4.1 Emergence of Gandhi:

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on October 2, in 1869 in a respectable Vaisya family of Khathaiwad. By the time Gandhi was born, that was a period of religious Renaissance. The family Gandhi was born was Vaishnavite. Khathaiwad was the centre of Vaishnava sect founded by Vallavacharyya. His family followed this traditional theistic faith of Vaishnavism. Gandhi's father Kaba Gandhi and mother Putuli Bai were stern believers in God. And consequently his home was surcharged with an atmosphere of love, pity and devotion to God conceived as a personal and benevolent Being. He used to visit temples and saints from his very childhood. All these might have imprinted religious impression on the mind of Gandhi. His grandfather Ota-Bapa in addition to a follower of Vallavacharyya Pusti-marga was very much attracted to a Khaki-Baba, one of the followers of the order of Ramananda who inspired Tulsidas, the well-known author of 'Ramcharitmanas'. Both Ota-Bapa and Kaba-Gandhi studied deeply this book. Gandhi also studied the Ramayana, the Bhagavad Gita, the Vaishnava poets of Gujrat...
and the popular writings of the Jaina. From the beginning his devotion to religious literature and from the imitation of his elders he developed at an early stage a strong moral attitude towards the world. Gandhi himself mentions in his autobiography some simple but touching episodes of childhood which marked his power of truth and love.

Porbandar, the birthplace of Gandhi was inhabited by people belonging to various religions of the world. Eclecticism had become their way of life and man enjoyed freedom to follow any religion as they pleased. His father had many friends belonging to various religions and they sometimes had religious discussions in his residence. Gandhi listened to their discussions. Gandhi also learned from his father the Indian maxim - 'There is nothing higher than Truth'. He also learned that non-violence is the highest virtue. (Ahimsā Parama Dharma'). Though the concept of nonviolence was universally acknowledged among the Hindus all over India, yet it was most rigidly practiced by the Vaishnavas and particularly by the Jainas, and the combined influence of which turned the native place Gujrat into the land of vegetarian. Gandhi could not cast-off the spell of that influence. His mother Putuli-Bai was a pious lady and consequently her spirit of devotion, saintliness and orthodoxy
Two Hindu mythological drama—'Sravana-Kumar' and 'Harish Chandra' influenced Gandhi a lot and he considered their moral to be of eternal value. He writes—"... still both 'Harish Chandra' and 'Sravanakumar' are living qualities for me and I am sure I should be moved as before if I were to read these plays again to-day." He also got by heart two valuable religious books—'Ramaraksasotra' and 'Vishnu-puja'. During his childhood, Rambha, a religious lady used to look after him and she asked Gandhi to repeat the name of 'Rama' with a view to making him free from the fear of ghosts. This created on Gandhi an ardent faith in Rama so much that he became fearless throughout his life.

Gandhi learnt the art of practising social virtue from his family. For example, on untouchability he writes—"This idea was brought home to me by my bitter experience in South African struggle, it was not the fact that I was once an agnostic. It is equally wrong to think that I have taken my views from the study of the Christian religions literature. These views date as far as back the time when I was neither enamoured for nor as acquainted with the Bible."
During his stay in England and South Africa he followed with sincerity the religions and social movements of the day. He studied Edwin Arnold's translation on the Bhagad Gita 'The song celestial'. This book impressed him so much that he wrote - "It opened to me a new view of life. It touched my spirit as perhaps it can only the child of the East". It is the Gita that taught him that self-realisation is possible only through righteous action and Non-violence. He derived the eternal message of selfless action i.e. Nishkāma Karma from the Bhagavad Gita. He did not interpret the Kurukshetra war as historical event but "..... under the guise of physical warfare, it described a dual perpetually going on in the hearts of mankind and the physical warfare was brought into to make the description of the internal dual more thrilling. This preliminary intuition became more a confirmed on a close study of the religion of the Gita...". To be precise it was the Bhagavad Gita that made him Karma-yogi, non-violent and to cultivate the spirit of self surrender to God.

Gandhi studied all major religions of the world. According to Gandhi Buddha and Christ were never theorists, they were activists, they were for direct action in accordance with their ends. They never advocated 'force' as a means of conquest. They
used moral force to fight against evil. These two were the apostles of love and gentleness for him. Gandhi studied Edwin Arnold's 'Light of Asia'. And this book gave a indelible impression on him regarding the life and teachings of Buddha. He liked Buddha because Buddha was opposed to cast-distinction, sacraments, rituals etc. the practice of which brings forth difference in individuals. Buddha was a permanent source of inspiration to him because Buddha tried to evolve new social values and accepted cosmic view of salvation. Gandhi fully accepted the Eight fold path of salvation of mankind enunciated by Buddha—particularly non-violence as most appealing.

Gandhi was equally well-versed in Christianity. He studied both Old Testament and the New. The message of Christianity especially the 'Sermon on the Mount' impressed him immensely. The ideals of detachment to worldly possessions, non-violence universal brotherhood etc. he derived from this. Gandhi expressed his view on the 'Sermon on the Mount thus——

"Today supposing I was deprived of the Gita and forget all its content but had a copy of the Sermons, I should derive the same joy from it as I do from the Gita." 5

Gandhi also studied Islamic religious books. He was well-acquainted with Quran. He regarded Islamic religion as
the religion of peace. In this religion he found "the spirit of brotherhood manifested in no other religion as clearly as Islam". Islam means in its way denial of self, annihilation of self. In brief, the ideals of Islamic religion like universal brotherhood, self-sacrifice etc; created much influence on Gandhi.

During his stay in England he also came into contact with its Theosophists and their relating to the movement for the unity of all religions. Practically his contact with Theosophical society helped him a lot to study more of the Hinduism like the Gita, Vedanta, Yoga, Jaiminism and the books of Swami Vivekananda who virtually preached Vedanta in the west. From all these and other books Gandhi received much more than the actual contents offered. Louis Fischer regarded Gandhi as a creative reader. He said - "He co-authored impression a book made on him. He put things into it and took them back with interest". He brooded over deeply over books he studied and was aware that while they agree on certain points, each had something valuable to offer. He did not consider it necessary unlike other religious thinkers that historical religions must be transcended to give a way to universal religion, the religion of humanity.
It is to be noted that though Gandhi was under the influence of many religions other than Hinduism yet he derived maximum spiritual satisfaction from his own religion, Hinduism. He regarded the traditional values of Hinduism sound and sufficient and found that Buddhism and Jainism are not at variance with the world outlook of Hinduism. His comment on the Bhagavad-Gita confirms this — "When doubts hurt me ......... and when I see not any ray of light on the horizon, I turn to the Bhagavad Gita and find a verse to comfort me".  

Gandhi himself confessed that "Three moderns have left a deep impression on my life and captivated me. Raichand Bhai and his living contact, Tolstoy by his book "The kingdom of God within you" and Ruskin's by his 'Unto the last'".  

Raichand Bhai, a saintly merchant made a deep impression on Gandhi by his ideal of Hindu-life. He helped Gandhiji to become acquainted with most of the valuable books of Hinduism like - Panchikarana, Maniratnamala Mummukh Prakarma of Jogi Vasistha. These books helped him to deepen his religious faith.  

Gandhi also felt the impact of some modern writers apart from the traditional source of Hinduism and other religions of the world. Henry David Thoreau's book on Civil
disobedience revealed to Gandhi for the first time how the
philosophy of non-violence can be applied in the service
of political cause. He was much impressed by his revolutionary
ethics. What deeply acted on the mind of Gandhi was Thoreau's
bold remark - "It is much more honourable to be right than
to be law-abiding". Gandhi thought over this remark with
the help of his own experience and was assured that under
certain circumstances non-conformation or downright disobedience
of established law becomes not only a right but also a duty.
Gandhi studied some books on atheism too, particularly the
writings of Bradlaugh. But the atheism of Bradlaugh created
no effect on him because in the meantime he had crossed the
Sahara of atheism. His aversion to atheism was confirmed when
Gandhi had gone through the books of Annie Basant - 'How I
became a theosophist'.

The influence of Tolstoy was much more deeper on Gandhi.
He read almost all the works of Tolstoy like - The power of
darkness'. The Kreutzer sonata and the Devil etc; where
Gandhiji strengthened his spirit of aversion to physical enjoy­ment. The seed of thought and action Philosophy and non-violence
and particularly the importance of manual labour was implanted
by Tolstoy to germinate the heart of Gandhi. Gandhiji says -
"The law that to live man must work first came to me upon reading Tolstoy's writing of Bread-labour". He learnt that to provide service to humanity man must work and share in the production of the country. "Let us get off the shoulders for our neighbour", impressed him a lot. What stirred Gandhi much more was Tolstoy's 'The kingdom of God within you'. In this book Gandhi found eloquent advocacy of truth and nonviolence and a moving expression of the beauty of suffering. It was Tolstoy who showed him how a man may through suffering set himself free and neutralise the power of evil. This book cured Gandhiji of his scepticism and made a firm believer in Ahimsa. Gandhi himself writes - "Ahimsa truly understood, is in my humble opinion, a panacea of all evils mundane and extramundane. Mahavira and Buddha were soldiers and so was Tolstoy, only they saw deeper and truer into their profession and found the secret of and humours of Godly life. Let us jointly share with these teachers and this land of ours once more be a abode of God".

Gandhi believed that love is the law of nature. To exercise force is to neglect human value, the cause of degeneration of man. This deep rooted conviction of Gandhi gained momentum when he found the same idea in Tolstoy's writing.
Love is thus the inspiration for communion and solidarity with other souls and that inspiration always liberates the source of noble activities. That love is the supreme and unique law of human life which every one feels with the depth of one's soul. Gandhi was a seeker of Truth. His belief in truth was reinforced by the teaching of Tolstoy. The Heroine of my writings, she who always was, is and will be beautiful, is truth. Gandhi’s belief in the Upanishadic ideals regarding the idea of God and His relation to man gained deep rooted ground when he went through the writings of Tolstoy who said - "I feel God for the first time..... I knew that He existed - that I existed in Him a limited being in the Inlimitable. He is in me, the unlimited within the limited." Gandhi was also influenced by Ruskin, Referring to Ruskin’s book 'Unto the Last', Gandhi says - "the book that affected me more than was 'Unto the Last' by Ruskin. I was in South Africa then. I was reading of 'Unto the Last' on a railway train to Durban in 1904 when I was thirty and that made me decide to change my outward life." He was influenced by the philosophy of Ruskin particularly that part of philosophy, the synthesis of thought and action, of aims
and ends, of the harmony attained between words, beliefs and action. Gandhi followed striking similarity with his deep rooted conviction with Ruskin. He said - "I discovered some of my deep rooted convictions reflected in the great book of Ruskin and that is why it so captured me and made me transform my life".  

Gandhi was tremendously influenced by the teachings of western philosophy and religion no doubt, but we see that Gandhi had already those ideas in his mind. The living contact with these ideas only served him to strengthen his convictions. Jou Bondurale says - "The influence of western thinkers like Tolstoy, Ruskin and Thorean has been repeatedly acknowledged by Gandhi himself. But in each case influence was that of corroboration of an ethical precept, a crystallisation of basic disposition".  

The inquisitive mind of Gandhi tried to learn and assimilate those ideas of different religions, but all those enriched his basic belief in divinity, the indigenous Indian religion and Philosophy by putting them to the acid test of experience. Though he was exposed to powerful influence of science during his stay in England but his scientific attitude could not alter his deep faith in religion, rather scientific attitude helped his religious faith more scientifically.
4.2 GANDHI'S IDEA OF RELIGION:

A widespread idea developed throughout the globe owing to the advancement of science and technology that religion is opposed to science. Religion transcends experience and hence nothing to do with practical life. This idea gave a dead blow to the religious thinkers of the 19th century and consequently led them to find out the ways and means to have a reconciliation between science and religion. In this connection William James was a religious thinker who became prominent in holding the view that religious ideas must be based on ascertainable and verifiable facts and religious ideas must correspond to scientific truths and thereby he established the foundation of scientific religion. Similar to William James Mahatma Gandhi was also confronted with the same problem and developed his thinking similar to James. In doing so Gandhi did not follow the western ideas blindly rather he interpreted the religious concepts into consonance with the new social and ethical demands.

Being born in a Hindu family Gandhi instinctively related to Hindu tradition. He was attracted to the central theme of Vedas when he emphasised on Truth which is higher than God.
And in accomplishing this his religious ideas became similar to advanced philosophical and religious ideas of Hindu tradition. Gandhi did not develop systematic philosophy of his own for he had little knowledge of Sanskrit and as a result he could not go through the original texts of Hinduism. He had to remain satisfied with studying English translation of those religious scriptures. But in spite of this he, however, was capable of retaining the indigenous traditional thoughts like Binding truth, Detached Action etc; intact and injected new blood by introducing the concept of Satyagraha into Indian tradition.

As Mahatma Gandhi did not develop any philosophical ideas of his own so he did not present his religious ideas systematically. It was the work of the later thinkers to systematise his religious philosophy in subsequent time. But it does not indicate that he had no meaningful philosophy as Unto Tahtinen observes - "In order to have a meaningful philosophy it is not necessary for a pioneer to present his thoughts systematically himself. This may be the task of others as in the case of great philosophers like Socrates and Buddha. No one as Louis Fisher explains knows himself completely nor can express himself. This he says, is especially true of Gandhi."
Gandhi was religious by nature and his doctrines are essentially religious. According to him - "Religion is a mighty tree that absorbs its sap from that moral height of those who prefer that religion".\textsuperscript{21} He became a political leader by necessity of circumstances. Acharyya Kripalani writes - "........ even to politics which for long he dominated and transfused with his light he drifted by accident, was not drawn by his innate inclination".\textsuperscript{22} Gandhiji himself admitted that his participation in political life was for him a means to religious life. He practised politics in order to realise religious ideas into practice. He said - "To see the universal and the All Pervading Spirit face to face one must be able to love the meanest creation as oneself. And a man who aspires after that cannot keep out of any field of life. It is devotion to Truth that has drawn me into the field of politics and I can say without any slightest hesitation and with all humility that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means".\textsuperscript{23} If we wish to understand Gandhi it is important first to understand him as a religious personality. Gandhi was a Karma-yogi, who aimed at perfection through morally justified action. Unto Tehtinnen observes - "Gandhi's ideas were based upon religious tradition not political, judicial, philosophical or economic.
He always tried to base his political and economic doctrines on religion. He demanded economic independence (Swadeshi) on the ground that it originally meant the soul's find emancipation and freedom from earthly bonds.  

As Gandhiji was linked with the Hindu philosophical tradition so eclecticism is the most prominent note of his religion. To express in the words of Romam Rolland—"His doctrine is like a huge edifice composed of different floors or grades. Below is the solid groundwork the basic foundation of religion. On this vast and unchangeable foundation is based the political and social campaign. It is not the ideal continuation of invisible foundation but it is the best structure possible under present conditions. It is adopted to conditions."

According to Gandhi religion is such which constitutes the most important aspect of life. Religion is a matter of life and death, religion accompanies beyond one's grave. He described the impact of religion on man thus—"Life without religion is life without principle, a life without principle is like a slip without a rudder." Only religion can help man in reaching the ultimate goal of life and cross over the sufferings of life.
Gandhiji advocated freedom for every individual to believe in his or her faith provided the faith is commensurate with moral principle and a faith that does not contradict ascertainable facts. He wanted religion to be a science and religious ideas must be in consonance with practical affairs. He tried to ensure phenomenal and existential interpretation of religion.

"In India the religions tended to be pluralistic while the philosophies were monistic but this could serve a compensation to maintain equilibrium between the two contraries, but this hardly brings unity and coherent meaning to life".27 Gandhiji had to break through the paradoxes and with a view to providing with coherent meaning to life he formulated Practical Idealism. This helped him to give active and living to traditional beliefs in Hindu doctrines.

By practical Idealism he meant that morality has an unconditional character in the guise of ethical ideals. The attainment of these ideals are not the exclusive monopoly for the rishis or saints alone, these are equally meant for ordinary people also. He said - "This practical Idealism means the coming together of moral practice and ideals not in such a way that ideals are derived from practice or from factual
behaviour but in such a way that behaviour moves in the direction of that ideal.\(^\text{28}\) Gandhiji criticised those moral propagandists who do not by themselves live up to their teachings. Morality must be applied to all fields of human activity. A moral or norm theory which remains purely speculative has no significance. It has no organic relation to synthetic truth.

Gandhiji's concept of practical Idealism may be applied to another sense also. According to him the awareness of a normative world in a way depends upon the subject himself. This awareness does not concern simply the relation of individual and others, it also concerns wider social and political relationship. He said that so long the curse of untouchability goes on poisoning Hindu's own mind, as long as he himself untouchable in the eyes of the world and an untouchable cannot reach real freedom. He said - "If I want to rid the earth of venomous beasts and reptiles I must rid myself of all venomous thoughts.\(^\text{29}\) That awareness of a normative world depends upon the subject. This idea should not suggest us that his attitude is arbitrary or it is subjectivism. He was an objective Idealist as he believed that reality is valuable though we are not aware of it. We could
say that only a man who has become good realises that this
world is in reality good.

Gandhiji did not conceive religion as one of the
tiniest activities of mankind. For him "even the finest
activity is governed by what I consider to be religions". 30
That religion was the end and be end of his life becomes clear
to us when he said - "I could not live a single moment without
religion". 31 To him religion means bound to God and hence he
had deep faith in God.

According to Gandhi the existence of God may be regarded
as a matter of fact by those people who have a living faith in
it. This living faith has many useful consequences. It solves
a number of problems in life and reduces our misery. Gandhiji
opined - "It sustains us in life, it is our solace in death.
The very search for truth becomes interesting and worthwhile
because of this belief". 32

According to Gandhi prayer is the inward communion with
the divine and it constitutes the very essence of religion. His
prayer is born out of conviction that faith creates it's own
verification. According to him - "There are subjects where
reason can not take us far and we have to accept things on
faith". 33 He also maintains that suffering is the best weapon
to attain perfection in life. His belief in God was the source of hope and strength to him.

For Gandhiji religion that takes no account of practical affairs and does not help in solving problems of life is no religion at all. He did not believe that spiritual laws act in a field of its own. Religion must express itself in and through the ordinary activities of life. He wanted to make religion dynamic and purposive in character; religious ideas must have flexibility. Religion is not simply divine revelations or purely intellectual, but must function of its practical fulfilment. Religion is the law of life and God must be treated as living power. God is neither in heaven nor down below, He is everywhere. Religion provides us with a moral basis to all our activities of life.

To make religion a science he held the opinion that religious concepts must have universal acceptability and objective meaning. He sought to find a phenomenal and existential equipment to God which would be acceptable and intelligible even to the atheist. That is why he asserted that 'God is Truth'. Even going to a step further he declared - 'Truth is God'. He came to this conclusion after continuous and relentless search after truth for 50 years. This distinction he saw makes a point
of departure from his original theological position to the monistic conception of God.

Gandhiji did not regard moral laws as subjective or timeless essence. Though these moral laws are spiritual revelations yet their truth consists in their practical applicability. According to him Ethics, the science of morality must be explored with the same spirit as we do in other positive sciences even though they differ in regard to its nature of investigation. When we engage ourselves in our investigation with the same spirit we do in physical sciences it is possible to ascertain and systematise the moral laws. Ethics is like an architects plan and its value is limited to that extent that moral ideals control the practical ordering of our lives. Moral ideals manifest in the action of man.

According to Gandhi - "True religion and true morality are inseparably bound with each other. Religion is to morality what water is to the seed sown in the soil". He rejected religious doctrine that comes into conflict with morality. He was ready even to tolerate unreasonable thoughts when they are not immoral. His central thesis was that we cease to be religious when we loose moral basis. He opined - "Identification with God for man is impossible without self purification or
Gandhi also opined that morality consists not in passive obedience to custom or in abiding by the duties and accepting responsibilities imposed by the community. Virtue consists in doing what are believed to be true and good. Gandhiji himself formulated the ultimate test by which all moral acts could be judged. He says—"In finding the actions of man we should always apply the test whether it conduces to the welfare of the world." He also prescribed certain cardinal virtues like- Truthfulness, Non-violence, etc; by which man can act morally in order to attain perfection in life.

Though Gandhi laid much importance on spiritualism yet, he did not reject reason. He had regard for all religious scriptures of the world no doubt, but the acid test of religion is reason. He would reject all authority if it conflicts with reason or dictates of heart. He was ready to reject all religious doctrines that do not appeal to reason. According to him error claims no exception even if it can be supported by all scriptures of the world. An error does not and can not become truth by reason of multiplied propogation nor does truth become error because nobody sees it. So Gandhiji never became
slave to superstition prompted by certain ancient tradition. The faculty of man is God given and therefore, any tradition, however, ancient it may be, if inconsistent with morality should not be accepted.

Gandhiji did not concern with the absolute good. Moral should have an existential base, they are experimental and not prescriptive. In his treatment of morals Gandhiji does not only provide for the exercise of freedom but bears scope for the formulation of hierarchy of values in order that antagonistic opposition between authority and innovation ceases. To be precise, Gandhi's concept of religion is a way of life to be cultivated consciously. The sole aim of his life was to apply rather than discover religion.

Commenting on Gandhi's conception of religion Dr. S. Radhakrishnan observes - "The inspiration of his life has been what is commonly called religious, religion not in the sense of subscription to dogmas or conformity to ritual but religion in the sense of abiding faith in the absolute value of truth, Love and justice and on a persistent endeavour to realise them on earth."
4.3 CONCEPT OF GOD:

The concept of God is the nucleus to Gandhi's philosophy. He had absolute faith in God like all the great saints of the world. He called God his 'inner voice'. He could not proceed even a single step without having the idea of God. Without the presence of God in his mind he felt misery and disappointment. He says - "If I do not feel the presence of God within me I feel so much misery and disappointment everyday that I would be a raving maniac and my destination would be Hoogly."  

Gandhi derived the idea of God from different religious but this was only to enrich his basic belief in divinity, he acquired from the Vaishnava family in which he was born. The Vaishnavite thinkers like Ramanuja, Madhaba, Vallav etc; who succeeded Sankara tried to refute the conception of God as interpreted by Sankara who upheld the doctrine of Indeterminate Absolute. Against this conception they established the conception of God as concrete possessing all the qualities and perfections like Omnipresent. Omniscient, benevolent and all mercifulness. This Vaishnava theism which had similarity with Christianity and Muhammedanism made very easy for Gandhi to accept the basic principles of Theism and other faiths of the world. Hence D.M. Datta observes - "Gandhi was rather a theist than an Advaitanism."
It seems to be correct when we come across with certain statements made by Gandhiji himself. He said - "I am Advaitist and yet I support Dvaitaism (Dualism). The world is changing every moment and is therefore, unreal it has no permanent existence. But though it is constantly changing, it has something in it which persists and it is, therefore, to that extent real. I have therefore no objection to call it real and unreal and this being called as Anekantavada or Syād-vāda." From the above statement Datta concludes that His own words clearly show that he is not an Advaitist in the sense of Sankarite who would neither support dualism nor the logic of Syād-vāda.

In his prayer meetings in the open he used to sing a rhyme which suggests to hold that Rāma, Isvara, Allah - are all names of God. Even on the eve of his death only the words that came out from his mouth were - Rāma, Rāma. Again, in opposition to fatalism Gandhi was a firm believer of the theory that man is the architect of his own faith. He also believed that man's perfection and liberation come only by self-surrender and grace of God. He says - "For perfection or freedom from error comes only from grace ....... without an unreserved surrender to His grace complete mastery over thought is impossible." The above statements clearly indicate that he
was a Vaishnava for Advaitan Sankara never believed in God's grace.

But sometimes Gandhi made certain statements which almost confirm us that he affirmed his faith in Vedanta. He also said - "My Rāma ....... is not the historical Rāma. He is the Eternal, the Unborn and the One without the second. Him alone I worship." 42 Again - "I believe in Advaita, I believe in the essential unity of man and for the matter of all that lives. I believe in the absolute oneness of God and therefore also of humanity. Though we have many bodies we have but one soul. The rays of the sun are many through reflection but they have the same source." 43

Apart from what have been described above there are certain thinkers who are prone to place Gandhi in the rank of Advaitan. As P.T. Raju observes - "There is no doubt about Mahatma Gandhi being an Absolutist and a Monist. For him God is the only truth. He alone exists. Everything else is Māyā. So we are all sparks of truth. The sum total of the sparks is indescribable as yet unknown truth, which is God." 44 Similarly T.M.P. Mahadevan writes - "The expressions that Gandhi used to indicate the plannery reality is closely similar to those that are employed in Advaita. ......... God is that
The controversy whether Gandhi was a Vaishnavite or Advaitan is based on certain misunderstanding about the religio-philosophical basis of Indian tradition particularly Advaita. If the aim of philosophy is to know the universe as a systematic unity than Advaitan's speculations are designed in bringing about a spiritual conversion of the finite to the Infinite by means of knowledge. Advaita has prescribed the method of training faculties of knowledge gradually through a number of definite stages in order that it may lead towards what yet fall outside the scope Human reasoning necessarily to pass through a series of tentative conclusions each reasoning is valid for a particular stage, but they come into conflict each other when conditions under which they are valid is ignored. The terms like truth, reality etc; that we find in Advaita have always reference to particular contexts but indiscriminative use of them leads to certain difficulties. The right estimate of the place of God in Advaita lies in it's classification of experience in that different levels of perfection - like Vyavahārika and Paramarthika level of experience. If we do not try to understand this distinction the correct assessment of Advaita spirit of teaching is not
Transcendence of duality with all its forms is the fundamental characteristic of paramārthika experience. This experience destroys the very recognised canons of human knowledge because in this level of experience the subject object duality is not there. It is absolute or ultra-relational experience. Human knowledge always involves subject object relation i.e. relational or discursive experience. As Reality transcends subject object duality, so it can not known through discursive knowledge. So to bridge the wide difference between finite and Infinite Advaita prescribes the method of gradual training of finite faculties through different stages of approximation to what is yet beyond their scope. Hence, our relational knowledge undergoes transmutation leading ultimately to the absolute experience. The aim of this method is not to remove the defects of discursive knowledge but it suggests rigorous intellectual scrutiny as an indispensable generative conditions of Absolute experience when Reality alone stands self revealed. "The rigorous intellectual scrutiny is like temporary scaffolding which has an indispensable function while the construction is not completed, the discursive knowledge prepares the path to intuition and is therefore, an important
preponderance to Absolute experience.**46** Advaita never discussed the world of experience as wholly unreal. It is unreal only from the paramarthika level of experience. It is not real means it is not as real as Brahman, it has its phenomenal reality.

From the above discussion we can ascertain the place of Advaita. "God as an Omniscient and Omnipotent being possessing personality and perfection and as such inspiring and satisfying religious sentiments of humanity has a genuine place in it. Such a God is also real as the individual centre of experience or as the world of common experience, our moral striving. Our aspirations, our happiness and misery. Neither He nor the minds and the material things are mere illusion. The fact that they are absolutely non-existent from the stand point of higher experience does not mitigate against the genuine relativity of our experience as it is now.**47**

That Reality is ultra-relational above all determinations is the central point of Advaita. But at the same time it is also conscious of the relational character of all thinkings. It follows from these two propositions that ultra-relational is inconceivable for us, yet logical thought being an indispensable stage in the process of raising the ultra-relational Absolute
the unthinkable has to be brought under the condition of thought by means of attributing to it what is not belong to it—i.e., Super-imposition. The Brahman thought absolutely distinctless is to be conceived as Māyā Sakti or Prakriti of the Omniscient Lord. Thus superimposition what is but another name for accommodation to the conditions of discursive thought occupies a prominent place at the method of stipulating thought to go beyond itself. It is not proper to think that Vaishnava theism is incompatible with Advaita. Among Advaitans even we find Vaishnavas, Saivas and others. Advaitans believe that Reality is non-dual but prefers Vishnu for their personal deity. T.N. P. Mahadevan also observes—"To the Advaitan Nārāyana is God, even as Siva is. The heads of the monastic orders established by Sankara even to this day conclude that messages, that they issue, with Nārāyana Smritti... many a classical workers on Advaita begins with an invocation to Vishnu-Nārāyana or to one of his avatāras." Gandhi described his Rāma as the Eternal, Unborn, the one without a second. To him Rāma is not sectarian because Rama and Krishna are regarded as avatāras, both belong to the Indian cultural tradition as a whole, even Sankara recognises
is beyond speech, true knowledge of religion breaks down barrier between faith and faith, the soul of religion is one but it is encased in multitude of forms.\textsuperscript{53}

It is true that Gandhi started his life as a conventional believer in personal God but later as he grew up he came to be convinced of the highest truth of the non-dual spirit. That Gandhi was an advaitan is proved when he says - "In truth there is no being as Brahma or Siva. The only Reality is Brahman. This is one total and all embracing Absolute, Indescribable. Truth is God, the other things are relatively true."\textsuperscript{54}

Having discussed the philosophical background of Gandhi in regard to his concept of God we are now in a position to discuss certain important ideas of Gandhi associated with God. One of the important concepts that caused ecstasy in the mind of Gandhi is truth. He evolved this concept for practical purposes and all his actions are based on this concept of truth in relation of Reality which he described - "My Experiments with truth."

Gandhi described God as the Absolute truth. The fundamental reality is, therefore, truth or God and He is everywhere. He made a clear distinction between "God is truth" and 'Truth is
God'. In subsequent period when Gandhi preached 'Truth is God', he made a departure from his theological position to the naturalistic conception of God. He did it because there are too many names of God but there is no double meaning in connection with truth and even the atheists had not demurred to the necessity for power of truth. And it was because of this reasoning that I saw rather than say 'God is truth', I should say 'Truth is God'. To Gandhi as truth is universally accepted without any objection from any corner as he preferred best to describe 'God is truth'.

'God is truth' as we find in Gandhi's writings has two different connotations. In certain times he meant by it 'a mighty affluence' which means desires to see face to face and of which he himself has only seen faint glimpse. But Gandhi is of opinion that if one attains the full vision of truth, one will not be mere seekers but become one with God for truth is God. Thus Gandhi sometimes regards truth as an Advaitan, might speak about Brahman and goes to the extent of saying that it 'alone is real and all else is unreal'. Truth stands here for a monistic Absolute and only final Reality with which one can mystically identify. As such truth is a traditional concept and choice of 'Satya' derived from the sanskrite root 'sat' which means 'Being' is also significally
Hindu going back to the Vedas and the Upanishads. But truth appears to man in that way only rarely. Generally truth is linked with moral action and that was the reason why he changed the formula - 'God is Truth' to 'Truth is God'. According to Gandhi the essence of religion is morality and called his autobiography 'The story of my experiments with truth'. He said - 'Truth is what you believe to be true to this and that is your God'.\textsuperscript{56} is the strongest expression of his conviction which formed the deepest grounds of Gandhi's personal religion. The central point of his religion lies in facing truth in all actions. When Gandhi regards truth as right action he again inherits the richness of those ancient Hindu term 'Dharma' and Rta. It is to be noted that some ancient Hindu-philosophers interpreted the word 'Satya' or 'Dharma' as Law or Cosmic Law. A western scholar Bonder has proved that Rta means truth - a meaning which carries the most sense when consistently applied to all pages of the Vedas in which Rta is mentioned. This concept of Rta can be translated as 'Binding truth' - to convey the existential obligation which ties man, God and world together in a direct way. Indira Rothmound also observes - "It is this invocation of this bond which seeks to characterise most pages in the Vedas which means Rita.\textsuperscript{57} According to Lauder Gandhi attempted to sum of the whole philosophical position of the Vedas in one sentence -
"God is the essences of the vow" (vrta). Gandhi recovered this meaning of the Rita in his own Experiments with truth.

According to Gandhi truth is indefinable but faith in it is essential for any enquiry. He said - "We embark upon the search because we believe that there is truth and that it can be found by diligent research and meticulous observance of the well-known and well-fired rules of search".  

Gandhi again holds the opinion that where there is truth, there is knowledge. If truth is Reality and truth and knowledge is co-equal than it implies that truth is an instance in which both knowledge and thought are co-related. Truth is the ground on which knowledge and experience are based. It is reflexive of thought as well as action. To him the real meaning of truth is moral conviction which impels a man to set in accordance with it. But the value of his conviction changes according to moral and spiritual development of the person concerned and the pursuit of his life and conduct. If a man realises that truth completely, nothing is left to be known by him because truth includes all knowledge. No inward peace can be gained without perfect knowledge of truth.

Gandhi did not regard God as a metaphysical concept. He described God as - "that indescribable entity which is
unknown but can be experienced - God is truth and love, God is ethics and morality. God is fearless, God is conscience, a theism of the atheists, transcends speech and thought. For those who needs His presence He is a personal God, He is Omnipresent, He is Omnipotent and a great democrat since he gives freedom to choose between good and evil.

Gandhi lived in God's conscience fighting the battle of life. God sustained him in life. It was his solace in life. His own experiences led to the knowledge that "The fullest life is impossible without a immutable belief in a living Law in obedience to which the Whole universe moves".

Though Gandhi described God as mysterious power but being a practical mystic he felt the presence of Him in each and every object of the world. He thinks that God reveals Himself daily to human being but we shut our eyes to the 'still small voice', we shut our eyes to the pillars of fire infront of us.

God is both immanent and transcendent. He is in all human beings though He transcends them Gandhi says - "God is the purest essence. He is simply to those who have faith in Him ....... He is in us and yet above and beyond us. The
only way to God is to see Him in His creation and to be one with it. God is found even in the lowest of His creation than in the higher and mighty .61

The most outstanding feature is that Gandhi described God as poverty incarnate - 'Daridra-Narayana'. He said - "To people femishing the ideal that the only acceptable form in which God can appear is work and promises of food as wages".62 He can think no poetry or hymn in premises of God except the term food for the poor. He said - "I have found it impossible to soothe the suffering patients with a song of Kabir, the hungry millions ask for one poem the invigourating food".63

Gandhi's great contribution lies in the fact that he made no dichotomy between religious, spiritual and practical. To him God can be realised only by pure heart. People fail to identify themselves with God without self purification or morality. He said - "To see God one need not go on a pilgrimage or light lamps or burn incense before the anoint the things of deity or paint red vermillion".64

Gandhi believed that man of great moral strength is not afraid of wicked rather the wickeds are afraid of him and he protects the virtues. Such a man is looked upon as 'Avatāra'
or incarnation of God. God never incarnates Himself as a human being for God is the creator who never borns in time. It is the human nature to call the person who has some complacence in him as avatāras. Krishna, Rāma etc. are looked upon avatāra in this sense.

Gandhi also defined God in terms of identity principle of Brahman and Atman. If one can conceive of one Atman when all the embodied jivatmas get liberated, that Atman is God. God is pure consciousness. God does not descend from above but the truth is that each one of us is an avatar if we affirm it without egoism. He writes - "When the 'I' is melted God can be found to exist in water, land and mountain tops. God, the individual soul and the universe are in essence Reality. Even God vanishes to the realised person". 65

4.4 PROOF FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

T.K. Mahadevan, an editor of the Gandhi Marg wrote - "Gandhi minus God is zero". 66 This statement shows that God is central to Gandhi's teaching. All his doctrines are derived from it. He had so deep rooted faith in God that he did not require any proof for the existence of God. He said - "you may pluck my eyes but that can not kill me; but blast my
belief in God and I am dead". But he had to advance certain arguments or proofs for the existence of God in order to make others believe in God. The reason why he did not like to prove was that must have been surprising if he had tried to do so. He was averse to wield the weapons of academic philosophy. God was to him such an intensely felt reality that the question of establishing God's existence did not arise. To him "God is the unseen power which manifests itself yet defies all proof". According to Gandhi, reason can not prove the existence of God. Reason can prove only the world of beings. His argument is rational and simple for "God is so unlike that is perceived through senses" and it transcends all senses. Any kind of proof according to Gandhi demands that the object of proof and the object of proof belong to the same domain. But God is unlike and differed from objects of world revealed through senses. Hence, the existence of God can not be proved.

But Gandhi was alive to the fact that if he affirmed that the existence of God is beyond proof then that would make the common people think that either God does not exist or God is simply a fabrication of mind. People will not accept that God is but it's existence can not be proved. He, however, tried to make it clear that God is not the imagination of the human mind. He said — "The question of anyone creating does
not arise, least of all by a significant creature such a man. He can, however, picture God in his mind in many ways. But how can man who is unable to create even a river or wood create God. That God created man is, therefore, the pure truth. The contrary is illusion. But Gandhi subsequently did not deny the possibility of reasoning out the existence of God to a limited extent. God may not be perceived by our limited minds and yet He exists. He made an illustration in this regard. He said “In my tour last year in Mysore, I met many poor villagers and I found upon enquiry that they did not know who ruled Mysore. They simply said some kind ruled it. If the knowledge of the poor people was so limited about their ruler, I who an infinitely lesser than God then they then their ruler, not be surprised if I do not realise the presence of God, the king of kings. This argument suggests that as the human beings are incapable of proving the existence of God, it does not follow that it does not exist. But he could not help formulating arguments in support of his view on pragmatic grounds.

Gandhi did not advance some of the time honoured proofs for the existence of God. If the universe is taken to be an effect in time, it must have a cause for there can not be an effect without a cause. This cause can not be mechanical or blind
as the orderliness or regularity of the universe prove to this. So there must be an intelligent principle or unchangeable divine law behind which governs everything. He said - "I do deemly perceive that everything around me is changing, ever dying, there is underlying all this a change, a living power that is changeless that holds all together that creates, dissolves and recreates. That informing power or spirit is God". It must be because of God that the universe is not a chaos but cosmos. He said - "That there is orderliness in the universe ....... it is not a blind law for no blind law can govern the conduct of living beings ....... that law which governs all life is God". Here Gandhi has blended both cosmological and ontological proof together. For Gandhi told that phenomena of changes and fluctuations cannot be explained unless we accept some permanent ground of these changes, the substructure of changes and transformations. His ontological argument held the idea of perfect Being implies the existence of a perfect Being. But Gandhi's argument penetrated deeper and asserted that deep into the changing world must be some changeless entity that remains unchanged amidst the changes, that is God. This shows that he stressed on immorality rather than immutability. Gandhiji said - "In the midst of death life persists in the midst of untruth truth persists, in the midst
of darkness life persists. Hence I gather that God is life, truth and love. 74 Truth to be immortal or to use his own term 'deathless'. What Gandhi wanted to assert is that what is changeless is permanent and what is permanent is Real i.e. God. God is the only Reality.

Gandhi was interested in proving the existence of God on moral ground. He regarded consciousness as the 'inner view of God'. The purpose of life is the direct intimation of the good and divine in man. The existence can be proved only through a definite realisation. This is more real than the false and deceptive sense perceptions however real they may appear to us. It is not proved by any external evidence, but in the transmuted conduct and character of those that have felt the real presence of God within. He opines - "He is no God who merely satisfies the intellect he ever does ....... God to be God must rule the heart and transform it ....... it is not proved by extraneous evidence but in the transmuted conduct and character who have felt the real presence within". 75

Gandhiji also tried to prove the existence of God on authoritarian and historical testimony. "Such a testimony is to be found in the experience of the unbroken line of prophets and sages in all countries and climes", 76 He said.
Over and above these arguments Gandhi in an intelligent manner tried to convince people by holding the view that "If I exist, if our parents exist and their parents had existed, then it is proper to believe in the parent of the whole creation".  

Gandhi was, however, of the opinion that God is too subtle to be proved and hence he did not like to waste his time in this regard. According to him it is matter of enlightened faith to believe in God. He said - "I confess to him (i.e. doubter) that I have no argument to convince him through reason. All that I advise him to do not to attempt impossible".

4.5 GOD AND THE WORLD;

It is well-known that Gandhiji not only wanted to spiritualise but also to moralise religion. So it is natural that his concepts of the world might have been influenced by the spiritualistic tradition of India particularly Advaita for the reason that at that time Sankara's Advaita received widespread attention of the west owing to untiring effort of the great Vedantist Vivekananda.
Gandhi's concept of world is closely associated with his concept of God. His concept of the world is reminiscent of theistic Vedantic Nimbarka who tried to reconcile Dvaita and Advaita. D.M. Datta observes that Gandhi's attempt "to do justice to the unity and diversity of the world strongly reminds us of the theistic Vedantist Nimbarka who tries to reconcile Dvaita and Advaita." Gandhi dedicated his life for the removal of suffering of his fellow beings, he could not dismiss the world as wholly unreal. On the other hand, he sometimes described the world as the sport of God. "Let us dance to the tune of His banshi-flute and all would be well." Gandhi regarded the world as an illusion in the sense of 'Lila' or sport like the Vaishnavas.

Did Gandhi then believe in the reality of the world as real as Brahman? To this question D.M. Datta remarks - "Gandhi sometimes speaks like Sankarite and called the world unreal ...." so he believes, "perhaps Gandhi meant unreal was only impermanent and transitory." But to an inquisitive reader on Gandhi, the use of the word "perhaps" would leave sufficient doubt in him and compel him to think that Gandhi did not regard the world as real as Brahman. That Gandhi's mind was drawing towards Advaita becomes clear when he said -
"The wonderful implication of the great truth 'Brahma Satya Jagat mithya' (Brahman is real, all else is unreal) grew on me from day to day".82

Now the question arises - Is the world nothing or unreal for the Advaitan? Here D.M. Datta admits - "Infact epistemologically Sankara can be classed rather with the Realists and pragmetists in so far as he admits the existence of an external world outside and independent of subject mind and judges the validity of knowledge by practical results".83

Regarding the status of existence Sankara made three kinds of distinct existence. It is the practical result of contradiction and non-contradiction that constitutes the distinction, what is never contradicted is of the higher order of reality, is Paramarthika, is Sat. Objects perceived in dreams or in illusions are always contradicted in our daily life. Similarly, objects of the world of experience are also contradicted when the stage of intuition is reached. So according to Sankara all kinds of experiences are real, although their realities differ in degree.

If we make a deep scrutiny of Advaita of Sankara then it is found that he never made this world dissolve into nothing. To Sankara the world of experience (Jagat) stands transfigured
as the manifestation of Brahman if the attention is diverted from the multiplicity to the unity of the whole universe or our Judgements are revised owing to the down of new experience of intuition. So to Sankara the negation of the world means transformation, re-organisation, revaluation than annihilation. From the metaphysical standpoint regarding the relation between the world of experience and the Absolute (Sat), Sankara maintained that the world is not a groundless phantom rather it is grounded in the Brahman. The falsity of the world consists in considering the world as having independent reality. "All this world of name and form, is real, the real being their essence, but considered independently or by themselves are false". Thus Brahman or Absolute of Sankara is not an abstract principle. It is real of many sided energy which is manifested in universe. The created energy being designated as Māyā. It is a mistake to hold that the world is an illusion. Dr. D.S. Garma observes - "For true saying that the world is an illusion, Sankara condemns the Buddhist school of Vijnanavāda which says so as a species of heresy. What Sankara means by his Māyā-avāda is that the world belongs to a lower order of reality than God who is perfect reality . . . . . what is imperfectly or incompletely real is not illusory . . . . To Sankara life is emphatically not an empty dream, or an illusion, where morality has no place".85
Again, the concept of 'Lila' that we find in Hindu religious literature does not suggest that the world is a mere stage play or a meaningless show made in a jest. The concept of Lila was employed to indicate the overflow of the divine into the universe. The world is created by God out of his joy. This does not mean that moral law has no place in it. To express in the words of Dr. D.S. Sarma - "The eternal values implicit in Brahman is realised in human history on the plane of space-time cause. Thus the world is the profoundest expression of the divine nature. It is entirely dependent on God but God does not depend on it. It is His nature to express himself thus. It is the Lila". Gandhi also affirmed the same view. "Therefore, it is that Hinduism call it all His sport and call it illusion or Maya".

So according to Advaita the world is not real from the standpoint of ultimate truth. Sankara uses the three words to denote three kinds of experience - Pratibhasika, Vyavaharika and Paramarthika, which respectively mean illusory, empirical and real. To Sankara also life is not an empty dream or an illusion where morality has no place. The world has only empirical existence - Vyavaharika sattva. The world like it's cause, Maya is neither real or unreal, nor both real or unreal and it is the projection of Brahman endowed with Maya. Even
the dream world has a degree of reality. Gandhi also opined —
"dreams are also true while they last". 

It is not true to maintain that when Advaita view is accepted there is no scope for social service. Gandhi might have received the inspiration in formulating his social service programme from positive Vedantist Swami Vivekananda. Gandhi's spirit of social service is in accordance with Advaita view because Sankara himself on the commentary of the Gita remarked —
"They (Jogis) are intent on promoting good will, they are non-violent". Sankara only stood for plannery experience, the glorious vision of reality to gain to which Gandhi constantly dedicated his life.

4.6 CONCEPT OF MAN :

Humanism which looks upon man as a purely natural phenomenon and whose outlook is confined to space and time do not appeal to Indian thinkers. They do not regard it as the highest system of ethics for it attempts to perfect human life by natural means alone. This kind of ethics encourages cynical subservience to nature. But man is not simply a natural being but also spiritual. Man is not satisfied with material civilization or even by unending progress. To the Indian
thinkers if the ethical thought is to be made profound and perfect, it must give transcendental motive to morality. Human spirit always tries to cross the boundaries of the finite and empirical reality. The religio-philosophical trend of India has been always insisting on the idea that every human being is a potential spirit and man in the depth of his souls something uncreated, deathless and absolutely real and hence they find the meaning of life not in this world but in something which is higher than historical reality. Infact man cherishes the ideal that transcends historical succession in space and time and that helps him to realise his own self. As D.S. Sarma observes - "If good will, pure love and disinterstedness are our ideals than our ethics must be rooted in other worldliness. This is the classical traditions of spiritual wisdom".

Mahatma Gandhi who was also the torch bearer of this classical system of India regarded man to be a complete being. In his philosophy man has occupied a unique position. He believed that man has a great future and is evolving towards a higher and noble destiny. He was aware of the power of man. Man is not only endowed with physical body which is liable to decay according to the law of nature but also conscious, with emotion and some similar other mental qualities. These
are the expressions of his indestructible spirit or soul in him. So Gandhi declared - "It is a rare thing to be born as a man". Hence, to make best use of his human life he dedicated his life to raise human beings into a higher spiritual plane and to remove the suffering of humanity in general.

According to Gandhi body and soul are not two ultimate and independent realities. He regarded God as the ultimate reality who manifests itself as body and as spirit, as matter and consciousness. Being a monist Gandhi believed in one all pervasive reality i.e. God. Gandhi tried to avoid the problem as to how two or more absolutely different and independent entities could at all be interrelated, the problem which is faced by the Dualists and the pluralists who try to understand and explain the world by assuming more than one reality. But it can not be denied that there is an interrelation between mind and body. To avoid the difficulty the monists try to understand the universe by assuming one all-pervasive Reality. According to Sankara all change and multiplicity are mere appearances. He regards body and mind as the finite appearances of one ultimate Reality, Brahman. So the self of man according to him is nothing but Brahman. Man thinks himself to be finite because of his ignorance of his own nature, which being known,
man realises his complete identity. This doctrine is known as Advaita or Non-dualism for it is the negative answer to the implied question - 'Are man and God (Brahman) two.

There is also other types of monism which accept the existence of one ultimate Reality. Brahman or God but regard external the objects, the bodies and selves are real though finite in opposition to Sankara's Advaitism. These monisms altogether deny Sankara's doctrine that man and God, the self and Brahman are absolutely identical in reality. And the followers of this view led to the existence of various Vaishnava schools in India. Though Gandhi sometimes claimed himself to be an Advaitan as D.M. Datta observes, he was not the strict follower of Sankara because Gandhi did not regard the world as mere appearances. Hence D.M. Datta observes - "By Advaita he (Gandhi) seemed to mean monism in general including both types distinguished above. This prestige term has sometimes been used in the wider sense of monism and he follows that trend." 91

4.7 MAN, GOD AND THE WORLD:

Mahatma Gandhi while dealing with the problems of the relation of man to God did not discuss from his own viewpoint.
He accomplished it from the progressive Hindu thought particularly Advaita conjoined with the idea of Christianity and Islam and injected mobility and dynamism to it. D.M. Datta remarks that - "Gandhi tries to keep his conception of man and God mobile and dynamic by thinking God as force, as life etc; as if to make him admit of divergent lines of manifestation incarnation and inspiration". To be precise Gandhi never entered into the intricacies of the exact relation between man and God. He showed a decisive preference for simplicity as against complexity. He tried to solve the problem in religious way. He regarded individuals as real and centre of the life of God and God as the ground of all individuals binding together in an inseparable relation. While in the one hand Gandhi regarded man as of supreme importance, on the other hand he also said - "I believe in absolute oneness of God and therefore of humanity. What though we have many bodies we have one soul. The rays of the sun are many through refraction, but they have the same source". This statement of Gandhi is in perfect accord with his positivistic Vedantic vision.

But Gandhi made certain statements in regard to the relation of man to God and these statements are having striking similarity with Vaishnavite theistic thoughts. It seems that
he was mostly influenced by Swami Vivekananda in consonance with the modern western emphasis that 'All this is nothing but Brahman'. He was mostly influenced by the humanitarian attitude of Christianity and inculcated the idea Man-God (Nara-Narayana) and regarded the service to humanity as the best worship of God and as the path of salvation. Gandhiji accepted this idea whole heartedly and practised it throughout his life.

In India religion is a life to be lived and it is not a thing to be accepted beliefs to be adhered to. Gandhi regarded service to humanity as an approach to the divine. He presented this idea to modern India by combining them in thought living them in life and giving them social and political shape.

Gandhi believed that "God resides in human form indeed in every particle of this creation everything that is on earth". This presence of God implies that man has reason, morality and freedom of will. And all these help only to a small extent in his march towards his goal. So it is through intuition or 'inner voice' that supreme power can be achieved. That was the reason why he exhorted man to lead his life listening to the dictates of his conscience (i.e. inner voice). Gandhi believed that man is the architect of his own fate. He must be able to understand his particular nature and try to
perform it with a view to attaining perfection in his life. He must not ignore truth, neglect conscience and indulge animal passions. He must try to cultivate the quality of love, goodness avoiding joy believing that the divine power is within us and we are Infinite. So he asked the people to follow the ideals of Gita thus - "Raise yourself, by yourself, do not depress yourself. You are your friend, you are your foe". Man is free to choose any path either the path of degradation or the path of upliftment. He said - "The brute by nature know' no self-restraint. Man is man because he is capable of and in so far as he exercises self-restraint". According to Gandhi the human civilisation is possible for man because he can control the bases tendencies and he can flourish because he can replace those low tendencies by good will and love. He also says that God has given man freedom to play in his own game and only man must keep interest to improve himself inspite of repeated failures. Man must learn the lesson that 'failures are the pillars of success. He said in a balanced tone - "If we believe that mankind has steadily progressed towards Ahimsa (i.e. love) it follows that it has to progress towards it still further. Nothing in this world is static, everything is kinetic. If there is no progression,
then there is retrogression. No one can remain without the eternal cycle, unless it be good by itself.\textsuperscript{97}

4.8 HUMANISTIC FEATURES:

The word humanism regards human interest as the most important. It's first and foremost aim is to guard and foster human inspiration and welfare. In the west humanism as an intellectual alternative has been developed under materialistic background. But this is not to lead us to think that humanism is bound to be materialistic. To be precise humanism as such is neither necessarily linked with materialistic or spiritualistic ontologies. If humanism develops at certain parts of the world with an accompanying feature of materialistic formulation, there is nothing wrong in locating humanism in another part of the world with the accompanying spiritualistic tradition. Whether humanism develops with materialistic or spiritualistic features depends upon the cultural set up in which human point of view has been found as being emerged.

The religio-philosophical tradition of India being spiritual so the humanistic feature as found in the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi is based on this tradition. Referring to the opening verse of Isha upanishad Gandhi himself writes - "Socialism or even communism owes it's origin from the verse 'That God
the Ruler provides all those in the universe, so renounce and dedicate to Him and then enjoy or use portion that may fall in your lot. Do not covet anybody's possession".  

Hence, it is almost certain that he picked up certain ideas from tradition of India as well as Ruskin, Tolstoy etc; and he lay belief in God to allely his love for Indian people with his love of humanity in his own peculiar way. He even demonstrated his love for some Britishers in the opposite camp. He writes - "My love of nationalism or my idea of nationalism is that my country becomes free, that if need be, the whole country may die so that human race may live". This shows that he had no racial hatred.

Mahatma Gandhi never used the word humanism in any of his writings and declined to call his ideas a philosophy. That does not mean that humanistic ideas are absent in his preachings and activities. That he was a humanist is confirmed by Dr. S. Radhakrishan thus - "The humanism I see in his life, ideas and works, in an incipient recognition of his sympathy for people inspite of their weaknesses, disabilities and mistakes ..... his life evidences to the evolution of an attitude of love which healed many people and brought a note of sympathy into the world........ he emerged a giant among man and brought awareness of political, social and human freedom
to many millions of people and also gave him a practical method for achieving redress against wrong, by practising of non-violent assertion of rights. And as he succeeded in remaining essentially human that is to say, posted the feeling for the dignity of weakness human beings. It considers him to be one of the few important humanist of our time.\textsuperscript{100}

Mahatma Gandhi laid much emphasis on the place and value of individual in the historical process. Contradicting the concept of Karl Marx he wrote - "Man is superior to the system under which he may be living or working.\textsuperscript{101}" Gandhiji believed - "If one man gains spirituality the whole world gains with him, if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent.\textsuperscript{102}" He had also great faith in immense power possessed by man and once he said - "A small body of determined spirit fired the unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of human history.\textsuperscript{103}" He had so much faith in human power and capacity that only man can rise to the highest pinnacles of spiritual and moral greatness.

Ahimsa, according to Gandhi, is the main force of history. The goal of history is the oneness of humanity. He said - "I believe in the essential unity of man and for that matter of all that lives.\textsuperscript{104}" Non-violence or Ahimsa is a universal
principle, it is not a matter of practice for an individual only. It can be practised by groups or communities and nations. He described the non-co-operative movement in India to be an evolutionary revolution. According to him true democracy which guarantees equal freedom of all is only possible by the outcome of non-violence only. He also said that—"The structure of world federation can be raised only on a foundation of non-violence and violence has to be totally given up in world affairs .... Non-violence is the most harmless and yet equally effective way of dealing with political and economic wrongs of the downtrodden portion of humanity". At the same time his concept of non-violence was a message of personal suffering and sacrifice rather than inflicting suffering to others even on the wrong doer. He directed non-co-operation against natural civilisation and it's attendants grow and exploitation of the weak.

In India his ambition was to get rid country of it's division and to discipline the masses to self-dependence, raise woman to a position of economic, political and social equality with man. He wanted to make an end of religious hatred and cleanse Hinduism of it's social abomination of untouchability. The success he achieved in removing the blot
on Hinduism would stand out as one of its greatest contributions to the progress of humanity. So long as there is a
class of untouchables he belongs to it, he said - "If I
have to reborn I wish to be born an untouchable so that I
may share their sorrows, sufferings and the affronts levelled
against them in order that I may endeavour to free myself and
then from the miserable condition". He said that we love
God as unseen and at the same time behave cruelly with people
who move by his life or life derived from Him is a contradiction
in terms. He taught to treat the poor and downtrodden as 'Nara-
Nārāyana' and he equalised the service of man with worship to
God. 'To serve man is to serve God' was his maxim. One of the
striking peculiarities of Gandhi was that he practised whatever
he taught to the people. Being a caste Hindu himself, he
voluntarily decided to live with the untouchables to become
one with them in appearance and standard of living. His
identification with the poor and untouchables had a revolutionary
influence upon the whole caste-system which had deteriorated to a
system of social discrimination. He turned his position into
a position of strength by identifying himself with the oppressed.
He influenced the masses and protected the minorities with the
same method of identification. Nehru writes - "In his (Gandhi's
single track and many sided nature, the dominating impression
that one gathered was his identification with the masses, a community of spirit with them, an amazing sense of unity with the dispossessed and poverty struck not only of India but of the world". 107

It has already been observed that his all forms of life as eternal part of God head, he directed all sorts of activities to serve eternal purpose. He often was willing to intensify his own life by fasting, suffering and prayer with a view to giving anything to the cause of human liberation. The essence of his teaching was the struggle for human decency and hence in this respect he may be regarded as a humanist. Keeping in view some doubts in him by some of his young colleagues he said - "He says, he does not understand my language and that he speaks a language foreign to me. This may or may not be true. But language has no bar to union of hearts. And I know this when I am gone he will speak my language". 108

The essence of his humanism lies in the repeated questions he made to himself - Oh God, how shall I serve the people new? He answered by himself - wipe out every tear from every eye. His heart bled for the poor and hence he said - "Recall the face of the poorest and the most helpless one whom
you may have been and again ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him, will he be able to gain anything by it? Will it restore him to control over his own life? ... you will find your doubts and yourself melting away." \(^{109}\)

Mahatma Gandhi's caste-system was entirely different from what we actually mean by it. He did not base caste-system on social superiority, but on duties. He said - "I am inclined to think that the law of heridity is an eternal law and my attempt to alter it must lead to utter confusion. 'Varna-Dharma' or caste-system is inherent in human nature. Hinduism has simply reduced it to a science." \(^{110}\) According to him the various classes define duties and does not confess any kind of privilege. He said - "That does not mean that a Brahman is absolved from bodily labour, it does not that he is pre-dominantly a man of knowledge and fitted by tracing the heridity to impart to others. There is nothing again to prevent a Sudra from acquiring all the knowledges he wishes only he will best serve with his body and mind and not envy others their special qualities of service. Brähmin who claims superiority by right of knowledge fails and has no knowledge. Varnasrama is self restraint and conservation of economy and energy". Hence, it may be said that his conception of caste-system is based on abnegation and not on privilege enjoyed
by any man. Romani Rolland remarks - "Gandhi unlike our European revolutionary is not the maker of laws and ordinances. He is a builder of new humanity ....... His keystone efforts, however, were given to regeneration of the suppressed classes ....... his cries to sorrow and indigestation at the monstrous social in equality which oppressed them, would alone immortalize his name."

His patriotism is same as humanity. He said - "I am a patriot because my patriotism is not exclusive. I will not hurt England and Germany to serve India. Imperialism has no place in my scheme of life. A patriot is so much less a patriot if he is a lukewarm humanitarian". His real doctrine is much broader and much more universal than that expressed in the gospel which he approved. As Rollan Romani observes - "Gandhi was much more a word, he is an example."

His message of self-sacrifice both in teaching and action is a unique contribution to the world in bringing friendship with the whole world. Non-violence has come and it will remains. It is the annunciation of peace on earth.
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