CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION: LOKA SAMASTHA SUKHINO BHAVANTHU -
'UNTO THIS LAST'

Change of time is a moving witness to man's various attitudes to Nature and universe, to the realms of man in the course of the revolution of his temper. Man belongs to a culture which has lost itself in the search for its truth and supreme happiness. He always thinks in terms of the universe - but in association with abstract idealism. He is also conscious of sustainable development: "Sustainable development is the need of humanity. This is recognized by scientists, and sane thinkers all over the world. Sustainable development requires taking from nature as much as it can replenish. It requires voluntary reduction of wants."

In the preceding centuries there was an ardent study of science and applied mathematics. The utility value of such studies was transmitted to the realms of material progress and limitless accumulation of wealth, without reducing wants. Meanwhile man got himself alienated from himself. He became a unit of the society-but destined to be viewed as a lesser object of study. He got into a situation of frightful moral stagnation. His problems are mostly moral and
psychological. The relevance of mental tuning for promoting goodwill has become a basic need of the time. When man asks about the nature and future of the world, he cannot but subject himself to effective introspection. A world-wide practical idealization, based on living in harmony with Nature is required far more urgently than it had been in the past. In Gandhiji’s simple living 20th century saw a beacon of light that illumines the arena of practical idealization. H.H. The Dalai Lama observes: “Mahatma Gandhi was a great human being with a deep understanding of human nature. He made every effort to encourage the full development of the positive aspects of the human potential and reduce or restraint the negative.”

Gandhiji was a versatile genius committed to realize absolute truth through seeking and perceiving. Satya Sai Baba proclaims:

Some may declare that Gandhiji is an Avatar; others may pronounce him to be the Architect of an Epoch or the Father of a Nation. These are the varied reactions of different minds. In reality, Bapu was a saatvic personality who cultivated the divinity inherent in him and overcame the Asuric tendencies and impulses.”


Gandhiji visualized the practical side of the search for Absolute Truth. He was a rare individual of clear vision and passion. His unique experience in the experiments with truth was personal but mystical. It had a metaphysical touch which he translated into simple terms of communicability.

A close speculation reveals how Gandhiji could popularize the inherent simplicity in human nature moulded by a world of fantastic mythology. The panoramic situation of human problems were effectively translated by Gandhiji in the simple terms of *Bhagavad Gita* and Nature living. He lived with his senses no longer subject to attachments and assertions and perfectly under his control: “But the disciplined soul moving among sense objects with the senses weaned from likes and dislikes and brought under the control of 'atman' attains peace of mind.” Living in harmony with Nature Gandhiji could wage the battle of living courageously but non-violently. It was a fight for relative truth:

The fight for relative truth became a moral way of life in the battle field of massive human relations and was a sort of modern edition of the battle of Mahabharata in the warring world of today. I believe that just as Vivekananda re-discovered the
Upanishads to preach the universal divine in man, so Gandhiji re-interpreted the Bhagavad Gita to preach karmayoga in terms of non-violence and work without attachment. Both brought goodness on earth as a gospel for the common man, which he could understand and accept.\(^5\)

In this regard, a steady vigilance and perseverance assisted him in the enterprise of retaining the temper of a perpetual fighter marching to attain the goal of self realization through Nature living and social service. The luxuriance of Nature living and vegetarian diet helped him to keep the spirit of attaining self control.

As a fighting practical idealist Gandhiji had to undertake extensive voyages. In most of these voyages the fruitarian diet made his physique and spirit more and more vigorous:

At the conclusion of the satyagraha struggle in 1914, I received Gokhale’s instruction to return home via London... The company had provided reserved closet accommodation for us, and as we were fruitarians, the steward had orders to supply us with fruits and nuts. As a rule third class passengers get little fruit or nuts. These facilities made our eighteen days on the boat quite comfortable.\(^6\)
The same voyage on fruitarian diet gave him an opportunity to think on how to tread the path of truth. He continues:

In the march towards truth, anger, selfishness, hatred etc naturally give way for otherwise truth would be impossible to attain. A man who is swayed by passion may have good enough intentions, may be truthful in word, but he will never find the truth. A successful search for Truth means complete deliverance from the dual throng such as love and hate, happiness and misery.⁷

Every step of living in harmony with Nature enhanced the possibility of accumulating noble thought for action. This in turn, acted as a catalyzing agent to promote practical idealism, especially in the moments of lack of understanding between nations: “A devotee of truth may not do anything in deference to convention. He must always hold himself open to correction, and whenever he discovers himself to be wrong he must confess it at all costs and atone for it.”⁸ A gentle touch of introspection is dominating in the warning.

In days of active illness Gandhiji dared not renounce his ideas in the direction of vegetarianism and Nature living. In such situations religious considerations also prompted him. He recollects:
Religious considerations had been predominant in the giving up of milk. I had before me a picture of the wicked processes the govalas in Calcutta adopted to extract the last drop of milk from their cows and buffaloes. I also had the feeling that, just as meat was not man's food, even so animal's milk could not be man's food.  

When the persistence of pleurisy caused anxiety, Gandhiji was resolute to follow Nature cure. He says:

I called in Dr. Allinson of vegetarian fame, who treated diseases by dietetic modifications and whom I had met in 1890. He thoroughly overhauled me. I explained to him how I had pledged myself not to take milk. He cheered me up and said: 'you need not take milk. In fact I want you to do without any fat for some days.' He then advised me to live on plain brown bread, raw vegetables such as beet, radish, onion and other tubers and greens, and also fresh fruit mainly oranges. The vegetables were not to be cooked but merely grated fine, if I could not masticate them.
Gandhiji kept all his unique originality of thought in terms of Nature living. He also borrowed ideas on that line from wherever they reached. He admits:

Dr. Allinson, when he next called, relaxed his corrections and permitted me to have groundnut butter or olive oil for the sake of fat, and to take the vegetables cooked, if I chose, with rice. These changes were quite welcome, but they were far from giving me a complete cure. Very careful nursing was still necessary, and I was obliged to keep mostly in bed.¹¹

The advice was welcomed for it could be in tune with the theory of rest and relaxation for ailing bodies. As a patient Gandhiji was not prompted by the instigation of any shastha or authority. He could not but deny friendly suggestions to follow systematic treatment and balanced diet: “For me the question of diet was not one to be determined on the authority of the Shastras. It was one interwoven with my course of life which is guided by principles no longer depending upon outside authority. I had no desire to live at the cost of them.”¹² That is why a practically simple deviation of using goat’s milk for restoration of health was felt to be unbearable to Gandhiji. He admits: “My experiments in dietetics are dear to me as a part of my
researches in *Ahimsa*. They give me recreation and joy. But my use of goat’s milk today troubles me not from being no less than a breach of pledge.” To him *Ahimsa* had a deeper sense. It is a supporting component in his relentless efforts to conquer the subtle passions: “To conquer the subtle passions seems to me to be harder far than the physical conquest of the world by the force of arms.” Nature living is a sure medium to identification with everything that lives:

Identification with everything that lives is impossible without self-purification; without self-purification the observance of the law of *Ahimsa* must remain an empty dream; God can never be realized by one who is not pure of heart. Self-purification therefore must mean purification in all the walks of life. And purification being highly infectious, purification of oneself necessarily leads to the purification of one’s surroundings.

This identification marks the culmination of living in harmony with Nature.

To Gandhiji, humanity is a positive expression in human behaviour and it is acquired through Nature living. It prepares the way for an absolute conditioning of the mind to assist the venture of eliminating egoism:
The true connotation of humility is self-effacement. Self-effacement is *Moksha* (salvation), and whilst it cannot, by itself, be an observance, there may be other observances necessary for its attainment. If the acts of an aspirant after *Moksha* or a servant have no humility or selflessness about them, there is no longing for *Moksha* or service. Service without humility is selfishness and egotism.  

As a champion of service, Gandhiji could discharge his duties to the entire satisfaction of the millions. In this dynamic enterprise Nature living imparted immense sources of encouragement to him.

Simplicity in living was a powerful shield in establishing living in Gandhian *ashrams*. In *Sabarmathi*, Gandhiji and more than forty souls; men, women and children having their meals in a common kitchen decided to start living under canvas and having a tin-shed for kitchen:

Our difficulties, before we had permanent living accommodation, were great. The rains were impending, and provisions had to be got from the city four miles away. The ground, which had been a waste, was infested with snakes, and
it was no small risk to live with little children under such conditions.17

Still in such situations of simple living, Gandhiji idealized the depth of the convictions on *ahimsa*:

The general rule was not to kill the snakes, though I confess none of us had shed the fear of these reptiles, nor have we even now.... The rule of not killing venomous reptiles has been practiced for the most part at Phoenix, Tolstoy Farm and Sabarmati. At each of these places we had to settle on wastelands. We had, however, no loss of life occasioned by snakebite. I see, with the eye of faith, in this circumstance the hand of the God of Mercy. Let no one cavil at this, saying that God can never be partial, and that He has no time to meddle with the humdrum affairs of men. I have no other language to express the fact of the matter, to describe this uniform experience of mine. Human language can but imperfectly describe God's ways. I am sensible of the fact that they are indescribable and inscrutable. But if mortal man will dare to describe them, he has no better medium than his own inarticulate speech. Even if it be a superstition to believe that
complete immunity from harm for twenty five years in spite of a fairly regular practice of non-killing is not a fortuitous accident but a grace of God, I should still hug that superstition.13

Gandhiji's attitude to venomous reptiles was superior to the hypocritical reverence to snakes exhibited by the Hospital Industry:

I do believe that all God's creatures have the right to live as much as we have. Instead of prescribing the killing of the so-called injurious fellow creatures of ours as a duty, if men of knowledge had devoted their gift to discovering ways of dealing with them otherwise than by killing them, we would be living in a world befitting our status as men - animals endowed with reason and the power of choosing between good and evil, right and wrong, violence and non-violence, truth and untruth.19

In this exhortation one sees long vistas of reasoning power and righteous sensibility. Here Gandhiji visualizes a brave new world where man and other creatures in the universe live in harmony with each other.

To Gandhiji life was a perpetually enabling and elevating search. His life is synonymous of his message, which is appealing to the literate and the illiterate alike. He lived the full span of living in
harmony with Nature without either renunciation or retirement. *Ahimsa* was not only non-violence but also a medium of harmony and profound love. The profundity of love opened the gateways to service for fellow beings. Being versatile, he could try innumerable experiments related to almost all the realms of human existence. His dislike for *Industrialization* was scientific. He was never against science or technology. But he could not tolerate machines becoming masters of man. He approved the remarkable changes brought about by technological developments. But his profound concern for Nature and Nature living prompted him to question the unwelcome activities like the denudation of forests and forest wealth, depletion of natural resources, ecological imbalance and all round pollutions. His uncompromising attitude towards a mass society is suggested by the promotion of village industries and the spinning wheel. He wanted a proper standard of living reachable to the millions of the country. He was totally aware of the existence of the laws of Nature and identified the danger in exhausting the non-renewable fossil fuels and natural resources required for sustaining the existing rate of growth.

Gandhi was a seer and visualized not only the imminent dangers, but also the challenges that future generations are to face. He
was deeply concerned about the millions of unborn babies in the womb of the planet. He warned against the nuclear fallouts and the consequent physical and mental deficiencies and deformities piled up in the war fields of Palestine, Afghanistan, Kashmir and so on. With the precision of a physician he prescribed a universal panacea-the establishment of a harmony between man and Nature. This harmony must go hand in hand with the harmony between man and man and man and nation. The principal component of this establishment must be Nature. Man should identify the tremendous potentialities of Nature being keen on providing everything for his need, but nothing for his greed. The first step of celebrating this glory of Nature is the recognition of the congenial conditions that she has created for man. Gandhi was a technocrat who could easily recognize Nature's glory. His conceptualization of living in harmony with Nature is a sign post for human progress and global peace.

One is surprised to see in Gandhi a monumental figure in the history of human dietetics. Man spends big amounts on processing various kinds of food items absolutely harmful to human gastro intestinal system. Huge mansions with palacious facilities are challenging the existing sky scrapers bearing testimony to capitalist
legacy. India also spends enough money for beautiful hotels and jumbo jets and expensive tourist resorts. It is forgotten how the thousands of Indian villagers are partly living without minimum sanitation and drinking water. The paradox is that

one third of the world suffer from over eating and one third from malnutrition..... There are more homeless in New York than in New Delhi. This is a strange civilization that we are building. Certainly there is the glittering achievements of modern technology, nobody underestimates that. But what about the dark underside, the multibillion dollar drub traffic, that is causing havoc throughout the world.201

No research is being conducted to contest this terrible drug traffic. One’s food is supposed to be one’s medicine. But the modern drug industry challenges this concept. Drugs applied against one ailment bring about strange symptoms of other fatal maladies. Gandhiji could foresee this health hazard and he stressed an inner transformation for sustainable development. His experiments in dietetics, in this regard, may be read along with his constructive programmes, his gobar gas plant, his tree plantation, Vanamahotsava Program all of which radiate relevance in 21st century.
Gandhiji believed that practical Nature living is an integral component assisting total development of a man's integrity and personality. From the perspective of proper dietetics what Gandhiji presented was a striking keynote. He was least connected to the science of Nutrition or the faculty of medicine. But he strived to perform the sacred duty of integrating the shadow within the global community and its habit of eating. He began it in South Africa and India when he had entirely sad sensations felt in the blood and felt along the heart. Here also he was a seeker of subjective Truth which was realized by intuition after an eventful and arduous life of discipline and vows. He sought and pursued after a pragmatic truth arising from the changing human situation that gave rise to dangerous health hazards.

Though a man of peace, he was made in the texture and temper of a fighter who could take up and advocate the basic aspect of human living. "For him human life is a field of activity, a continuum in which everything affects every thing else."\(^2\) The importance of a sound mind in a sound body and both for an easy access to self realization was idealized and realized by Gandhiji. He has placed, in the hands of those who are desirous of brilliance in living, the operation of a mighty enterprise viz. living in harmony with Nature. He has opened the door
and pointed out the way. “Gandhiji has done his duty; he has warned us of the perils and the temptations that confront us and he has delivered his soul unto his Maker. It now remains for us to do our duty.”22 The pestilence and disease stricken global community with its agony of centuries of injury acquired from malpractices, has been prompted to rise to the occasion, welcome the brave new world, promote the cause of peaceful co-existence in the very dawn of twenty first century.
References:


2. Sheshrao Chavan, p5

3. Sheshrao Chavan, p2


7. M.K. Gandhi, p288

8. M.K. Gandhi, p293


10. M.K. Gandhi, p298

11. M.K. Gandhi, p299

12. M.K. Gandhi, p376

13. M.K. Gandhi, p379

14. M.K. Gandhi, p420

15. M.K. Gandhi, p420
17. M.K. Gandhi, p358
18. M.K. Gandhi, p358
22. ‘The Hindu Daily’, Editorial 31.01.1948