CHAPTER IV

NON-VIOLENCE AND ITS ROLE
MAHATMA GANDHI embodied in his life the noble values that India has cherished down the centuries. No wonder, then, that R.C. Zaehner says that in Mahatma Gandhi Yudhisthira, the son of Dharma, was reborn in our times. He amazed all sincere Christians, "for never in modern times had they seen any man tread more faithfully in the footsteps of Christ." Gandhi showed to the whole world the efficacy of the principles of love and peace as instruments of Social change. "It is Gandhi's belief that only in a non-violent social order a proper relationship between man's faculties and his relationship with the external world can be put on a proper keel and rid the world of domination, exploitation, oppression and violence."

Non-violence or Ahimṣā is a key concept of Indian ethics. It has been a salient feature of the important religions of India like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and in the west Christianity. The concept of non-violence (ahimṣā) is very old so far as Indian philosophy is concerned. It is at least as old as the Vedas, because the command of the

1. R.C. Zaehner, Hinduism, PP. 224-53, i.e. the chapter on Gandhi, 'Yudhisthira Returns'
2. Ibid., P.224
3. Ramashray Roy, Understanding Gandhi, PP.165-66
Vedas, 'Mā himsyāt sarva bhutani', means 'Do not kill any living being'.

In this chapter, it is proposed to discuss the concept and implications of non-violence so far as possible in Gandhian thought.

Gandhi's concept of non-violence claims a superior position which is the basic teaching of his life in every thought, word and deed. 'By birth, I am a Vaishnavite, and was taught ahimsa in my childhood.'

The etymological meaning of ahimsa is not 'non-killing' but 'physical non-injury'. The Upanisads, Mahavira, Buddha and Manu used the word ahimsa in this sense.

The word Himsa signifies slaughter. To slay requires an unsympathetic attitude of mind towards the victim, which, in positive term, is called hatred. Himsa therefore, is hatred, - the narrow mood of mind. Hence its opposite, Ahimsa, is non-hate, absence of hatred, that is, in positive term, sympathy or love.

Non-violence or ahimsā is the Indian doctrine of non-injury, non-killing, that is to all living things (man and animal). Ahimsā negatively refers to abstention from injury or harm to any living being in any form, but positively it refers to the virtue of love, kindness and compassion towards all beings. Ahimsā means the largest love, the

4. I.C. Sharma, Ethical Philosophy of India, P.325
greatest charity. "If I am a follower of ahimsa, I must love my enemy."6
Violence is a sign of barbarity, but non-injury, compassion or love is a sign of culture.

According to Gandhi Ahimsa is a natural virtue of the human soul. Man is essentially spiritual in nature and in course of civilization the progress is essentially moving towards Ahimsa. In its positive aspect Ahimsa is love, which can be realised only when, the mind is free from anger, hatred, jealousy, revenge etc. Gandhi said, "To me it has a world of meaning and takes me into realms much higher, infinitely higher, than the realm to which I would go, if I merely understood by ahimsa non-killing. Ahimsa really means that you may not offend anybody, you may not harbour an uncharitable thought even in connection with one who may consider himself to be your enemy........ One who follows the doctrine of ahimsa, there is no room for an enemy; he denies the existence of an enemy."7

The famous Hindu sacred texts, Upanisads and the Bhagavad Gita repeatedly emphasise the role of Ahimśā. The Risis of the Vedic and the Upanisadic ages used non-violence as a negative aspect of life and it was in the sense of non-killing and non-injury to any other creatures. It was also used as one of the means for achieving the goal of life.

The term Ahimsā occurs in the Upanisads and comparing the Chāndogya Upanisad (3-17-4) with the Brihadaranyaka Upanisad (5-2-3); it would be found the original meaning of Ahimsa is the same as 'Dayā', which is synonymous with sympathy, love, mercy, benevolence, good-will, etc.

Gandhi started a deeper study of Bhagavad Gita is South Africa when he was engaged in an incessant struggle against the South African Government for the redress of the wrongs done to the Indians settled in South Africa. When hardships, failures, rebuffs and ridicules thronged his path, he was hard-pressed to seek strength from his inner being. The Gita's message of 'Nishkāma Karma' or performing one's duty without any desire for fruits strengthened his resolve to fight injustice. The Gita became his spiritual dictionary provide him with a key to solve all the problems. Gandhi derived utmost peace and solace from the Bhagavad Gita which was a guide book in his life. The central teaching of Gita in Karmayoga is 'Nishkāmakarma' which means to work for the well-being and peace of his society, without the desire of results. It contains all the truth and light to a Karmayogi. Gandhi used to consult Gita for solutions to his problems. "When doubts haunt me, when disappointments stare me in the face, and when I see not one ray of light on the horizon, I turn to the Bhagavad Gita and find a verse to comfort me, and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming sorrow."8

According to Gandhi self realisation is possible only through right action

or non-violence. The renunciation of the fruits of action cannot be cultivated without Ahimsa. It is possible only for them, who are above the petty consideration of hatred, anger, jealousy which are the main source of violence. To quote Gandhi "after forty years of the teaching of the Gita in my own life, I have in all humility, felt that perfect renunciation is impossible without perfect observance of Ahimsa in every shape and form."\(^9\)

The great principle of non-violence of Manu (the Hindu Law giver) formed the key stone of Gandhi's life and teachings. A study of the Manusmrti revealed to Gandhi that morality should be the basis of all activities and that truth is the substance of all morality.

Ahimsa is the keystone of the ethics of Buddhism. The Buddha clearly enunciated the morality of Ahimsa. Ahimsa or non-violence is the practical expression of truth. The Panchasila of Buddhism and Panchamahavrata of Jainism are the symbols of this virtue. Gandhi's views are similar with Lord Buddha who taught that ethical life alone brings salvation. Gandhi adopts the well-known Buddhist formula 'Ahimsa Paramo Dharma' (non-violence is the highest duty) as his own. Gandhi, in conformity with Buddha's teaching, was of opinion that all lives high or low are the same. He observed, "Great as Buddha's contribution to humanity was in restoring God to his eternal place, in my humble opinion greater still was his contribution to humanity in his

\(^9\) Young India, 6-8-1931
exacting regard for all life, be it ever so low, "In Gandhi’s opinion, Buddha’s acceptance of the eternal moral law as God Himself is the right concept of God and at the same time Buddha’s preaching of equality of lives high or low is still a greater contribution to humanity.

Jainism as the oldest philosophy based on non-violence, accepts and advocates non-violence as the highest ideal of life and as the means of attaining Moksa, or liberation. According to Radhakrishnan, "the Jainas were the first to make ahimsa, non-violence, into a rule of life." Jaina philosophy explains ahimsa as 'Prāṇātipāta Viraṇama' that is 'to abstain from killing any living beings'. According to Jainas, killing or injuring in any form was considered to be himsa or violence, even to think and speak of killing or injuring others is himsa or violence. Violence does not mean causing only physical injury, it also includes mental and verbal injury. A follower of non-violence in Jainism follows the principle of three Guptis through mind, word and deed, in other words which implies the Guptis of mental non-violence, verbal non-violence and physical non-violence. If one participates directly or indirectly in killing or injuring others, one commits himsa. Killing and injuring in all circumstances are sinful and evil. Though Jainism and Buddhism are almost contemporary as classical systems, Jainism is undoubtedly older than Buddhism. There are a number of similarities between these two schools, particularly with regard to their ethical concepts. Both systems are opposed to the Vedic

10. M.K.Gandhi, Hindu Dharma, P.242
11. S.Radhakrishnan and C.A.Moore, A source book in Indian Philosophy, Princeton, P.251
cult of sacrifice, both systems advocate strict adherence to non-violence (ahimsā). Gandhi was greatly influenced by Jainism because this religion preached ahimsa in the true sense of the term. Though Gandhi was influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism also, in his concept of ahimsa, the contribution of Jainism was somewhat greater. Non-violence does not mean avoiding injury to other persons, but it also implies active service of others. Although Jainism lays emphasis on the practice of the principle of non-violence in all individual matters, it is evident that its ultimate goal is the well-being of humanity and social progress.

In the west, the teachings of Christ by his religious thought emphasise the need for non-violence, truth, love, pity, humanity, forgiveness etc. It is by love that man can attain his redemption. Ahimsa is supreme kindness and supreme self sacrifice.

Gandhi was deeply impressed by Christianity, particularly the Sermon on the Mount, which he read being propelled by Tolstoy's writings. He was greatly influenced by Tolstoy's famous book 'The kingdom of God is within you', which offered to him his first belief in ahimsa. His philosophy of non-violence derived from Tolstoy's teaching who was the first teacher and guide for him in modern times. Both Tolstoy and Gandhi adopted the instrument of love for fighting out all problems in their lives. For both of them non-violence can cure all social maladies, remove political ills and secure salvation for mankind. According to Tolstoy, "Love is the aspiration for communion and
solidarity with other souls, and that aspiration always liberates the sources of noble activities. That love is the supreme and unique Law of human life, which everyone feels in the depth of one's soul."12

Another major influence in shaping the philosophy of life of Gandhi and his socialist thought was that of Ruskin. In Christian socialism Ruskin advocates the belief in the brotherhood of all human beings. His 'Unto This Last' is a tribute to Christian philosophy of 'love fellow beings or love your neighbour as you love yourself'.

All the great religions of the world accept very important role of Ahimsa or non-violence. Neither Hinduism, nor Islam, nor any other religion advocates hatred. Gandhi says that the religion of non-violence is not meant merely for the rishis and saints. It is meant for the common people as well. Non-violence is the law of the brute. According to Gandhi, non-violence can be practised at all levels, individual as well as collective. For him non-violence was synonymous with truth and is the heart of all religions. It is thus an eternal, all-pervasive principle and is applicable to all situations in life and the world.13 Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence and the technique of Satyagraha are not for weak man's or a coward's refuge for inaction, but a brave man's tools for facing odd situations. Gandhi regards non-violence as a sign of strength and not an indication of weakness but if there is a choice between cowardice and

12. Leo Tolstoy's Letter to Mahatma Gandhi, dated 7th Sept., 1910
13. G.N.Dhawan, The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi; PP.58-61
violence, he would advise violence.\textsuperscript{14} Non-violence or ahimsa is really for
the strong and not for cowards and the weak. Gandhi says, therefore: "My
creed of non-violence is an extremely active force. It has no room for
cowardice or even weaks."\textsuperscript{15}

Gandhi applied the principle of non-violence to all spheres of
life and experimented it fruitfully. He observed, "I have nothing new to
teach the world. Truth and Non-violence are as old as the hills. All I have
done is to try experiments in both on as vast a scale as I could."\textsuperscript{16} Gandhi
holds that Truth and Non-violence are the inherent and universal virtues
of humanity. His greatness lies in translating them into actions. For him to
know is to act. Theory without practice is void and meaningless. He said,
"The religion of non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the
law of the brute. The spirit lies dormant in the brute, and he knows no law
but that of physical might. The dignity of man requires obedience to the
higher law-to the strength of the spirit."\textsuperscript{17}

While for some thinkers man's vident behaviour is
phylogenetically based,\textsuperscript{18} for Gandhi man's unique position in evolution as
a unique being endowed with "reason discrimination and free will" and
"moral instincts and moral institutions" makes the transfer of laws from

\textsuperscript{14} Harijan, 21-10-1930
\textsuperscript{15} Young India, 16-6-1927
\textsuperscript{16} N.K.Bose (ed.), Selections from Gandhi, P.13
\textsuperscript{17} M.K. Gandhi, My Non-violence, P.4
\textsuperscript{18} Konrad Lorents, On Aggression, P.229
animal behaviour to man particularly hazardous. For Gandhi, non-violence is "the law of the human race." The spiritual quality in man, when it wakes up from its slumbering and dormant state, can work amazingly in this life. Non-violence is not a religion of a particular section of mankind and of a particular place of the world. Therefore he wrote, "My religion has no geographical limits. If I have a living faith in it, it was transcend my love for India herself." According to Gandhi, just as there is a cohesive force in Nature to fasten the atoms which constitute this universe, Ahimsa is the cohesive force which fastens all living beings. This force binds the individuals into a family, the families into a group, the groups into a civilized society, the societies into nations and so on. With this cohesive force of Ahimsa, human society considered as a whole, has been progressing from cannibalism to the present civilization. Had this cohesive force of love not worked in this human society, the so-called human species might have been extinct by this time. He said again, "......we have to identify ourselves with every human being without exception. This is called cohesion or attraction in scientific language. In popular language it is called love. It binds us to one another and to God. Ahimsa and Love are one and the same thing."
According to Gandhi, "perfect non-violence is impossible so long as we exist physically, for we would want some space at least to occupy. "It is like Euclid's point, an ideal "which we have to endeavour every moment of own lives "to realize but which we cannot realize perfectly in own mortal bodily frame." He said, "...every seeker after truth has to adjust and vary the standard according to his individual need and to make a ceaseless endeavour to reduce the circle of himsa." Violence cannot be law of the human race for mankind is not a pack of wolves. Man must always try to reduce the circle of himsa in life. Gandhi wrote, "Nevertheless there is that difference between a belief in ahimsa and a belief in himsa which there is between north and south, life and death. One who looks his fortunes to ahimsa, the law of love daily lessens the circle of destruction and to that extent promotes life and love; he who swears by himsa, the law of hate, daily widens the circle of destruction and to that extent promotes death and hate."

Gandhi is aware that a theoretical emphasis on Truth and non-violence would lead us nowhere unless a way is shown for the practice of Ahimsa. He has firm faith that ahimsa or non-violence can be practised universally as a technique for achieving truth which is God. He gives the name Satyagraha, which is translated in English as Truth-force or even, at times, as Soul-force or Love-force. Describing the nature of Satyagraha Gandhi says, "Its equivalent in the vernacular rendered into

24. Harijan, 21.7.1940
25. Ibid
26. N.K.Bose, Selections from Gundhi, P.39
English means Truth Force. I think Tolstoy called it also Soul-Force, or Love-force and so it is. Carried out to its utmost limit, this force is independent of pecuniary or other material assistance, even in its elementary form of physical force or violence. It is a force that may be used by individuals as well as by communities. It may be used as well in political as a domestic affairs. Its universal applicability is a demonstration of its permanence and indincibility. It can be used alike by men, women and children. Gandhi evolved the term Satyagraha to give a distinctive identity to his non-violent movement in South Africa. The word Satyagraha is compound of two Sanskrit expression, Satya (truth) and Agraha (determined pursuit). Thus it means insistance on truth.

We find in the hymns of the Rg-Veda the conception of Ṛta. It means first and foremost a cosmic rule. But it also represents an ethical law which men should observe in their actions. As Radhakrishnan observes, "It is the law which pervades the whole world, which all gods and men must obey. ...Ṛta furnishes us with a standard of morality. It is the universal essence of things. It is the satya or the truth of things. Disorder or An-Ṛta is falsehood, the opposite of truth." Gandhi was influenced by ancient Indian ideals. The most primary normative ideal for him is Truth. It is the eternal principle, the absolute Truth, God. Just as a perfect definition of God is impossible, so too is one of Truth. The truth

27. N.K. Bosc, Selections from Gandhi, PP.218-19
28. S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, Vol. 1, PP.109-10
which can be defined ceases to be God.\textsuperscript{29} The final truth can never be reached, it can only be approached in approximation.\textsuperscript{30}

Gandhi's entire philosophy of life is based on the fact that truth alone can be victorious. For him, truth without non-violence is not truth but untruth. Truth is the end, non-violence is the means to its attainment. Gandhi observed, "Ahimsa and truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are like two sides of a coin, or rather a smooth unstamped metallic disc. Who can say, which is the obverse, and which is the reverse? Nevertheless, Ahimsa is the means; Truth is the end."\textsuperscript{31}

In Gandhian thought, the concept of Truth is used in different senses. First, in the metaphysical sense it is used in the sense of Reality or God. Secondly, it is used in the ethical sense of absolute Value. Thirdly, truth itself is a relative term and used in the sense of relative value. The concept of truth, while not excluding these three senses, is very much existential is its content. Satya is essentially a mode of being, and only dependently a characteristic of a concept or of a doctrine or of a belief. This existential aspect of truth was realized very early by the ancient Indian sages in this concept of the Rta. Since Satya is primarily a mode of being, we can come to Satya only by a way of life, by a constant struggle to live satya. Satyagraha is the practical aspect of Truth and Non-violence.

\textsuperscript{29} The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol.LXV, P.398
\textsuperscript{30} N.K.Bose, op. cit., P.45
\textsuperscript{31} M.K.Gandhi, Hindu Dharma, P.224
Gandhi's Theory of Satyagraha is an integral part of his theory of truth; in so far as it is an attempt to insist on and to realise truth, it is an inseparable part of his theory of non-violence. Satyagraha is the way of truth. Satyagraha is essentially based on love. It is the basis of love, and unless one has this basic love for mankind, one cannot practise the technique of Satyagraha.

Gandhi distinguishes Satyagraha from Passive Resistance (with which it is usually confused) which is a technique of fighting evils of a policy as followed by the weak against the strong. Passive resistance is practised from an awareness of weakness or helplessness against strong adversary.

Satyagraha is not a passive state, it is more active than violence. Passive resistance has an element of force, it does not forbid the use of violence, there is room for the use of force if a suitable opportunity comes. But in Satyagraha the use of violence in any form is totally ruled out even against a weak adversary. In passive resistance there is always present an idea of harassing and defeating the other party while in Satyagraha there is not the idea of injuring the opponent, victory or defeat has no place. Passive resistance arise from hatred, anger or frustration but Satyagraha presumes love and sympathy even for the adversary. It seeks to convert the opponent and turn him into an ally. Hence Gandhi applied
the Satyagraha as a simple technique and active form in different situations like political and economic situations. As active forms of Satyagraha Gandhi seems to favour most are Non-co-operation, Disobedience, Direct action and Fasting etc.

According to Gandhi, Non-co-operation as essentially a cleansing process affects the Satyagrahi more than the other party and is able to give to the Satyagrahi a power to face evil and to endure suffering. Gandhi showed the way of non-co-operation which became a great movement. He advised the people to non-co-operate with the British Government in every possible way. In 1920 Gandhi's non-co-operation movement as a satyagraha movement may be mentioned here. 'Swadeshi' is an example of this kind of Satyagraha.

Civil disobedience is considered to be a protest against unjust laws. In this regard, Gandhi seems to be influenced by Thoreau and feels that it is morally proper to be right and true than to be law-abiding. He resorted to this technique chiefly in South Africa when he protested against the unjust, discriminatory and racial laws. Civil disobedience movement in 1930 as an example of this kind of Satyagraha may be mentioned here.

Direct Action is conceived as an open and mass rebellion. Although the word rebellion has associations with violent ways, but 'Direct Action' is essentially non-violent. In 1942 Quit India movement
given by Gandhi was an example of this kind of Satyagraha. In this movement Gandhi gave the mantra of "Do or Die". It means that we shall either free India or die in the attempt; we shall not live to see the perpetuation of our slavery.

The most effective form of Satyagraha according to Gandhi was fasting. It is way of personal cleansing and penance. Fasting unto death was an integral part of Satyagraha programme. During 34 years of his stay in India Gandhi undertook as many as 15 fasts.

Gandhi advocates the method of non-violence for solving all human problems, whether religious or social, whether political or economic. He believes that the non-violent technique is applicable to every sphere of life and to a variety of situations. He wielded this weapon not only against political wrongs but also in cases of economic, social and religious injustice. The significant feature of satyagraha method lies in arousing the consciousness of the masses and making them fearless.

The Gandhian technique of Satyagraha as a means of protest against injustice integrated rather than disintegrated the national life and fostered co-operation rather than conflict by lifting the society to a high moral plane. In his use of the method of Satyagraha during the freedom struggle against the British in India whenever violence crept into the movement, Gandhi was quick to suspend it and simultaneously undertook a fast for atonement of the mistake. "His basic objective was to purify
politics by spiritualising it through emphasis of the ethical criterion. Gandhi was a realist enough to know that the state was all powerful and any attempt at sporadic organized violence would not succeed in the long run. Direct action may in the short run lead to beneficial results but it was in no way superior to the use of moral force for solution of problems. Hence, in a democracy the Gandhian philosophy of Satyagraha or Civil Disobedience with its emphasis on non-violence will remain as a powerful technique to bring about social change. 

Satyagraha is wilful and conscious self-sacrifice to melt the heart of the evil-doer so that he may see his own wrong done against his fellow-beings. Gandhi observed, "I have... ventured to place before India the ancient law of self sacrifice. For Satyagraha and its offshoots, non-co-operation and civil disobedience are nothing but new names for the law of suffering." he prescribed a number of necessary conditions for the success of satyagraha. The conditions are: "(1) the satyagrahi should not have any hatred in his heart against the opponent (2) The issue must be true and substantial. (3) The satyagrahi must be prepared to suffer till the end." Satyagrahi does not hate his opponent but his evil nature. Radhakrishnan aptly remarks, "Satyagraha is based on love, not on hate; on loving one's opponents and suffering to convert them. Aggressiveness is not an essential part of human nature. Combativeness can be replaced by meekness and gentleness. Satyagraha demands discipline and may

32. V.T.Patil (ed.), Studies on Gandhi, P.29
33. M.K.Gandhi, Hindu Dharma, P.162
34. M.K.Gandhi, My Non-violence, PP.236-237
entail self-sacrifice, suffering, fasting, imprisonment and death, yet it has 
the supreme virtue of providing means consonant with the highest ends. 
The Cross indicates that the love which suffers is more powerful than the 
force which inflicts suffering."³⁵

The philosophy of satyagraha is based on three fundamental 
assumptions:

1. Man's nature is not beyond redemption and it can be perfectible. 
2. Human nature is one in its essence and responds to love. 
3. What is possible to do for one man is equally possible to all.

The doctrine of satyagraha is based on the metaphysical 
belief that the tyrant may have power over the body and material 
possessions of a satyagrahi, but not over his soul. Hence "the soul can 
remain unconquered and unconquerable even when the body is 
imprisoned."³⁶

Role of Non-violence in the Political field:

In the history of the world, for the first time non-violence 
was tried out on the collective level and succeeded well due to the skilful 
leadership of Gandhi (A.D.1920-1942). In the realm of political conflicts

³⁵. S.Radhakrishnan and others (ed) Mahatma Gandhi 100 Years, P.4  
³⁶. Young India, 21-5-1931
involving political domination, colonial subjection and repression-Gandhi himself demonstrated the efficacy of satyagraha primarily through non-co-operation and civil disobedience. There are numerous examples in history which show that a political attempt based on truth is ultimately victorious. Ashoka the Great (272-232 B.C.) based his politics on non-violence and was able to establish an empire without war. After the Kalinga war, he praised, preached, and practised non-violence. Even outside India there sprang up sages and seers who denounced violence. They were found in different ages and in different parts of the world; to mention a few-Laotse, Jesus Christ, Socrates, Wycliffe, Tolstoy, Ruskin and Thoreau Lessing. Having tremendous faith in the principle of non-violence, Gandhi applied it in fighting against political supression. For the first time it was in South Africa that he used this weapon for saving the political rights of the Asiatics living there. Gandhi evolved the term Satyagraha to give a distinctive identity to his non-violent movement in South Africa for the first time in the political field. Gandhi regarded Satyagraha as the main weapon of non-violence so far as freedom movement in concerned. Satyagraha is nothing but non-violence in action. By applying this principle of non-violence Gandhi guided the national movement in India and succeeded in freeing India from the shackles of foreign domination. Even Lord Mounbatten, the last British Viceroys hailed Gandhi as "the architect of India's freedom through non-violence." Through the application of this principle Gandhi brought about a bloodless revolution.
Gandhi accordingly practised non-violence in every walk of life. But, in one respect, there is a marked difference between Gandhi and his predecessors. Gandhi has much extended the scope of non-violence. What other men have taught as a personal discipline, Gandhi has transformed it into a social programme for redemption of the world. He utilised this weapon in India's struggle for freedom, which is possible without bloodshed. Ahimsa as a political weapon aroused the people of developing countries to gain their last freedom. It has a great deal to extend the area of peace in national and international spheres. Gandhi was a bitter critic of dictatorship. He supported democracy. In a non-violent democracy, every one shall be equally free. In his opinion a democracy based on violence cannot protect the weak. In a democracy based on non-violence, the weakest shall have equal opportunities with the strongest in the society. "True democracy or the Swaraj of the masses can never came through untruthful and violent means, for the simple reason that the natural corollary to their use would be to remove all opposition through the suppression or extermination of the antagonists. That does not make for individual freedom. Individual freedom can have the fullest play only under a regime of undulerated ahimsa." By this principle of non-violence Gandhi added a new chapter to the history of human civilization. According to Gandhi by collecting this weapon, all kinds of conflicts could be settled. In his own words, "non-violence in politics is a new weapon in the process of evolution." The fact that there are so many

37. Harijan, 27-5-39
38. Ibid, 23-10-1937
men still alive in the world shows that it is based not on force of arms but on the force of truth and love.

The bloodless revolution brought about by Vinoba Bhave in the form of Bhūdāna Yajña is entirely based on the principle of non-violence. Three years after Gandhi's death, in 1951, Vinobaji picked up the Gandhian thread and started the Bhoodan movement as a moral movement. While it took up the cause of the last man, the landless agricultural labourer, the perspective it placed before the people was that of Gramaswarajya, village self-rule. Bhoodan later developed into Gramdan which made the picture of Gramswarajya clear, where people are makers of their destiny, people are a real power, distinct from state power and their power must be recognised as such in a democracy. In the course of the Bihar movement in 1974-75 Jaya Prakash Narayan asked people to organise their own 'Janata Sarkars' in their villages. His idea was to organise villages on a permanent basis with their own village assemblies.

Thus it is evident that a non-violent revolution, for Gandhi, is not a programme of seizure of political power, but it is a programme of transformation of relationship that existed between exploiters and the exploited. He gave little importance to the state to bring about political change. Hence his methodology of political change is not based on the capture of state power or on the destruction of established institutions to bring radical changes in the political system. He relied much on the
energy of the masses at the grass root level to play the dominant role to bring about political change. Hence his conception of political change is more evolutionary than revolutionary. For Gandhi, satyagraha is an infallible means for resolving all social, political and economic evils. Explaining the Satyagraha movement before the Hunter Committee Gandhi said, "It is a movement intended to replace methods of violence and a movement based entirely upon truth."39

Role of Non-violence in Economic Field:

Mahatma Gandhi had his own approach to the economic problems of India. He applied non-violence in economic field also. He applied this weapon against the economic oppression of the people. His earliest encounters through non-violent Satyagraha were in the field of economic oppression in Champaran in Bihar and in support of the textile mill workers of Ahmedabad in 1917. On both these cases he demonstrated the importance of non-violence in the economic field. Gandhi did not believe in promoting large scale industrialisation which rendered economic dislocation and was responsible for many of our economic problems. Gandhi was opposed to the use of machinery which was responsible for exploitation. For him, machine was a sin and unhealthy introduction in our economy. Gandhi emphasised upon small scale and cottage industries, which preserved harmony. A life devoid of physical

labour, was, to him a sin. Exploitation cannot exist in a society in which non-violence does.

Gandhi wants to emphasise the basic philosophy of non-violence in its relation to man by which man must find out the simple means of leading a life in mutual harmony and goodness. For this, individual sacrifice serves as a positive point. Therefore, Gandhi introduces Charkha which facilitates man to final out the life of simplicity, harmony and amity. The quality of self-sufficiency also becomes a practical aspect of life, which serves as a positive force to cultivate the spirit of non-violence and freedom of mind. "I hold that without truth and non-violence there can be nothing but destruction for humanity. We can realize truth and non-violence only in the simplicity of village life and this simplicity can best be found in the Charkha and all that the Charkha connotes."40

Gandhi believed that use of Khaddar or Khadi could provide employment to millions of unemployed Indians. It helped both the poor and the rich in establishing a close link between various Indian communities and living in harmony and co-operation with each other. According to Gandhi every citizen must put in some intelligent social service to the community and eat what he produced. By 'Bread labour' Gandhi means that in order to live man must work. Gandhi derived the

40. D.G.Tendulkar: Mahatma, quoted from the Gandhian Philosophy of Man, Mohit Chakravorty P.151-152
concept of 'bread-labour' from Tolstoy and Ruskin. He also claimed that the same principle is set forth in the Gita. Where we are told that "He who eats without offering sacrifice, eats stolen food,"41 Here the word 'sacrifice' is interpreted by Gandhi to mean 'bread-labour'. Gandhi asked, "How can a man who does not do body labour, have the right to eat."42 In support of his argument Gandhi quoted the famous Biblical saying, "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread."43 It is essential for every man to realise the dignity of labour and to think that at least for earning his own bread one must do some manual work. The importance of manual work and the necessity of doing labour came to his mind from Tolstoy for the first time. For, Tolstoy, the man who abstains from manual labour is a thief of the society. Gandhi is indebted to Tolstoy for his philosophy of bread-labour. He says, "the Law, that to live man must work, first came home to me upon reading Tolstoy's writing on bread-labour."44 Only those men deserve to eat bread who are actually tilling the ground, spinning cloth and producing things. All men, great or small, high or low, rich or poor must earn their bread by physical labour.

According to the law of bread-labour, the people who multiply their wants and free themselves from manual labour are exploiting the labour of the poor and using them as mere means for their gratification. Though physical labour is mainly related to agriculture,

41. M.K.Gandhi, My Socialism, P.60
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
Gandhi thought that people should take other forms of productive manual work like spinning, weaving, carpentry, smithery etc. where agriculture is not possible at all. According to Gandhi, mental or intellectual labour is necessary in life, but the needs of the body must be supplied by the body itself. As he argued, "without the products of the earth, those of the intellect would be an impossibility."45 He wanted to break down the aristocracy of the brain. He believed that the brain workers would not be able to appreciate the dignity of manual labour unless physical labour is made the supreme source of wealth. If all men turn voluntarily themselves into manual labourers, then the distinctions of rank in society would be abolished and there will be "no rich and no poor, none high and none low."46 Gandhi wanted to make the law of bread-labour obligatory to all the Varnas of the Hindu society.47 The introduction of the law in a hierarchical authoritarian and closed Hindu society is undoubtedly a progressive step as it cuts at the root of social inequality which is institutionalized through the age-old caste system.

Like Marx, Gandhi believed in labour being the real capital and supported equitable distribution but he opposed class struggle. Gandhi wants every man to be treated as equal. The rich are the trustees of public wealth and they should spend it accordingly. Gandhi suggested the adoption of non-violent non-co-operation in order to end capitalism. To remove the exploitation of one class by another, Gandhi stressed on the

45. M.K. Gandhi, Young India, 15-10-1925
46. M.K. Gandhi, My Socialism, P 65
47. Ibid., P 61
theory of trusteeship, which provides a permanent solution to class
conflict in a very humane, non-violent, and peaceful manner. According
to Gandhi, the theory of Trusteeship of the wealth lies at the doctrine of
equal distribution. Non-violent, non-co-operation is the infallible means to
bring about trusteeship, because the rich cannot accumulate wealth
without co-operation of the poor in society. On the other hand, a thorough
reconstruction of village life is possible only through trusteeship. As
trustees, said Gandhi, "the owners would be allowed to retain reasonable
commission for themselves in recognition of their service on usefulness
to society. In case the owners proved impervious to the appeal to reason,
the weapons of non-violent non-co-operation would be brought in to
play."48

Though Gandhi recognised the antagonism of classes, on
account of his belief in conversion through non-violent means he opposed
the necessity of class conflict. He wanted to transform the existing
relations between the capitalists and labourers through his non-violent
method and said, "I expect to convert the Zamindars and other capitalists
by the non-violent method, and therefore there is for me nothing like an
inevitability of class conflict.....If I thought it inevitable, I should not
hesitate to preach it and teach it."49 Gandhi further observed,
"Exploitation of the poor can be extinguished not by effecting the
destruction of a few millionaires but by removing the ignorance of the

49. Harijan, 5-12-1936
poor and teaching them non-co-operation with their exploiters. That will convert the exploiters also." The trusteeship theory does not recognize the inherent, unrestricted, irresponsible and absolute right of private property. It is not optional but obligatory. Trusteeship is not a permanent tenure for holding property, but it is only a transitory stage towards socialization of large scale property. It gives no quarter to exploitation but gives the present owning class a chance of reforming itself. Thus Gandhi's trusteeship provides a means of transforming the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one.

Non-violence in the Social Field:

Gandhi stressed non-violence in the social sphere too. It is clear that Gandhi aims at the establishment of a society in which peace and happiness will reign supreme. Gandhi's campaigns for improving the conditions of the untouchables and the widows were based upon his sermon of equality. Gandhi hated untouchability which he felt was justified neither on human nor on moral grounds. Caste system was as much evil as untouchability. Restriction on widow marriage was also the cause of many social evils which could be removed by encouraging widow re-marriage. Gandhi could not cherish the idea of child marriage. Child marriage resulted in poor health of the couple and also in population explosion. He favoured inter-caste and inter-communal marriages.

50. Ibid., 28-7-1940
In this social field too, the ideal at the base is non-violence. Exploitation, be it social, political or economic, is violence. For the elimination of all these Gandhi suggested the method of non-violent non-co-operation.

Gandhi wanted a classless society, wherein every individual got equal opportunity for his or her all-round development. This he called 'Sarvodaya Samaj', in which love, non-violence, truth and justice and 'service to all' would be the ideal of each citizen. His dream was to build an ideal society where every individual should have a feeling of freedom or 'Swaraj'. He takes particular care to emphasise this. "the Swaraj of my dream is the poor man's swaraj. The necessities of life should be enjoyed by you in common with those enjoyed by princes and monied men."51

The goal of Gandhi and Marx is similar in so far as both seek to liberate man from social, political and economic bondage and to create exploitation free society. Gandhi and Marx are anarchists in their political views. They have conceived the ideal of a classless society devoid of any state apparatus, free from all kinds of exploitation. But the very concept of social ideal through force and violence and the dictatorship of the politariate differs from Gandhian social idealism. In the case of Gandhi, a society organised and run on the basis of complete non-violence would be

51. Young India, 26-3-1931
the purest anarchy. His concept of social ideal is to be obtained through non-violence and in a democratic way.

Thus we can say that Marx and Gandhi do not differ much in ideology. "Suffering Masses" are the immediate object of worship to both of them. But they differ as to the ways and means of attaining the goal. While Marx supports violence to achieve the end, Gandhi speaks of non-violence. Man is not a machine. It has a mind different from other animals. Man's mind can be changed as the robber Ratnakara is changed to the sage Valmiki. The enemy may be transformed to a good friend. The weapon of killing can be utilised for better end. This is based on the belief of human values.

Among the contemporary thinkers of India the name of Mahatma Gandhi will remain high because of his simple and straightforward views which he preached and practised without swerving from truth at any moment during his long career as a social reformer, a political leader, a true lover of humanity and an apostle of peace and non-violence. Non-violence the only remedy against organized violence, which during the first half of the twentieth century had twice given unlicensed freedom to hatred, disorder and destruction.

According to Gandhi non-violence is not a philosophical principle but it is the very breath of his life. He had applied it in every walk of life domestic, institutional, economic and political problems.
Sometimes, when he had failed in any case, he ascribed it to his imperfections. Gandhi's chief message to man was to concentrate all his efforts in the discovery of truth. He believed that through such discovery he would change society also. Ahimsa, is not merely a negative state of harmlessness but it is a positive state of love, of doing good even to the evil-doer. It has no room for cowardice or even weakness. "These hope for a violent man to be some day non-violent, but there is none for a coward. I have therefore, said more than once in these pages that if we do not know how to defend ourselves, our women and our places of worship by the force of suffering, i.e. non-violence, we must, if we are men, be at least able to defend all these by fights."\(^{52}\)

\(\checkmark\) Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence is inseparable from the conception of truth. Non-violence or ahimsa is the means to seek and find the truth. It is the soul of truth. Non-violence and truth are so intertwined "that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are like two sides of a coin."\(^{53}\) According to Gandhi truth and non-violence are identical terms. Non-violence or Ahimsa is the means to seek and find that truth. Ahimsa is the soul of truth. Ahimsa is the means and Satya - the truth - is the end. This truth and its attainment through the means of non-violence must be viewed against the background of human nature. Human nature is a mixture of good and evil, weakness and strength, violence and non-violence. According to Gandhi, ahimsa is the one and only means for

\(^{52}\) Young India, 16-6-27
\(^{53}\) N.K.Bose, Selections from Gandhi, P.14
attaining truth "Ahimsa is not the goal. Truth is the goal. But we have no means of realizing truth in human relationship except through the practice of ahimsa."\textsuperscript{54} Again, "Truth is my religion and ahimsa is the only way of its realization."\textsuperscript{55} Gandhi's theory of Satyagraha is an integral part of his theory of truth; in so far as it is an attempt to insist on and realise truth, it is an inseparable part of his theory of non-violence.

Gandhi's thought of identification of God and Truth was most significant. He identifies God with Truth and makes the terms convertible. For him the statement that Truth is God is a perfect statement. But if we consider the etymological meaning of the word "satya", it is derived from the root "sat" which means to exist eternally. Satya is truth. And this Truth he calls God. That means to Gandhi Truth is God. According to Gandhi, "the nearest approach to truth was through love."\textsuperscript{56}

Non-violence as a humanistic endeavour teaches man the art of self-discipline. Gandhi identifies man with the marks of non-violence and Truth that represents God as well as self-discipline. According to him if the senses of every human being are controlled in a self-disciplined manner which denotes a positive approach to Truth or non-violence, the manifestation of God in him becomes, a reality. "He (A man) must be completely free from anger and lust, greed and attachment, pride and

\textsuperscript{54} Harijan, 23-6-1946
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{56} N.K.Bose, Selections From Gandhi, P.4

110
fear......He who has mastered his senses is first and foremost among men. All virtues reside in him, God manifests Himself through him."^{57}

In Gandhi's thought non-violence and love were synonymous. It would be seen that though the word ahimsa originally conveyed the negative sense of non-injury, it was interpreted and used by Gandhi in the positive sense as well. Non-injury for him was a virtue in so far as it expressed love and good-will. So he sometimes translated ahimsa with the word love."^{58} According to Gandhi non-violence is not a negative attitude. It is a positive attitude of tolerance, patience, self-sacrifice and self-suffering. It includes the power of the spirit, the power of truth and power of love. Gandhi gave five reasons for which non-violence is preferable than violence. These are—

First, non-violence is more effective than violence.

Secondly, it is a triumph of moral and spiritual principle over the 'brute force'.

Thirdly, love and non-violence are in accordance with reality and it must triumph ultimately.

Fourthly, non-violence shakes the opponent's will and destroys his morals.

---

57. Pyarelal, Mahatma Gandhi: The last Phase. Quoted from The Gandhian Philosophy of Man, by Mohit Chakravorty. P.158
58. D.M.Datta, The Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, P.102
Lastly, Non-violence purifies the spirit.

Gandhi was deeply impressed by Christianity, particularly the Sermon on the Mount, which he read being propelled by Tolstoy's writings. Jesus's life is itself a message of universal love. Jesus said: "Love one another as I have loved you. There is no greater love than this that a man should lay down his life for his friends ..........This is my commandment to you love one another."\(^59\)

To Gandhi non-violence was a way of life as well as an ideal. This recognition was to shape our conduct to reach the ideal as near as possible in reality.\(^60\) The ideal in the process of non-violence was the achievement of a quality of mind. Gandhi was aware that it was a difficult ideal to achieve. That is why he accepted different grades of non-violence to man, beasts and insects.\(^61\)

The adoption of absolute non-violence in life is not only difficult, but impossible for practical reasons. Hence the path of non-violence is not simple, but very arduous and complicated. While defining non-violence Gandhi remarked again and again that this path is not meant for a coward or a weakling but for the brave and courageous. Non-

---

59. John, XV: 12,13,14 and 17 Quoted by Benudhar Pradhan, the Socialist thought of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol 1, P.119
60. The Complete Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol.54, P.437
61. Ibid. P.456
violence or ahimsa is really for the strong and not for cowards and the weak. Gandhi believed in non-violence as an active and positive force and translated it into action. He never allowed cowardice, because a coward never knows how to accept non-violence. It is the weapon of the brave alone. "My creed of non-violence is an extremely active force. It has no room for cowardice or even weakness. There is hope for a violent man to be some day non-violent, but there is none for a coward. I have therefore said more than once in these pages that if we do not know how to defend ourselves, our women and our places of worship by the force of suffering, i.e. non-violence, we must, if we are men, be at least able to defend all these by fighting."  

"Between violence and cowardly fight, I can only prefer violence to cowardice. I can no more preach non-violence to a coward than I can tempt a blind man to enjoy healthy scenes. Non-violence is the summit of bravery. And in my own experience, I have had no difficulty in demonstrating to men trained in the school of violence the superiority of non-violence. As a coward, which I was for years, I harboured violence. I began to prize non-violence only when I began to shed cowardice."

Gandhi is a great advocate of truth through non-violence and love. Without the principle of truth-speaking, non-killing and universal love, our human relation would be impossible. As non-violence is a universal concept and its place is the human heart, the use and the

62. Young India, 16-6-27
63. R.K.Prabhu & U.R.Rao (compiled): The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi, Quoted from The Gandhian Philosophy of Man, by Mohit Chakraborty, P.139-140
application of non-violence is not very difficult. But the difficulty exists in the way of practice in life, because the human nature appears to be different at the different levels of individual social existence.

Of course, it is not possible to follow the path of non-violence in the strict sense of the term. The total avoidance of violence is not possible for a living being. Now if the question arises—whether complete non-violence is possible or not, the answer is clear 'no'. Because, for survival also everybody has to violate something naturally. For survival, we are bound to kill some living things. Sometimes we are required to kill some insects for self-protection and to live on the vegetation which are also living beings. This killing of insects is certainly violence, which can be excused according to Gandhi. Killing of dangerous wild animals for self-protection is a duty. We have to kill them for the sake of living, and we do not commit violence in doing so. The Hindu law-giver Manu allowed killing of animals for sacrifice and food. Even he allowed killing in self-defence. But Gandhi rejects Manu's liberality in permitting killing for the sake of eating flesh or for the religious sacrifices. Having considered absolute non-violence impossible, Gandhi advocated relative violence for the common man. In his speeches and writings he made clear that his non-violence is a peculiar non-violence. For example, he does not think compassion shown to man-eating wild animals in non-violence. In this respect Gandhi is similar to the Jainas in austerity and rigidity. But Gandhi differs from the Jainas, because for him, killing is not evil in all circumstances. Sometimes killing is a duty. One
may use disinfectants for killing the mosquitoes and pests. Gandhi realized that in some exceptional cases, killing may be necessary. For example, when a dog becomes rabid and there is no chance of recovery, it should be killed. Where there is danger from Tigers, Wolves and so on, then killing becomes inevitable. The germs that water contains must also be inevitably destroyed. Again, " suppose a man runs amuck and goes furiously about sword in hand, and killing any one that comes in his way, and no one dares to capture him alive. Anyone who despatches this lunatic, will earn the gratitude of the community and be regarded as a benevolent man." 64

Gandhi was the unique personality in the whole world to use non-violence in its positive aspect, although most of his followers could not understand the real implication of non-violence in every walk of life. Fearlessness, selflessness, sacrifice of everything for the cause of truth, the winning of heart of the enemy by extending love centre round the concept of truth. Gandhi's non-violence is not easily digestible by the average followers of Gandhi. So after independence, the people of India seem to begin ignoring the importance of Gandhi's ideology of truth and non-violence except Satyagraha in the political affairs.

Though this modern world, materially is too much advanced, it is unfortunately, spiritually too much behind also. On all sides, there is fear and violence. The strong attempt to rule over the weak. Peace has

64. N.K.Bose, Selections from Gandhi, P.156
become a cherished ideal to be attained. Many conferences on disarmament have been held everywhere, but success attained so far has been meagre. The maxim says— whoever lives by the sword, by the sword shall die. Mud can never be washed off with mud but only with clear water. Darkness can removed by only light. Hatred can never end hatred but only love can end hatred. So violence cannot end violence and bring peace. Non-violence is the best way to end violence and achieve permanent peace which is a positive force.

When Gandhi saw that it was not easy to persuade majority of the people to adopt non-violence, he, therefore, sponsored minimum application of violence, if necessary. According to Gandhi, when one is spiritually not strong enough to meet some situation through non-violence, there is no other way but to take a violent method. Thus, he said, in order to protect an innocent woman from the brutal designs of a man, we should try to conquer the brute in that man by the force of love. On another occasion, he said that when monkey has destroyed the paddy field, the peasant should kill them for the protection of the paddy. Thus, as in the case of the protection of a paddy-field, so in the case of the protection of a country, violence is necessary. While for one who is spiritually bold enough to conquer his enemies through love, or for one who has renounced the world end required one nothing for himself, violence is not necessary. But, for one, who is not so spiritually strong; it is necessary.
Thus we can say that Gandhi does not consider non-violence as a mere philosophical principle. It has a great practical value to him. As he puts it, it is "the rule and the breath of my life......It is a matter not of the intellect but of the heart."\(^\text{65}\) We can say that Gandhi does not use the word 'ahimsa' in some special sense which is entirely different from its traditional and customary sense, but he has emphasized certain aspects of ahimsa which have not been given that importance by others. As a result, Gandhi's use of the word has some distinctive feature of its own. But at last we can say that the world requires a philosopher like Gandhi-who approved non-violence for a country where majority of people believed in non-violence. Everyone should accept complete non-violence in the world which is the ideal, the goal of mankind. If somebody practised ahimsa or non-violence in domestic life, it becomes easy for him to attain success in his relationship with others. Because to a non-violent man, the whole world appears like a family where there will be no way to fear. On the other hand, violence is always subordinate to non-violence. Non-violence is the higher path, a power of the pure soul; which is much higher than violence and weapon of the brave. It is a positive attitude of tolerance, patience, self-sacrifice and self-suffering. It is the law of human beings which includes power of spirit, truth and love. Practice of non-violence at the individual level can gradually lead to the practice of non-violence at the institutional level.

\(^{65}\) M.K.Gandhi, Non-violence in Peace and War. Vol.1 PP.74-75