mind. His greatness lies in the fact that he accepted Ruskin's ideas, expanded them and made them applicable on a universal basis. To a critic who asked him if he was not obsessed by his partiality to India, he replied that his techniques were not of local importance, but of universal relevance. Thus he created a new ethos, a new way of life.

2.3. Influence of Thoreau

Another great Western thinker who had influenced Gandhi was Henry David Thoreau whose, 'Civil Disobedience' was one Mahatma's call to another Mahatma. Though Gandhi had never visited America, the 19th century transcendentalist - Thoreau - exercised a powerful influence on the making of his thought. Thoreau himself was a man who practised what he preached. He was a great writer, philosopher, poet and above all, a practical man who taught nothing which he did not practise himself. Gandhi shows his indebtedness to Thoreau in these words: "You have given me a teacher in Thoreau, who furnished me through his essays on the 'Duty of Civil Disobedience' scientific
confirmation of what I was doing in South Africa."

Gandhi read Thoreau during a crucial stage of his life when he was fighting in South Africa. He wrote that Thoreau's essays contained "the essence of his political philosophy not only as India's struggle related to the British but as to his own views of the relation of citizens to government." Gandhi owed his concept of 'Civil Disobedience' to Thoreau.

The phrase 'Civil Disobedience' became a watch-word of the Indian National Movement under Gandhi's leadership. Thoreau's essays on the 'Duty of Civil Disobedience' and life of principle impressed him so greatly that he termed their emphasis as 'Inner Voice.'

Following the footsteps of Thoreau, Gandhi defied the laws and adopted 'Civil Disobedience' towards unjust authority. Gandhi, like Thoreau, passionately believed first in the individual and that is why more importance was given to the individual.

Thoreau's revolt was one man's affair while Gandhi's was a mass movement. Both believed in the change of heart of the opponent. Gandhi shared the trials and tribulations of the common man, gave a unique and incomparable lead to the masses inspired by a common purpose. Both Gandhi and Thoreau were basically seekers of truth who had lived according to their convictions.

Though Gandhi was very much influenced by the Western writers, he re-shaped their ideas within himself, evolving an idiom of his own. He did not blindly imitate the Westerners, instead he tried to take what was good in their teachings and adapted them to Indian conditions.
The goal of life of Gandhi can be expressed in a single word, self-realization, which is a quest for truth of being, of living and of the law of life. This vertical dimensions of development in Gandhi was enriched by different influences.

1. Influence of Jesus Christ

Gandhi considers Jesus as a great leader of humanity. "He belongs not solely to Christianity, but to the entire world, to all races and people." He had chanced to read the Bible during his stay in London. It is well-known how deeply indebted Gandhi was to Jesus and how he always considered the 'Sermon on the Mount' to be his greatest single inspiration. He said, ...."Today supposing I was deprived of the Gita and forgot all its contents but had a copy of the Sermon (On the Mount) I should derive the same joy from it as I do from the Gita." It became one of the great sources of inspiration throughout his life. The precept "Love thy neighbour as thyself" had an overwhelming influence on Gandhi's life. To turn the left cheek after being struck on the right and even then to love his enemy was an ideal, Gandhi had total empathy with.

The 'Sermon on the Mount' had a significant role in the transformation of Gandhi's personality. For Gandhi, it contained all that can be said about charity, human-kindness and human frailty. On seeing a painting of the Crucified Christ in Rome, he remarked:
'What would not I have given to be able to bow my head before the living image at the Vatican of Christ Crucified? It was with a wrench that I could tear myself away from the scene of living tragedy. I saw there at once that nations like individuals could only be made through the agony of the Cross and in no other way. Joy comes not out of infliction of pain on others but out of pain voluntarily borne by oneself.42

Gandhi, like Christ, preached the brotherhood of all men. Jesus’s compassion for the poor and the dispossessed is reflected in Gandhi's love for the harijans and the outcastes. Burton Pine observes a Christ-like quality in Gandhi. He drew a parallel between the life and teachings of Christ and of Gandhi. He says: "Gandhi for certain, have directly adopted some of the teachings of Christ, for both their basic teachings are just admirable, humanitarian morality."43 The writer further points out that both Christ and Gandhi exemplified their teachings in their own lives.

2. Influence of Buddha

Gandhi was of the same spiritual lineage as Buddha. Ahimsa was the bedrock on which the principles of Buddhism were built and in this Gandhi was the spiritual successor of Buddha. To Gandhi, however, ahimsa has a wider meaning; it takes him into higher realms. Gandhi said:

Non-violence is not a cloistered virtue to be practised by the individual for peace and final salvation, but it is a rule of conduct for human society if it is to live consistently with human dignity and make progress towards the attainment of peace for which it has been yearning for ages past.44
This was not Buddha's teaching exactly, but came close to it.

In Buddha's teachings truth was one of the five precepts to achieve salvation. For Gandhi Truth was the foremost precept and the only reality subsisting in his being. He considered Truth as God. Suffering is the first of Buddha's four noble truths, and Gandhi, too, found in suffering a positive value. For him, it was a means of self-purification.

The mind and the body of both Buddha and Gandhi were subjected to severe discipline imposed by themselves and both were guided by the inner light. Both, in their own ways, became the light of ordinary mortals.

3. **Influence of Vivekananda**

Vivekananda and Gandhi were fundamentally close in their spirit and outlook. Both were rooted in the ancient culture of India and both looked forward to a glorious resurgence of their mother land. Vivekananda's ideas regarding education as a means for the development of personality showed great insight and Gandhi was very much influenced by it.

To Vivekananda a proper system of education was the only remedy for all social evils. He considered formation of character as the essence of education. He said:

> Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested all your life. We must have life-building, man-making, character-making, assimilation of ideas.
To him the end of all education is concentration of mind. He passionately believed that the purity of one's personal life is the rock on which social education can be built. Like Vivekananda, Gandhi also considered character as the core of education.

4. **Impact of Iso Upanishad**

Gandhi was deeply influenced by the opening verse of Iso upanishad:"Iso vasyam idom sarvam....kaya sadid haram." He believed that this verse contained the essence of all Upanishads and indeed of all religions. It teaches that God dwells in all things, great and small, in the universe. All things in this world belong to God and therefore there is nothing here that anyone can claim as his own. That is why it is said "renounce and enjoy":

Gandhi found in this verse a clear basis for equality, brotherhood, love, service, unselfishness and dedication. He claimed that here was the basis for *Sarvodaya* philosophy of trusteeship, according to which rich men should look upon themselves as trustees holding their wealth for the benefit of the poor.

5. **Influence of the Bhagavad Gita**

The teachings of the Gita had the most profound influence in the transformation of Gandhi's life style. He called the Gita his "Spiritual reference book". He first read the Gita when he was studying in England. Gandhi expressed his appreciation of the Gita in the following words: "Hinduism as I know it entirely satisfies my soul with my whole being and I find a solace in the Bhagavad Gita and Upanishads that I miss even in the 'Sermon on the Mount'."
According to Gandhi, Gita is not a historical work, but a philosophical and ethical work. Self-realization forms the central teaching of the Gita and renunciation is possible only through the observance of non-violence. Non-violence or *ahimsa* is transcended and included in *anasakti* or desireless action found in Gita. He says: He who would be *anasakta* (desireless) has necessarily to practise non-violence in order to attain the state of desirelessness. *Ahimsa* is, therefore, a necessary prerequisite included in *anasakti*.\(^5^2\) He affirms that he derived his belief in non-violence from the Gita.\(^5^3\) He observes further that Gita solves the great dilemma every intelligent, morally conscious person faces in life.

Gita projects a predominantly activist philosophy while preserving at the same time the essence of renunciation. "Renunciation is no longer a renunciation of action but a renunciation in action."\(^5^4\) One can attain perfection by worshipping Him through one's own duty.\(^5^5\) The famous teaching of *karma yoga* is action alone is one's concern and never its fruits.\(^5^6\) The disinterested performance of one's duty - 'Nishkamakarma' is the guiding principle of the Gita.

Gandhi was a moral and spiritual genius and a *Karma Yogi* who combined both thought and action into one single process. He believed that a life of ceaseless activity dedicated to the service of one's fellow men becomes a medium for an ideal life. The Gita made him realize that one's duty whether pleasant or unpleasant has to be performed. Man has to rise above his duty and work as a free being. Gandhi said:
Today the Gita is not only my Bible or my Quran, it is more than that - it is my mother. I lost my earthly mother who gave me birth long ago; but this eternal mother has completely filled her place by my side ever since. She has never changed, she has never failed me. When I am in difficulty or distress, I seek refuge in her bosom. 57

Thus to Gandhi Gita had become the 'Upanishad of all Upanishads' and the supreme guide.

Gandhi's personality, as seen above, was partly shaped by persons who were close to him as well as great men whom he had admired. Certain religious classics and a few great writers have guided his thinking constantly. Gandhi was more than the sum total of the influences that made their impact on him. One should not see Gandhi from the periphery, but judge him from the centre and that centre was Truth.

Article iii

TRUTH AND NON-VIOLENCE: GANDHI'S MEDIA OF ACTION

The Sanskrit equivalent of Truth is 'Satya', derived from 'Sat' which means 'being' or that which exists 'eternally'. Nothing really exists except Truth. 58 The concept of Truth has two dimensions - Absolute and relative. For the theist Absolute Truth is God. The whole universe is the manifestation of this Absolute Truth. The way to this Absolute Truth is through relative truth as conceived by the individual.

In the Gandhian view Absolute Truth is impersonal, all-pervading reality. 59 The effort to discover this Absolute Truth at every living moment is through relative truth. "Truth is that which you believe
to be true at this moment, and that is your God. If a man worships this relative truth, he is sure to attain the Absolute Truth, i.e., God in course of time." 60 Gandhi said: "As long as I have not realised this Absolute Truth, so long must I hold by the relative truth as I have conceived it. That relative truth must meanwhile be my beacon, my shield and buckler." 61 Adherence to relative truth leads to Absolute Truth only when actions are selfless and emerged from love.

Everybody experiences truth in different ways. We live in a world of relative truth where the subjectivity limits truth so that ". . . . what may be truth for one may be untruth for another." 62 The same truth is perceived differently by persons due to the imperfections and limitations of individual man. To know the complete truth, the individual will have to orient himself to the selfless search for truth, whereby he will be consistent in thought, word and actions.

Gandhi provided a theoretical foundation for the task of self-transformation in the distinction he drew between Absolute and relative truths. He sharply distinguished between Absolute and relative truths, to emphasise the individual nature of the quest for truth which is a quest for self-realization. The idea of individual moral integrity requires each person to adhere to his view of truth until persuaded by a more complete version of truth. Thus the goal of the truth seeker is to reassess his particular perspective of truth manifested in daily life.

Gandhi formulated the different dimensions of truth and related them to his life in such a way that he can be a model even for the common man in transforming himself.
1. **Dimensions of Truth**

Truth is like a vast tree yielding more fruits, the more you nurture it. The richer and greater truth has different dimensions.

a) Truth is the primeval energy pervading the universe.

b) Truth is the only way of life in harmony with the cosmic process.

c) Truth is a tool of spiritual insight into the working of the universe. There is possibility of conflict in the choice of tools.

d) If the conflict is not resolved at the third level by the right choice, truth manifests itself as a technique for resolving conflicts.

Conflicts signify tension. Tension at the first level is estrangement from the Supreme Soul. At the second level it is disharmony with the cosmic process. At the third level, ideological differences and at the fourth level violent hostilities.

1.1. **Truth as the cosmic principle**

Truth as the cosmic principle has been with mankind from time immemorial. It is the primeval energy to life. Gandhi viewed Truth as eternal.

I do dimly perceive that whilst everything around me is ever changing, ever dying, there is underlying all that change a living power that is changeless, that holds all together, that creates, dissolves and re-creates.
Gandhi, with a deeply religious background, moved a step forward and identified this power which governs the universe as God. He asserts "God Is." For him God is Truth. "If it is possible for the human tongue to give the fullest description, I have come to the conclusion that for myself God is Truth." Gandhi had not only known and thought of God but had experienced God's omnipresence. In defining his God-experience Gandhi equated God with Absolute Truth. "Many deny God, none can deny truth." By this simple definition of God as Absolute Truth Gandhi lifted the concept of God from the theological trappings and raised it to a level of rational concept. "We can describe God as millions of things, but I have for myself adopted the formula - Truth is God" which "gives me the greatest satisfaction." Thus "Truth provides a common platform to both the theist and the atheist." Gandhi believed action to be an integral part of this reality.

Indian philosophy identified three characteristics of the Reality - Sat (Truth), Chit (Consciousness) and Ananda (Bliss). Where there is truth there is consciousness that leads to bliss. Hence God is Sat-Chit-Ananda, the ultimate Reality who combines in himself Truth, Consciousness and Bliss.

Gandhi's declaration that Truth is God was a result of his experience and inner realization. His 'inner voice' had shown him the path. "For me the voice of God, of conscience, of Truth, or the 'Inner Voice' or the 'Still Small Voice' mean one and the same thing!" Gandhi described in his own words his experience of the 'Voice of Truth' which relates to his 21 days fast for the removal of
untouchability.

I saw no form. I have never tried, for I have always believed God to be without form. But what I did hear was like a voice from afar and yet quite near. It was as unmistakable as some human voice definitely speaking to me, and irresistible. I was not dreaming at the time I heard the Voice. The hearing of the Voice was preceded by a terrific struggle within me. Suddenly the Voice came upon me. I listened, made certain that it was the Voice, and the struggle ceased. I was calm. The determination was made accordingly the date and the hour of the fast were fixed. Joy came over me. This was between 11 and 12 midnight.

Thus Gandhi was able to make the transcendental touch experiential.

1.2. Truth in tune with the cosmic process

All things in the cosmos, including the sun, the moon and the stars, obey certain laws. "Without the restraining influence of these laws the world will not go on for a single moment." To be in harmony with the cosmic process, one's sure guide for life and action is Truth. If one has to live purposefully one has to follow truth, the law of life. There are two aspects of truth, one to know the law of life and the other to know details about day-to-day life. Hence irrespective of belief in God pursuit of truth at every living moment has to be the aim of one's life.

To live in the cosmos one has, perforce, to act. Blind actions lead to conflict and tension. If truth is made the base of action, then one is in tune with the cosmic process. Actions based on truth lead one unswervingly towards realization of the universal force. The model assumed of the universe is one of hospitality and love. Destruction and subsequent evil result when actions are away from truth and the
assumed model of universe is unhospitable and unloving. Untruth and consequent evil action force one to be eternally at war with the universe while action based on truth makes one to be in harmony with the universe. Gandhi's life was an eloquent expression of this harmony. He believed that nature acts as a unit, a totality with man as its part. If man has to be in harmony with nature, he should experience unity with his fellow men. This accord is visualised through good action towards humanity in the pursuit of service. Hence all his endeavours are directed towards the eternal search within, by the total submission of his mind towards what is true and good, beautiful and sublime. "This supreme state of total surrender is difficult to describe, but not beyond the bounds of human experience."^79 For Gandhi this submission of mind was possible on account of his total identification with the poor and downtrodden.

The process of identification stimulated Gandhi to open out his heart as he entered the arena of oppression by the whites in South Africa. It is this identification which led him to organise Satyagraha in Champaran on behalf of the poor peasants and another one in Khaira for a revision of revenue assessment mainly concerned with the toiling masses.80 This all-embracing love inspired him to undertake long journeys on foot for raising funds for the welfare of Harijans. It was because he wanted to identify himself with the poor that he took to the loin cloth and became a 'half-naked fakir'.

The nature of every action based on truth, Gandhi believed, determines the nature of the reaction evoked by it and provides an inner balance and peace in harmony with the cosmic process.
1.3. **Truth as a tool of spiritual insight**

In the materialistic world of today, moral and spiritual values are at a discount. The human psyche has lost its way in the maze of materialistic pursuits. To discover our identity and purpose we have to rediscover our spiritual values. The Gandhian way of doing this was to accept 'love' as the golden rule for living out the Truth.

No event occurring in the universe is outside the purview of truth. Every one's action has an impact on all others and every one's freedom is limited by the equal freedom of others. Similarly everyone is free to arrive at his own truth, by the tools nature has entrusted with him. Gandhi declared that love should be the sole and unexceptionable guide in asserting one's own truth through actions. "Where love is, there God is also." ⁸¹ This love should be the norm for other's truth. Therefore, there should be no compulsion on our part in making others accept what we regard as truth. ⁸²

It was Gandhi's strong conviction that the whole universe is one unity in which each particle interacts on the whole and the whole interacts on each particle every moment on account of universal interpenetration and interdependence. Gandhi said: "I subscribe to the belief or the philosophy that all life in its essence is one, and that the humans are working consciously or unconsciously towards the realization of that identity." ⁸³ This wondrous, beautiful, magnificent world is not merely a fantasy but an orderliness of some law which regulates everything from the speck of dust underfoot to the starry heavens and galaxies with the blissful energy of God. It is this spiritual insight that was a real source of power on which he relied. "I believe", he said, "in the absolute oneness of God and therefore
also of humanity. What though we have many bodies? We have but one soul. The rays of the sun are many through refraction. But they have the same source.\textsuperscript{84} This power helped him to identify "with even the crawling things upon earth, because we claim descent from the same God, and that being so, all life in whatever form it appears must be essentially one."\textsuperscript{85}

It is, perhaps, in India alone that a politician of great eminence can also be a person of a high spiritual order. This was true of Gandhi, who drew courage and inspiration for political action from the source of spirituality. He observed, "most men of religion who I have met are politicians in disguise. But I who carry the mask of a politician am, in reality, a man of religion."\textsuperscript{86}

1.4. **Truth as a technique for resolving conflicts**

In life, conflicts arise in spite of man's best attempts to avoid them. For resolving conflict-situations truth is the only sure technique. This technique refined and propounded by Gandhi is known as 'Satyagraha'. He defined it as "the vindication of truth, not by infliction of suffering on the opponent, but on one's own self."\textsuperscript{87}

*Satyagraha* is essentially the use of soul-force which presupposes self-discipline, self-control and self-purification. It draws a fine line between the deed and the doer.\textsuperscript{88} The emphasis is shifted from the doer to the deed so that the *satyagrahi* and his opponent may address themselves to the solution of the problem rather than seek the destruction of each other. Thus the operation of the soul-force converts the wrong-doer and makes him ashamed. Hence evil conflicts are converted into good relations.\textsuperscript{89}
Satyagraha purifies the satyagrahi and the on-lookers. Even the illiterate and the poor acquire a sense of justice. It gives them self-confidence and teaches them self-reliance. It helps to improve both the tyrant and his victim. Even the on-lookers get purified by witnessing a true satyagrahi. Thus it is a process of conflict-resolution by mutual understanding and by educating public opinion through reason, discussion and self-suffering. Satyagraha cleanses the whole atmosphere and leads to a voluntary change of heart. It provides a mirror for the satyagrahi, for the opponent and for the on-lookers to see themselves as they really are, harmonising the cause, the means and the ends.

For Gandhi Satyagraha was a new way of life. Its novelty consists in the synthesis of truth and non-violence formulating a new concept of attaining truth through non-violence. This principle can be applied to every walk of human life for fighting evil and injustice and establishing truth and justice. Hence Satyagraha can be a way of life emphasising non-violent action against evil and injustice. Finally, "It is an identification in spirit with all life through love to serve and sacrifice for the good and welfare of all." Gandhi practised it in his daily life. He writes, "I see that Satyagraha is assured of divine help, and that in testing a satyagrahi, the creator imposes on him at every step only as much burden as he can bear." To ride in this new path successfully, one has to practise non-violence.

2. Gandhi's vision of non-violence

The greatest force at the disposal of mankind is non-violence. "It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by
The ingenuity of man. The influence of such a force of non-violence on Gandhi's life was so great that it is called one of the twin principles on which rested the entire framework of his life and activities, the other being truth. Gandhi said: "Non-violence is the first article of my faith. It is also the last article of my creed."

The Sanskrit equivalent of non-violence is 'Ahimsa', derived from the Sanskrit word 'Himsa' with the negative prefix 'a'. Etymologically 'himsa' comes from 'hims' which means to injure, harm, slay, disturb, break etc. Ahimsa has negative and positive connotations. In its negative form ahimsa is non-injury to any living being by deed or thought. It is both gross and subtle; in its gross form it means not to injure directly while in its subtle form it means not to injure indirectly. It is abstinence from lust, anger or greed. In short, in the negative sense, "ahimsa means avoiding injury to anything on earth, in thought, word or deed."

In its positive connotation ahimsa means 1) love for all living beings 2) sacrifice for others 3) an active force of love and life. Gandhi said:

I accept the interpretation of ahimsa that it is not merely a negative state of harmlessness, but a positive state of love, of doing good even to the evil-doer. "It is no non-violence if we merely love those that love us. It is non-violence only when we love those that hate us. I know how difficult it is to follow this grand law of love. But are not all great and good things difficult to do? Love of the hater is the most difficult of all. But by the grace of God even the most difficult thing becomes easy to accomplish if we want to do it."

But it does not mean helping the evil-doer to continue the wrong or tolerating it by acquiescence. On the contrary love, the active state of ahimsa, requires to resist the wrong-doer by...
dissociating yourself from him even though it may offend him or injure him physically." So ahimsa in the positive sense means pure love, universal love or the largest love, love even for the evil doer. The least ahimsa demands is non-injury and the most it demands is conversion of enmity with love and compassion.

Ahimsa enjoins upon man the duty to eradicate evil and violence and the obligation to serve the community. It prescribes and formulates harmonious relationships between man and all other living beings. Hence ahimsa is universal law, effective under all circumstances.

Ahimsa in both its negative and positive aspects is the very essence of Gandhi's approach to life. He realised that to maintain harmony in our daily life and social life it should be practised. Ahimsa aims at conversion and not destruction of the opponent. The violent brute force of the opponent withers away for want of nourishment in the face of calmness of the practitioner of ahimsa. The opponent becomes weary of violence and slowly his goodness is awakened. He responds and repents. True freedom is thus obtained for all by the change of the oppressor into a man of reason. Thus a peaceful democratic change is brought about and social order is maintained. In order to maintain social order violence should be halted at the mental and verbal levels. Since thoughts are the root of verbal and physical violence, ahimsa should be practised in thought, word and deed.

The highest form of ahimsa is ahimsa of the brave. A man who practises it must learn the art of dying rather than the art of killing. He desists from violence never surrendering because it is wrong. He tries to convert and not coerce his
For him it is a creed, a mighty force. He adopts ahimsa as a way and a law of life. "He who has not overcome all fear cannot practice ahimsa to perfection." Gandhi remarked: "The practice of ahimsa calls forth the greatest courage." A person who is courageous is capable of forgiving. According to Gandhi "the weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong." Thus forgiveness and courage are the hallmarks of ahimsa of the brave.

3. Gandhi's practice of ahimsa of the brave

Gandhi was a votary of the ahimsa of the brave. He realised from his own experience that violence begets violence. It is a vicious circle of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." To break this circle ahimsa of the brave is the only effective weapon.

Gandhi believed that ahimsa of the brave has the unique capability to force the violent to eschew violence. This realization found its application in the way he handled the crisis of the exploitation of the poor peasants at Champaran (Bihar). This offered him an opportunity to test the efficacy of the weapon of satyagraha through non-violent means for the first time in India. In his Autobiography he describes the situation: "The Champaran tenant was bound by law to plant three out of every twenty parts of his land with indigo for his landlord. This system was known as the 'tinkathia' system, as three kathas out of twenty (which make one acre) had to be planted with indigo." Gandhi wanted to abolish the tinkathia system once and for all at the cost of even his life.

The local government and the planters tried to use the 'law of the land' against him and threatened him with arrest and imprisonment.
unless he left the place. But Gandhiji disregarded the court order served on him. His aim was to enlighten and convert the oppressors through his courage and commitment. He feared neither the British government nor the land lords.

Gandhi had displayed this fearlessness of all earthly powers from the early years of his public life. This is evident from his relentless struggle against British rule. He was not over-awed by grandeur or royalty. During the second Round Table Conference in London, Gandhi was invited to the Buckingham palace for a royal reception. When he was introduced to King George V the King told him,

"You were a friend of the British in Africa. I do not understand how you have now turned against me and the British Government. I warn you, if you create disturbance in India and do not co-operate with my Government, I have my army there to blow up all agitators and conspirators." 117

Gandhi politely responded: "My children in India treat British bombs and bullets as mere crackers." 118

In a situation of conflict the practice of ahimsa of the brave demands a sense of self-sacrifice. Gandhi made this clear when the non-co-operation movement launched throughout India was brought to a grinding halt as isolated instances of violence were reported. A nation on the march was halted in its tracks. Gandhi took this unprecedented step despite total opposition from almost all leaders of the movement. He said: "My non-co-operation has its roots not in hatred but in love." 119 He was soundly criticised but he was firm in his resolve that violence should not have any place in the agitation for independence.

Gandhi was not satisfied with the mere practice of ahimsa. He
wanted **ahimsa** of the brave to become an integral part of one's personality. He said:

> A man who wants to lead a religious life on this earth and a man who wants to realize himself on this earth in this incarnation must remain non-violent in every shape and form and in every one of his actions.\(^{120}\)

The practise of **ahimsa** rests firmly on the belief that what holds good in respect of oneself equally applies to the whole universe. What is possible for one is possible for everybody. **Ahimsa** is not meant merely for the saints and holy men; it is meant for the **common man**.

4. **Satya and Ahimsa**: **Tenets of action**

For Gandhi **Satya** and **Ahimsa** are inseparable. He said: "Truth is my God. When I look for **ahimsa**, Truth says, find it out through me; when I look for Truth, **ahimsa** says find it out through me."\(^{121}\) They are two sides of one and the same coin or like two sides of a smooth unstamped metallic disc.\(^{122}\) He also considers them to be his two lungs.\(^{123}\) They are even synonymous.\(^{124}\)

Non-violence is rooted in truth. Therefore, where Truth prevails violence rooted in untruth can have no place. Gandhi shows by his example that truth cannot be expressed except by non-violence and hence every devotee of truth is also a devotee of non-violence. He firmly remarked: "My marriage to non-violence is such an absolute thing that I would rather commit suicide than be deflected from my position."\(^{125}\) He believed that "a perfect vision of truth can only follow a complete realisation of **ahimsa**".\(^{126}\) Truth is the highest law and **ahimsa** is the highest duty.\(^{127}\)
Truth is the ultimate end. It exists beyond and unconditioned by space and time. **Ahimsa** is the means to achieve the ultimate end - Truth. For Gandhi, "**ahimsa** is the means and Truth is the end." He states, "means are after all everything. As the means so the end." Though the means and ends are distinct, they form a continuum. There is no wall of separation between means and end. The means contain the end as the seed contains a tree. "The means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree, and there is just the same inviolable connexion between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree."

For Gandhi, **ahimsa** is not one among the possible means. It is the only means to attain truth.

**Ahimsa** being the means, we are naturally more concerned with it in our everyday life. It is **ahimsa**, therefore, that our masses have to be educated in. Education in truth follows from it as a natural end.

Gandhi brought down the concepts of truth and non-violence to the level of practical conduct and the relationship between individual human beings. If the relationship is to be mutually beneficial, it should be based on mutual trust and reliability. It evokes the belief that the other is truthful, speaks the truth, keeps to truth and acts truth, so far as they two are concerned. This will lead to the conviction that the other will not harm or destroy him thus arriving at **satya** and **ahimsa**, truth and non-violence. If anything happens contrary to this plan these simple rules of relationship would cease to function. This applies not only to two persons but also to a family, to society, to a nation, and to international relations.
Gandhi steadfastly held the principle that "truth and ahimsa should be the basis for all successful activity."\(^{134}\) Ahimsa requires truth in order to succeed but truth stands alone. It exists independent of all requirements. Faith is the basis for human transactions, for even thieves have a code of honour among themselves.

Gandhi had a deep faith in the essential goodness of man. Hence he chose ahimsa as a basic dimension for all actions. He passionately believed that "ahimsa is the law of our species, as violence is the law of brutes."\(^{135}\) For him ahimsa was a collective social law. It is an expression of conscious and inner ceaseless effort to realise the end. So non-violence is conceived as a gospel of action. Gandhi proclaimed: "There is nothing on earth that I would not give up for the sake of the country excepting of course two things and two only, namely, truth and non-violence,"\(^{136}\) which formed the basic tenets of Gandhi's action. Thus the basic dimension of Gandhi's action is satya and ahimsa - 'Truth in Action'.

A person's life spelled out through "Truth in action" is geared for higher development in all faculties of life. He is able to attain the closest communion between his actual self and ideal self and ultimately with the universal self. This integrated oneness comes by incessant loving action dedicated to truth and pursued through ahimsa that becomes a medium for transformation of personality. This was the personal experience of Gandhi.

In this chapter an attempt has been made to analyse the different forces that influenced and guided Gandhi continuously and transformed him from a diffident ordinary young man into a determined, altruistic
and magnetic personality. The effective medium of his transformation was action based on the twin principles of truth and ahimsa.

Several great personalities had deeply influenced Gandhi. Many books too, of a religious and socio-political nature had influenced him. The total change in Gandhi cannot, however, be entirely explained by these influences.

The change was the outcome largely of his mode of actions fashioned with a dynamic, inner power. The active, living, 'soul-force' that led to the transformation was Truth. By his absolute commitment to Truth as the basis of his actions, he was able to relate himself meaningfully to the Truth of earthly life and to ultimate Truth. Gandhi tried to embody in his life this truth in its four different dimensions - truth as the cosmic principle, truth in tune with the cosmic process, truth as a tool of spiritual insight, and truth as a technique for resolving human conflicts.

The Absolute Truth for Gandhi is God, and he had the conviction that the attainment of ultimate Truth was through relative truths actualised in actions. To be in harmony with the relative truth of everyday life, Gandhi fashioned from his experiments a unique path - the path of non-violence.

The actions in Gandhi's life were based on ahimsa of the brave which does not coerce the life that it touches but tries to transform it. Gandhi believed that every action should emerge from the twin principles of truth and ahimsa of which truth is the end and ahimsa the means. He was a 'stern lover' of ahimsa of the brave and wanted every one to follow the same. His life has shown to the world that
satya and ahimsa, the basic tenet of action is capable of playing the role of a medium in profoundly transforming a personality.

An attempt is made in the next chapter to show that development of personality is an evolutionary process; this is done by analysing the transformation of Gandhi's personality, highlighting its pedagogy and methodology. It also deals with the role played by the transformed personality as a catalyst in the transformation of others.

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