M.K. Gandhi, an incomparable apostle of the world, a charismatic leader of the 20th century, who fought for the freedom of our country, was the first man to invent an unusual method of political struggle and brought about liberation from foreign rule. When he was born, the British rule had been firmly established in India. On the other hand when Gandhi died, it was a free nation that mourned the loss. The dispossessed recovered the lost heritage and the dumb found the voice. Thus the soul of India has found a worthy symbol in Mahatma Gandhi. His achievements were many, which have made his name honoured anywhere in the world. He came to occupy the position of the supreme leader in the country. He left an indelible impact on the social, economic and political forces of the day. Gandhi's social ideas exemplify a deep and abiding interest in a fundamental reformation of the Indian society.

Man is a rational animal. Rationality distinguishes man from other animals, and makes him essentially and fundamentally a progressive being. Gandhi had a very noble conception of man. 'Man' is the supreme consideration for him. Gandhi's philosophy stressed on the individual as the starting point of social regeneration. According to Gandhi, man is neither a matter alone nor spirit alone, he is a rare combination of both. Man is a 'creation of God striving to realise his divinity'. There is the need for a proper concept of man with due regard to his nature, dignity and destiny. The thesis is an attempt to present
conception of man and, by so doing, to clarify the ideals that can guide us in an uncertain world.

The introductory chapter point out the importance of Gandhian thought, importance of the concept of man in Indian philosophical thoughts and describes Gandhi's life and the background of his philosophy. The foundation of Gandhi's life was formed by his living and growing faith in God and Truth. So his ideas about God, Truth, world etc. are discussed in the II nd chapter. Gandhi emphasized upon the efflorescence of inherent divinity in man, because he believed that the essence of man is the essence of God. Gandhi's views on human nature are bound up with certain metaphysical and moral principles. The chapter III brings out the philosophical principles which form the foundation of Gandhian thought.

The nature and status of man have been interpreted in various ways in the history of philosophy. Man as spirit is essentially non-violent. Although outwardly man appears to be selfish and even brutish, inwardly and essentially he is good. Violence is alien to Man's nature. Gandhi preached non-violence as the weapon of the brave and believed that non-violence is infinitely superior to violence in the same manner as forgiveness is an act of greater bravery than that of an act of punishment. Gandhi was the first man who transformed the concept of ahimsa from individual action to mass action. Gandhi proposed the non-violent technique, not only as a substitute for violent conflicts within a narrow
social group, but in that of international relations as well. He transferred non-violence or ahimsa into a social and political technique and attempted to apply the theory of ahimsa on a social and political plane. According to Gandhi ahimsa is the supreme principle for reformation of politics and society the nature of non-violence and how Gandhi applied it on socio-political thought are discussed in the chapter IV.

The V th chapter contains the relation between man and society. Man is essentially and basically a social creature, apart from society he cannot even exist. Man is dependent on society for the content of his thoughts, his dreams, his aspirations. His birth in society brings with it the absolute need of society itself.

Gandhi was not an academic philosopher but he was a practical philosopher who tried to translate his ideas into practice. He called himself a 'Practical Idealist'. His noble ideas were scattered throughout his writings. These need to be systematized. The thesis seeks to explain systematically the basic Gandhian concept of the philosophy of social reconstruction. Gandhi's attempt was to make a fruitful combination of theory and practice. He wanted an all round transformation of society in the social, economic; political and moral fields. Sarvodaya, as the welfare of all, represents the ideal social order according to Gandhi. Its basis is all embracing love. Prince and peasant, Hindu and Muslim, touchable and untouchable, white and black, saint and sinner all are equal members in his sarvodaya, all sharing in the produce
of their labour, the strong protecting the weak and functioning as trustees for the weak, and each promoting the welfare of all. An attempt has been made to discuss the reformation of society by the name of Sarvodaya in the chapter VI. The VII th chapter points out that Gandhi's freedom is the birth right of human beings. Without freedom nothing is possible. For the first time Gandhi realised the deeper significance of the concept of Swaraj and gave a democratic orientation of it. He made it applicable to all spheres of life like political, social, economic and spiritual life. The concluding chapter contains a summary of earlier chapters and relevance of Gandhian thought in the context of modern technological civilization.

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(Mrs. Indira Devi)