Preface

There has always been a close relationship between a thinker’s understanding of human nature on the one hand and the entire philosophical framework of him on the other. Because his ideas are ultimately concerned with man, promotion of their welfare interests and securing those conditions in life which will make a better life possible for him.

Human nature, however, has been understood in different ways by different thinkers, philosophies or schools of thoughts at different stages of history. For Homer, man was essentially proud and free, on happy terms with himself, with the world and with Olympus. The Sophists believed in the selfishness and inequality of human nature. Socrates believed that man has both selfishness as well as the urge to welfare. For Plato, human nature is composed of three elements viz., reason, courage and appetite. For Aristotle, man is by nature political man.

The ancient philosophical traditions of India, on the other hand, believed in the spiritual nature of man. Such an understanding of human nature was the result of the belief that God exists within man and that there is unity between man and God. It also understands the ultimate goal of life as liberation from the bondage of karma and sufficiency, moral development
of the individual and that of the society and realization of the basic unity and oneness of mankind.

The present work is an attempt to examine Gandhi's understanding of human nature and how that understanding has influenced the fundamental aspects of his philosophy. The present work was carried out with the hypothesis that there is a close relationship between Gandhi's understanding of human nature and the different aspects of his philosophy. So far as the methodology of the present work is concerned it is a descriptive, exploratory as well as analytical one.

The thesis comprises seven chapters. Chapter one is an attempt to understand Gandhi's understanding of human nature against the backdrop of the different understandings of human nature as understood by different thinkers at different stages of history. The various influences on Gandhi regarding his understanding of human nature and the purpose of human existence as understood by him is also being examine here.

Chapter two deals with Gandhi's concept of Satyagraha. In this chapter, meaning of Satyagraha, its origin and evolution, essentials of Satyagraha and its objectives, forms of Satyagraha, essential qualifications of a Satyagrahi, Satyagraha and passive resistance, etc. are being dealt it,
along with the correlation between Gandhi's understanding of human nature and the concept of Satyagraha.

Chapter three is an attempt to understand Gandhi's ideas on non-violence and to explore the correlation between his concept of non-violence and his understanding of human nature. The meaning and nature of Gandhi's concept of non-violence, its sources, methods and practice of non-violence, etc. are also being examined in this chapter.

The fourth chapter tries to examine Gandhi's ideas on equality and how his understanding of human nature was the basis of his acceptance of equality man and unity of mankind. The comprehensive nature of his concept of human nature is also being highlighted in this chapter by highlighting the social, economic and political aspects of his concept of equality.

The fifth chapter deals with Gandhi's concept of freedom. The main focus of this chapter, apart from highlighting the different aspects of his ideas on freedom like that of individual freedom, social, economic and political freedom, etc., is to throw lights on how his understanding of human nature has influenced his perception of freedom.
Chapter six deals with Gandhi’s ideas on decentralization of power, social, economic as well as political; and how his emphasis on them have been born out of his understanding of human nature and his concern for the promotion of the true interests of man.

Finally, Chapter seven is the concluding chapter of the thesis. It is systematic summarization of the findings of the previous chapters thereby showing the close relationship between Gandhi’s understanding of human nature and the different aspects of his philosophy. It also highlights the relevance of Gandhi’s understanding of human nature in the contemporary world.