Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Mohandas K. Gandhi was born in 1869 to Hindu parents in the state of Gujarat in Western India. His family later sent him to London to study law, and in 1891 he was admitted to the Inner Temple, and called to the bar. He went to Southern Africa he worked ceaselessly to improve the rights of the immigrant Indians who were there. It was there that he developed his creed of passive resistance against injustice, satyagraha, meaning truth force and was frequently jailed as a result of the protests that he led. Before he returned to India in 1915, he had radically changed the lives of Indian living in Southern Africa.

Back in India, it was not long before he was taking the lead in the long struggle for independence from Britain. He never wavered in his unshakable belief in nonviolent protest and religious intolerance. When Muslim and Hindu compatriots committed acts of violence, whether against the British who ruled India or against each other, he undertook fasts until the fighting ceased. Indian Independence, when
it came in 1947, was not a military victory, but a triumph of human will. To Gandhi's despair, however, the country was partitioned into Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan. The last two months of his life were spent trying to end the appalling violence which ensued, leading him to fast to the brink of death, an act which finally quelled the riots. In January 1948, at the age of 79, he was killed by an assassin.

Many universities have prescribed in their syllabi of social thought beginning from Comte and coming down to Gandhi. Social life and social thought are two charming streams; one cannot exist without the other. On one side, social life inspires social thought and on the other, social thought moulds, transforms and sets up social life. The process of social philosophy dates back to the origin of civilization. “Civilization means a society based upon the opinion of civilians. It means that violence, the rule of warriors and despotic chiefs, the condition of camps and warfare, of riot and tyranny, give place to parliaments where laws are made and maintained.” - The above words of Sir Winston Churchill talk strongly about the deep relation between man's life and his thought. The study of a civilized society will definitely be incomplete unless there is a thorough study of the social thought of the ancient, the medieval and the modern world.
Changes happen to every society due to the influence of time, place and rituals (‘kala, desha, āchāra’). The Sun, the Moon, the Stars and the Sky remain almost changeless but man yields himself to changes. Places all over have undergone changes.

Whenever there is a visible change in the normative values of man, there will be a change in the society. Gandhi stood changeless in an ever-changing world of time, place and rituals then he stands changeless in his thought, India can live on not meeting with her death.

While Ram Mohan Roy is called as ‘the Father of Modern India’, Gandhi is affectionately called ‘the Father of the Nation’. The impact of British imperialism, western social and political thought, science and technology, roused the Indian people and leaders like Ram Mohan Roy, Gandhi and Nehru to build a Modern India. Ram Mohan Roy became the Father of Modern India, Gandhi, the Father of the Nation and Nehru, the Architect of Modern India. The emancipation of women and the beginning of secular education were the two powerful movements initiated by Ram Mohan Roy which contributed much to the renaissance of India. Gandhi, a century after, not only reinforced these ideas, but launched an attack against the various traditional weak points of our country that had spoiled the unity and
charity of the Indian society. Considering the rural background of India, Gandhi stood for establishing cottage industries.

Gandhi had his own views about the negative impacts of mechanization and automation especially in India. "Modern man is the victim of machines which he values most. Every gain in power, every mastery of natural forces, every scientific addition to knowledge, has proved potentially dangerous, because it has not been accompanied by equal gains in self-understanding and self-discipline". Gandhi believed in 'social gain' which is gain 'for all' and not the gain for a privileged few.

Gandhi played a vital role in moulding the minds of millions and designing the present day India. This has been accepted even by scientists. Einstein (1879-1955) wrote of him ".....a Leader of his people unsupported by any outward authority whose success rests not upon craft nor the mastery of technical devices, but simply on the convincing power of his personality, a victorious fighter who has always scored the use of force, a man of wisdom and humility, armed with resolve and inflexible consistency who has devoted all his strength to the uplifting of the people and betterment of their lot, a man who has confronted the brutality of Europe with the dignity of the
simple human being and thus at all times risen superior. Generations to come, it may be, will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth”.

It was in the first half of the 20th century that Gandhi appeared on the stage of Indian politics with a definite programme for life and a unique style of action. He felt that the state is perfect and non-violent when its people are governed fairly. Gandhi stood for organized social development in a context where a perfect state was practically impossible. He was more concerned about the balanced development of the society, giving special stress on the spiritual and moral development of the individual. If the society is taken as the structure, the individual as its components each individual have a function to perform. Gandhi’s plan was to build up India with the help of individuals belonging to a rural setup. He has in his mind the following means and measures for the framing up of a balanced Indian society.

1. Building up of communal unity
2. Removal of untouchability
3. Introduction of universal adult education
4. Organizing the peasants, protecting their rights and helping them to lead a non-violent and pleasant life
5. Giving due consideration to the ‘adivasis’
Gandhi was a True LEADER in every sense of the term. He was ‘Lovable, Educated, Able, Dutiful, Enduring, and Righteous.

Gandhi viewed education with much respect and believed that the aim of all education and progress was to develop the collective instinct in man; to teach him to cooperate with his neighbours.

As a leader, Gandhi showed his ability to lead his people to victory. In H. W. Longfellow’s words, “We judge ourselves by what we feel capable of doing, while others judge us by what we have already done. Gandhi was capable of making all impossibilities possible and in his case ability meant responsibility power and duty.”

A leader ought to do all his duties in different capacities unfailingly. In this context the Bhagavad Gita says, “He who performs his duty, understands the secret of work rises above good and evil”.

Gandhi believed in ‘Nishkāma Karma’. Sri Krishna says: about Niskama Karma “The man who doeth that which he hath to do, without attachment to the result, obtaineth the Supreme”. 
Gandhi was ever alert ‘in doing today’s duty and fighting today’s temptation’. He also believed that the only right course for a man was to do his duty from morning to evening like a worm.

About ‘fearlessness’ which is an outcome of righteousness Gandhi says: “Fearlessness should never mean want of due respect or regard for the feelings of others”.

It is because of these qualities of Gandhi’s leadership, Sardar Patel writes: “It is to Gandhi that we all owe our freedom” and Albert Einstein: “We are fortunate and should be grateful – that fate has bestowed upon us so luminous a contemporary – a beacon to the generations to come”.

Gandhi was a man of vision with a definite mission in life. He tried to remould the individual and reshape the human society on the basis of certain principles. In fact, these principles formed the framework of his philosophy that dealt with his desire to ‘change history’.

Like our former sages and philosophers, Gandhi considered self-knowledge as the supreme wisdom and
Truth as the highest possession. He writes, “The purpose of life, is undoubtedly to know oneself”¹. According to him, “there is no search greater than that of Truth and the whole life is to be a “perpetual quest for Truth”². The truth that man is after, is the truth about himself: what is man? What is his destiny? For Gandhi “the supreme consideration is man.”³ And his vision (darshana)⁴ of man is the central theme of our present discussion.

Like the prophets and reformers, Gandhi had an integral view of man and life. He tried to purify religion and society by fighting against all that is inhuman and irrational. He wanted to convert social institutions into embodiments of moral values that guide and mould the minds of millions. He regarded the individual the centre of social transformation. Hence, he concentrated on the reformation of the individual and insisted that life should be regulated in accordance with an integrated scheme based on a coherent system of principles and values. Gandhi’s practical schemes of action and their explanations together constitute his philosophy of life.

Human life is viewed as an undivided unity. The external life is the expression and extension of the internal reality. There is unity between thought, word and deed. And there is continuity between the different spheres of
life. Compartmentalization of life is incompatible with this view of life. The seemingly separate segments are but different facets of the complex human life. A realistic approach is needed to make this complexity clear.

In ancient India, philosophy was closely related to religion. The one fused into the other and both, together, contributed much to make life nobler. Philosophy was not merely a view of life but primarily a way of life. Its aim was the ultimate liberation of the soul from its bondage to mundane existence. It was an approach to spiritual realization. To emphasize the inner spiritual aspect Indian philosophy takes a contemplative turn and develops into a sort of mysticism. The stress is more on the intuitive and empirical side of life than on the discursive and experimental knowledge. Knowledge is a liberating experience (mokshanubhava) and wisdom is salvific. It is to be attained by self-discipline, ascetical practices and concentration (yoga). Intuition is of primary importance. In the process of attaining knowledge Logic, is not neglected. It is useful for the systematic exposition of the truth that is intuitively perceived.

The ancient Indian philosophers were great sages (Rishis) and saints. Their spiritual perception (darshana) of Truth was transmitted to the following generations as guide
to life and as aid to liberation (moksha). Like the Indian sages of old, Gandhi converted his life into a continuous and relentless search for Truth as a means to liberation and relied on his intuition and “inner voice” rather than on syllogistic reasoning. His ideas emerged from the crucible of his day to day life and his conclusions bear the stamp of his personal experience. I have,” he writes, “seen the world. I have lived in the world with my eyes open, I have gone through the most fiery ordeals that have fallen to the lot of man.” Gandhi’s philosophy, therefore, is not a reasoned out and well-formulated system but a spiritual perception, an experience tending to flower into the supreme experience of spiritual liberation. It is a philosophy not expounded or spelt out in words but made real by life. His life was the exposition of this philosophy. “My life is my message,” he wrote in September 1947, a few months before his passing away. He looked for Truth not in the solitary forest caves of the recluse, nor on the mountain tops of high speculation, but in the innermost self of man and in the midst of the hurly-burly of daily life. It is only with that special frame of mind and the peculiar perspective can one enter into the mind of Gandhi, and grasp and share his vision. It may be significantly called ‘darshana’, a word rich in import in the Indian religio-philosophical context.
Gandhi’s ideas are scattered throughout the enormous amount of literature that has come from him over a period of over fifty years. Except a few books, his writings were in the form of letters and articles. His ‘Collected Works’ which run into one hundred volumes include numerous speeches and interviews. It is a challenge to any student of Gandhi’s thought to pick out the relevant ideas and arrange them coherently around a central theme. His language is not the specialized language of the philosophers but of the ordinary people often with religious and mystical connotations.

Gandhi was not a metaphysician in the sense of one who has given a systematic account of Reality. However, a careful study of his life and his writings reveal a metaphysical core, and certain unshakable convictions about the ultimate nature of Reality, which formed the basis of his vision of man and life. An attempt is made in this chapter to bring together the various ideas of Gandhi’s metaphysical presuppositions and organize them into a meaningful system. Following the Upanishadic terminology, Gandhi called Reality - “Sat”. Sat literally means “that which exists”. “Sat is the metaphysical expression of Ultimate Reality. That which ultimately exists is the one, spiritual, primordial source of the universe. In his Autobiography Gandhi wrote: “Often in my
progress I have had faint glimpses of the Absolute Truth, God, and daily the conviction is growing upon me that He alone is Real and all else is Unreal.”

The central idea in Gandhi’s metaphysical thought, therefore, is the idea of God as Sat and all other ideas were arranged around this nucleus.

Gandhi was imbued with the teaching of the first verse of his favourite Ishopanishad which says: “All this that we see in this great universe is pervaded by God.”

God fills the world. Yet the world does not fully contain Him. He transcends man and the world. “He is in us yet above and beyond us.”

Gandhi points out that, there is a law that abides and governs everything in the universe. The particular laws which govern different spheres of the universe are the different ways of working of this one law. This law is God Himself. The whole universe is throbbing with life. There is no dead matter. Matter itself is a form of life, perhaps, the crudest form. Infact, the law which governs the universe “is not a blind law; for no blind law can govern the conduct of living beings.” Gandhi identified this ‘Living Law’ with the ‘Living God’. “The Law, that governs all life which is God.”
The Formless God assumes form for His devotee. "A man sees God as he worships Him" and "what he sees will be a creation of his own imagination." In 1944, four years before his assassination, Gandhi wrote "I do not believe in a personal deity, but I believe in the Eternal Law of Truth and Love which I have translated as non-violence. This Law is not a dead thing like the law of a king. It is a living thing --- the Law and the Law-giver are one. For those who realize this Truth, the Law-giver becomes a personal Deity." Gandhi identified Reality with God and God with Truth. "Truth is 'That' which Is, and Untruth is 'That' which is Not. Truth alone is the Ultimate Reality. Everything else is dependent on It and derived from it. "The world rests upon the bedrock of satya or truth. Asatya meaning untruth which also means non-existent, and satya or truth means that which exists. Truth, as the Ultimate Reality is the "central conception of Gandhi’s metaphysics" and the chief concern of his life. "It is this word", writes S.C. Thakur, "that imparts meaning and justification to everything that Gandhi stood for”. "Gandhi’s description of God as Truth reflects the Upansihadic tradition also, according to which God is Truth, knowledge and infinite. D. M. Datta writes. Gandhi believed in the axiom ‘Satyameva jayate’.
"The Upanishadic seers say, Conceive of God as the reality within us, which directly manifests itself in our inner knowledge, consciousness and life. So, knowledge is nothing but God Himself, and knowledge of God is not different from this God in us."\(^{16}\)

Truth, in the Upanishads, is not understood as the correspondence of knowledge with reality, involving the knowledge-reality dichotomy. In the empirical level, knowledge and its object are distinct. But there is a higher level of knowledge where knowing means becoming. "True knowledge or truth, thus becomes identical with reality. Similar views are held by thinkers in the West as well. Plato, for example, as Professor J.H. Muirhead points out, "while distinguishing knowledge and the fact known in the ordinary level of knowledge, held that “there is a higher level still.... In which these two are united but also transcended in a sense of an immediate vision and absorption in what is seen, and the mind seems at home with the very being of things."\(^{17}\)

Gandhi used the word “satya” for Truth and accepted its traditional meaning. It is derived from the word ‘sat’. "The name that Sanskrit has for Truth literally means that which is ----Sat.”\(^{18}\) On another occasion Gandhi wrote:
"The word Satya (Truth) is derived from Sat, which means verdure or ‘being’. Nothing is or exists in reality except Truth. That is why Sat or Truth is perhaps the most important name for God." Gandhi's interpretation of the Upanishadic appellation of the Ultimate as 'Sat-chit-ānanda' was in keeping with his description of God as Truth:

The Absolute Truth needs no proof. Just as the sun shines by its own light, the Absolute Truth "Shines with its own light and is its own proof. No finite mind can comprehend It fully. Yet all can have a partial insight into it. This insight is imperfect and relative. "Gandhi distinguished between relative truth as perceived by finite individuals---- relative to a particular set of ideas and circumstances and Truth as the summum bonum, i.e., Absolute Truth which he identified with God. Relative truth is not the Truth but one's truth, truth as perceived by the individual. Since man cannot have the whole truth, he has to be satisfied with partial truth: "Truth is not so simple as it appears to you... We must therefore, be content with believing the truth as it appears to us." In 1945, three years before his death, Gandhi expressed the same view, "I write the Truth as I personally see it. Absolute Truth alone is God. It is beyond reach. At the most, we can say it is neti, neti (not this, not this). The truth that we see is relative,
many sided, plural and be our ideal... and reaching it is attaining moksha.\textsuperscript{21}

This simple conversion of “God is Truth” into “Truth is God”, apart from its logical implications, marks a significant psychological transition in Gandhi’s life and entails metaphysical consequences.

Through constant effort and strenuous self-discipline, Gandhi developed the habit of listening to the “inner voice.” He says, “having made a ceaseless effort to attain self-purification, I have developed some little capacity to hear correctly and clearly the ‘still small Voice within’.”\textsuperscript{22} As years rolled by the “Voice” became increasingly audible to him.\textsuperscript{23} It was, as he resorted, unmistakable and at times sudden “preceded by terrific struggle within me.” He had absolutely no trace of doubt regarding the authenticity of the “Voice.” He writes “I can say this, because it is not the unanimous verdict of the whole world against me which could have shaken me from the belief that what I heard was the true Voice of God. For me the Voice was more real than my own existence.”

Reality has manifold aspects. Gandhi accepted the Jaina doctrine of the “many-sidedness of reality” (anekantavada), and the consequent epistemological
doctrine of conditional predication (syadvada). Reality, according to Jainism, has many aspects. It admits of several “points of view” (jnaya) from which statements can be made about it. Jainism limits the valid points of view to seven (saptabhangi). The statement made from any of these points of view is valid, but relative to that point of view. Since there are other valid points of view there is the possibility of having different statements (anekanta) about the same reality. He says, Gandhi was greatly influenced by this doctrine: He says, “I very much like this doctrine of the manyness of Reality. It is this doctrine that has taught me to judge a Mussalman from his own standpoint and a Christian from his... My anekantavada is the result of the twin doctrine of satya and ahimsa. Since reality is so complex in its structure and since human understanding is limited, no single statement is exhaustive of the whole reality. Every statement is partial and relative. Absolute affirmation and absolute negation are both erroneous according to syadvada: “No absolute affirmation or negation is possible about anything, for the nature of things is too complex to be exhausted in any single definite predication. Thus, all predications are predications only from a certain point of view.”

Gandhi has emphasized certain aspects of ahimsa which were not given due importance in the traditional
understanding of the word. On account of such emphasis there emerged "a Gandhian sense of the word" which has some distinctive features. For Gandhi, ahimsa has both a positive and a negative meaning. The positive meaning is more fundamental than the negative.

In its negative form ahimsa is "not injuring any living being whether by body or mind." It is avoiding injury to anything on earth in thought, word, and deed. It is the opposite of 'himsa' which means killing or hurting any life out of anger, ill will or selfish motive. It does not, however, include suffering caused by acts that do not proceed from ill will. "The essence of violence is that there must be a violent intention behind a thought, word, or act, i.e., an intention to do harm to the opponent so called." The negative meaning is only an insignificant aspect of ahimsa:

Not to hurt any living thing is no doubt a part of ahimsa. But it is its least expression. The principle of ahimsa is hurt by every evil thought, by undue haste, by lying, by hatred by wishing ill to anybody. It is also violated by our holding on to what the world needs.\(^{27}\)

In its positive form ahimsa means "the largest love, the greatest charity." It is doing good even to the evil-doer. In expounding the positive meaning of ahimsa, Gandhi
acknowledges his indebtedness to the teachings of Jesus and the writings of St. Paul. Non-violence in the form of love is a quality of the heart. It is a feeling of love kinship with all life and has no boundary. It is an attitude of mind to give away what one has and what one is without seeking anything in return: “a reckless giving away, oblivious as to what it gets in return.”

Ahimsa is a “self-acting force” and includes not only human beings but the whole creation. It is the greatest spiritual force that mankind has ever known. “Non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind.” Since it is an active force, Gandhi called it “active ahimsa.” “It is the greatest and the activistic force in the world... In spite of the negative particle ‘non’, it is no negative force... At the centre of non-violence is a force which is self-acting.”

Ahimsa, therefore, is not merely a superficial concern for lives of lower animals. “In its essence, ahimsa is a powerful emotion of the heart which finds expression in numerous forms of service.” The test and concrete expression of ahimsa is compassion. Where there is no compassion there is no ahimsa. Ahimsa, thus, is both an attitude of the mind, a well-balanced consideration of one’s neighbour, and actions consequent upon it; “If a person does not observe ahimsa in his relations with his neighbours and his associates, he is thousands of miles away from ahimsa.”
Ahimsa implies fearlessness because fear and love do not go together. "The word 'fear' has no place in the dictionary of ahimsa."\(^{35}\) Non-violence is the way of the brave and belongs to the brave. A coward cannot practise ahimsa. "My creed of non-violence is an extremely active force. It has no room for cowardice or even weakness."\(^{36}\) Cowardice is unmanly and worse than violence:

Gandhi says, Ahimsa is the way of the strong; and not of the weak. It calls for strength of man and not his retaliation. He alone can practise ahimsa which can kill but never does so. Non-violence presupposes ability to strike. It is a conscious, deliberate restraint which is put up on one's desire for vengeance. "A non-violent man or woman will and should die without retaliation, anger, or malice... This is the highest form of bravery."\(^{37}\) It is the readiness to immolate oneself for Truth. History bears witness to instances of men who immolated themselves on the altar of non-violence: "He who when being killed bears no anger against his murderer and even asks God to forgive him is truly non-violent. History relates this of Jesus Christ."\(^{38}\) Bravery does not consist in killing others but in dying boldly at the hand of others in defending Truth. This is self-immolation, and clinging to life in all circumstances betrays cowardice. Only the brave can die boldly: Cowards
die many a time but the brave dies only once. “There arises occasions in a man’s life when it becomes his imperative duty to meet them by laying down his life; not to appreciate this fundamental fact of man’s estate is to betray an ignorance of the foundation of ahimsa.” 39

Though Gandhi’s non-violence was not a policy or a temporary expedient, yet its application was confined to certain places and times: It was not a mere philosophical principle. Ahimsa was his religion, creed, rule of life, and God. In 1938 he wrote: “I have been a worshipper and servant of non-violence for fifty years.” 40 Gandhi considered ahimsa as the “law of our being” and proposed it as a philosophy of life” that should permeate and influence all aspects of one’s reality and all spheres of one’s activity.

Though Gandhi held out absolute non-violence as the ideal, he realized that, in practice, complete adherence to this ideal is impossible. In life it is impossible to eschew violence completely. There is violence in the very act of living. What is practical, therefore, is a kind of “limited non-violence” but always striving beyond the “status quo” to the ideal. In his autobiography Gandhi writes:
“Ahimsa is a comprehensive principle. We are helpless mortals caught in the conflagration of himsa. The saying that life lives on life has a deep meaning in it. Man cannot for a moment live without consciously or unconsciously committing outward himsa. The very fact of living-eating, drinking and moving about — necessarily involves some himsa, destruction of life, be it ever so minute. A votary of ahimsa therefore remains true to his faith if the spring of his actions is compassion, if he shuns to the best of his ability the destruction of the tiniest creature, tries to save it, and thus incessantly strives to be free from the deadly coil of himsa. He will be constantly growing in self-restraint and compassion but he can never become entirely free from outward himsa.”

Gandhi admitted that violence was inevitable at times. He did not allow pests and vermin to thrive at the cost of men. The emphasis that is laid on the sacredness of subhuman life does not mean that one is to be kind to this life in preference to human life. Gandhi allowed the inmates of his ashram to kill snakes and scorpions, and admitted that a farmer could be justified in shooting wild beasts which destroyed crops.

Ahimsa is the quality of the atman (soul). It is contrary to the nature of the atman to make others or let
others suffer. On this basis Gandhi justified mercy-killing. "Ahimsa implies inability to endure other creatures suffering pain." Gandhi allowed a calf, suffering excruciating pain, whose case the surgeon declared "to be past help and past hope" to be put to death. "I felt, “he wrote, “that humanity demanded that the agony should be ended by ending life itself.” This action was not himsa because “the killing was undertaken for the sake of the dump animal itself.

Gandhi extended this principle to human beings also. When an ailing man in beyond recovery and no further help can be rendered to him, and “is lying in an unconscious state in the throbes of fearful agony, then,” said Gandhi, “I would not see any himsa in putting an end to his suffering by death.” In such instances the body becomes an instrument of torture and the extreme step is taken “to relieve the suffering soul within from pain.” Just as the surgeon practices purest ahimsa when he wields his knife on his patient’s body for the latter’s benefit, “similarly one may find it necessary under certain imperative circumstances to go a step further and sever life from the body in the interest of the sufferer.” There are circumstances in which men prefer death to life. It is not always true that death is more painful than anything that man may suffer in life.
Ahimsa, thus, is a difficult ideal to practise. It is like balancing oneself on the edge of a sword. Often one has to tread the path of ahimsa all along. The principle is the same for all. As for the application of the principle the individual has to decide on his own. “At every step he has to use his discrimination as to what is ahimsa and what is himsa.”\textsuperscript{47} Gandhi laid great stress on the responsibility of the individual and the subjective aspect of ahimsa.

There is an inextricable connection between Truth and non-violence in Gandhi’s philosophy. They are inseparable and presuppose each other. Truth and ahimsa are the “observe and reverse” of the same coin: “Ahimsa and Truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are like the two sides of a coin, or rather of a smooth unstamped metallic disk.”\textsuperscript{48} Ahimsa is the expression of Truth in the world of phenomena. The Absolute Truth which is the sum total of all relative truths is the Ultimate Reality. It is one and is beyond human understanding. Yet it is not totally unknowable. It reveals itself in nature and man as the law of love. Thus the law of love is the mundane expression of the supreme law, i.e., Truth.
Truth, the ultimate ontological reality, which is Gandhi’s God, thus, reveals itself in the phenomenal world as the law of love, ahimsa, which becomes the law or philosophy of life. Ahimsa can be lived only by the brave and the fearless and not by the coward. Within man Truth reveals itself as the “inner voice.” Therefore, God is Truth, Love and Conscience: “To me says Gandhi “God is truth and love; God is ethics and morality; God is fearlessness. God is the source of Light and Life and yet He is above and beyond all these. God is conscience.”

Gandhi’s conception of the world followed from his view of God as the all-pervading reality. “God manifests Himself in innumerable forms in this universe and every such manifestation commands my reverence.” From the highest to the lowest, everything in the world is an expression of the unmanifest. “From the Imperishable Unmanifest down to the perishable atom everything in the universe is the Supreme and expression of the Supreme.”

Gandhi called himself an Advaitin but he did not dismiss the world as an illusion. It is real but finite. It is real because it comes from the Real and depends on the Real-God. God permeates everything: “God is in everything. Even in a stone.” The world, no doubt, is constantly changing. But in the midst of change there is an
unchanging inner core, which is none other than God, Who endows the world with a limited reality. The phenomenal world, therefore, partakes of the Reality of the Ultimate and to that extent is real: "The world rests on the bedrock of Satya, Truth." Thus, as coming from and resting on the Real the universe is not an unreality and Gandhi advised his readers: "Let both be real, if you will," i.e., according to S. Verma's interpretation: "For all practical purposes the two may be regarded as 'equally real if you so desire but are not, in fact, equally real." Notwithstanding its transitoriness, Gandhi thus ascribed a relative reality to the phenomenal world. However, from the ultimate point of view Truth alone is real:

Gandhi accepted two descriptions of the world current in the Indian systems of philosophy, namely, world as God's lila (sport) and maya (appearance). "The world," he wrote in his autobiography, "is the playground of God and a reflection of his glory." Gandhi did not use the word maya in the sense of illusion. Replying to Vincent Sheean's question "is the world an illusion?" he said, "If you are using the word illusion as a translation of Maya, it is wrong. There is no correct English translation of the word Maya." He preferred the word "appearance" to describe the world.
Gandhi noted that in the midst of death and destruction life persisted, that in spite of hatred and wars humanity survived. Life is stronger than death and love is weightier than hatred. "Nature lives by attraction. Mutual love enables Nature to persist."  

"I cannot account for the existence of evil by any rational method. To want to do so is to be coequal with God. I am therefore humble enough to recognize evil as such. And I call God long-suffering and patient precisely because He permits evil in the world. I know that He has no evil in Him, and yet if there is evil, He is the author of it and yet untouched by it." 

There is no Beauty apart from Truth. The Truth may manifest itself in forms which may not be outwardly beautiful at all because all his life was a striving after Truth.

The analysis of the basic tenets of Gandhi's philosophy, thus, reveals that Truth is the Ultimate Reality. The Absolute Truth is beyond rational knowledge. What man can have is a fragmentary knowledge of the real. The voice of pure conscience, the "fleeting glimpses" of Truth, is the royal road to the unfathomable Ocean of Truth. "What is perceived by a pure heart at a particular moment
is Truth to it for that moment. By clinging to it, one can attain pure Truth. To cling to Truth is to practise non-violence. Non-violence, as the universal law of love, as the centripetal and cohesive force, is the expression of Truth in the world of nature and man. The harmonies of nature and the symphony of the integrated life of man are the expression of Truth. Truth is, thus, Goodness and Beauty (Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram).

Gandhi meditated deeply and spoke eloquently on the nature of Truth and non-violence. But he was not an arm-chair philosopher, who indulged in mere abstract speculations. He found joy not in the building up of neatly argued logical systems but rather in helping man. For him man was of primary importance: "The supreme consideration is man." Gandhi's private life and his public activities were inspired by his insight into the reality of man and his destiny. He claimed himself "to be a practical idealist," and lived a life of experiments in translating his ideas into actions. Gandhi, a fearless advocate of human dignity, was a relentless defender of human rights as well. "It has always been a mystery to me," he wrote, "how men can feel themselves honoured by the humiliation of their fellow-beings." For him service was
worship which leads to the goal of life. All his constructive programmes and political campaigns were aimed to reinstate the individual in his proper status. To help man to reach his destiny was his passion. He desired to live long so that he could serve his fellowmen and thus realize his own destiny. “My desire to live up to one hundred and twenty-five years,” he said, “is not for enjoyment but service.”

Following the teachings of the Gita, Gandhi held that Mind, Reason and Ego belonged to the bodily aspect of man. The psycho-physical aggregate is the body in the wider sense of the term. It is the lower, empirical self. It is the “earthly vesture of decay.” This mortal composite will be reduced into its constituent elements.

Moksha positively is the experiencing of the soul of its true identity and its ‘true being’. Its truth being in its identity with the Absolute and it is realized when all others is eliminated. “In it,” writes Pyarelal, “all feelings of duality or separate existence is abolished”. It means to attain to the state of Brahman. Then jiva becomes Siva. When the individual empirical self is extinguished what remains is the Supreme Self and being awakened into the identity with the Majesty of the One Infinite is experience relating to salvation.” This is what Gandhi means by “Self-
knowledge.” The purpose of life is undoubtedly to know oneself.\(^68\)

Gandhi called this state “spiritual comfort” or bliss which is a “state beyond happiness and misery.” This is the ‘metaphysico mystical’ state of oneness with Brahman. “The man who sheds all longing and then moves without concern, free from the sense of ‘I’ and ‘Mine’ – he attains peace.... He who abides in this state even at the hour of death passes into oneness with Brahman”\(^69\). This experience of one’s own true being is the goal of life in which the seeker becomes the One Sought, the devotee becomes the Deity. There is something which is beyond all forms, Unthinkable, Formless, Impersonal and Changeless. The highest goal of the devotee is to become one with the object of his devotion. The bhakta (devotee) extinguishes himself and merges into, becomes, Bhagavan (God).\(^70\)

The “Law of Varna” requires that an individual earn his livelihood by following his father’s profession. He may do anything that he likes so long as he does it for love of service.\(^71\) Gandhi further explains the meaning of the “Law of Varna”: If my father is a trader and I exhibit the qualities of a soldier, I may without reward serve my country as a soldier, but must be content to earn my bread by trading.\(^72\) The “Law of Varna” is based on the law of
heredity and is not a mere human invention: Every child naturally follows the 'colour' of his father, or chooses, his father's profession. Varna, therefore, is in a way the "law of heredity." It is not a human invention, but an immutable law of Nature. Since the child inherits the traits of the parents, it has the natural aptitude to follow the profession of the parents. Thus, by following the innate vocation the individual can, without competition and unnecessary waste of time and energy, earn his bread:

The varna system is ethical as well as economic. It recognizes the influence of previous lives and of heredity. "All are not born with equal powers and of similar tendencies...there would be no difficulty if each child is prepared for the profession indicated by heredity, environment and the influence of former lives: no time would be lost in fruitless experimentation, there would be no soul-killing competition, a spirit of contentment would pervade society and there would be no struggle for existence."74

In the light of his understanding of the nature and destiny of man and of the purpose of wealth, Gandhi gave the world the vision of a new society, a society based on transformed relationships between man and man. In painting his picture of an ideal society he laid great stress
on the "fundamental values such as the dignity and freedom of man, love, respect and regard for human personality and the supremacy of the Self over everything else". The basis of this society is the Truth of the unity and equality of men and the law of love. It is a casteless, classless and equalitarian society. It is a society which aims at the welfare of all, i.e., 'Sarvodaya'.

Sarvodaya is a Sanskrit word coined from 'sarva' (all) and 'udaya' (rise, prosperity, affluence) and means "the welfare of all." This word was employed by Gandhi to express the thoughts contained in Ruskin's "Unto This Last", the "magic spell" of which changed his life instantaneously. He wrote in his Autobiography: The one (book) that brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation in my life was "Unto This Last." I translated it later into Gujarati, entitling it Sarvodaya (the welfare of all).

The concern for the welfare of all has been a decisive element in Gandhi's conception of society and his developmental programmes. "What is called Sarvodaya," writes J. D. Desai, is only another name of the Gandhian way. As a matter of fact, Sarvodaya has been the basic idea of Gandhi's philosophy right from the days when he wrote his "Hind Swaraj." Sarvodaya is a social ideal which
aims at the full development of the individual and the greatest good of all: A votary of Ahimsa cannot subscribe to the utilitarian formula (of the greatest good of the greatest number). He will strive for the greatest good of all and die in the attempt to realize the ideal... The greatest good of all inevitably includes the good of the greatest number.

The Mahatma is upholding principles from Indian culture. Dharma ought to be what functioning as the guiding principle for any Indian, irrespective of space and time. A viewing of the entire cosmos in its integrated inter-relationship, is essential to Indian thought. For instance, to make a quick reference at random, let us resorted to the Philosophy of Ramanuja. For Ramanuja everything what so ever is manifestation of that ultimate reality, Brahman. So, everything in the world is important and equal to one another. The wide perspective of this thought is amazed. It is not only the case that every living being is important but also every non-living Objects are important. Any thing in the world has its unique importance which cannot be substituted with any thing else. The Indian mind respects everything in this world giving it it's due.

The concept of equality among men gives well beyond any materialistic approach as propounded by Marx. The
equality here is spirituality which automatically prescribes any other form of equality including material equality. Love to fellow beings, to other living beings is only a spontaneous outflow from such a philosophical position. From such love, there comes another great Indian concept, the concept of “Thyaga” felt the comfort of other individual volunteers himself to suffering. This suffering is pleasantly meaningful for the performer, who, in fact, enjoys it. The happiness derived from giving out is intrinsic and for greater than the happiness derived from receiving. Let us recall here two kinds of love as demonstrated by the great thinkers. These are love as “Eros” and love as “Agape”. Eros is instrumental love which means conditioned love. Such love depends on other factors. When that thing suffers Eros also suffers. Now love as agape is intrinsic love. It is a spontaneous outflow that does not depend on any thing. God’s love is love as agape.

Thyaga (sacrifice) is a necessary outcome from love as agape. The Mahatma finds this truth and his vision of ideal society is thus based on love as agape. It is also deeply rooted on Philosophy of ‘vedanths’.

In such a society none has any privilege on the basis of birth, wealth, office or talent. The officer is the servant of the people; the capitalist is the trustee of his surplus
wealth and the guardian of the poor. The other is none other than one’s own self and to live is to love and serve the other, i.e., to follow the law of sacrifice. The readiness to suffer and even to die for one’s fellowmen is the mark of a member of the ‘Sarvodaya’ society. A votary of sacrifice will be willing to die, so that the others may live. He will serve the rest through his own death. The utilitarian to be logical will never sacrifice himself. In this society opponents are not destroyed but converted to be friends through self-suffering and conflicts are resolved through non-violent non-co-operation.

Since human life is “life for others” real civilization consists in reducing one’s personal needs and making oneself and one’s possessions available for the well-being of others: Civilization in the real sense of the term, consists not in the multiplication, but in the deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants. This alone promotes real happiness and contentment and increases the capacity for service. Hence, the primary aim of civilization is not bodily welfare or multiplication of luxuries but rather the moral elevation of man: A man must arrange his physical and cultural circumstances so that they may not hinder him in his service of humanity, on which all his energies should be concentrated. The mark of a true civilization is “high thinking” and not “high living.” Gandhi, therefore, advised:
“Let us engrave on our hearts the motto... plain living and high thinking.”

Gandhi was outspoken in his condemnation of mechanization. In his Hind Swaraj he wrote: “Machinery is the chief symbol of modern civilization; it represents a great sin.” He compared machinery with “a snake-hole” and advised: “Instead of welcoming machinery as a boon, we should look upon it as an evil.” This attitude was based on his conviction that the introduction of machinery led to the exploitation of one nation by another and made some incredibly rich while the vast majority were subjected to the inhuman drudgery of life in factories. Gandhi was afraid that the use of machines would lead to unemployment, idleness and atrophying of the limbs of man. Instead of helping man to grow, machines are overpowering man. Man is more important than the machine. Gandhi did not want man to be a slave to machines.

Gandhi was a phenomenon. A legend in his own lifetime, and influences the course of events the world over in varying degrees. Gandhi’s vision of ‘Ahimsa’ and the values of life are becoming increasingly relevant in the contemporary world. His emphasis on the need for a change of attitude towards life was apparently aimed at bringing
about a change in the mind of man and there by enabling him to strive for social change. A refined and reformed person only can carry forward the torch of peace and progress. His call for eradicating poverty, untouchability and other social evils and his appeal for developing a work culture were all intended to achieve a brighter new world for the welfare of all. Gandhi’s idea of social transformation has a special significance in this context. The transformation of society is inextricably linked with the enlightenment of the individual. A humble attempt is being made in this study to extract the ideas on the vital aspect of Gandhi’s thoughts. The introduction is given in chapter I. The concept of social transformation is detailed in chapter II. The materialistic and spiritualistic aspects of social transformation are discussed in chapter III. Gandhi’s vision on social transformation and the way ahead to attain this objective are given in Chapter IV. Chapter V provides a concluding analysis on social transformation as visualized by Gandhi.
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The Mahatma, Indian Duo, Mahatma Gandhi, certainly ranks as one among the most of the great personalities in history. He is even possessed the greatness of the Mahatma is drastically different from the greatness of many others. It is the overwhelming greatness of the great man. His great nature with glorious culture, heritage and

An endless list of great names from Mahatmas of Ramkrishna to Rabindranath, Tagore, the Bharatpur scientists, and the Jagadguru Adi Shankara and others have witnessed and would be considerate as their master and grandsire. Others might have been great on some or another level of accord, but Gandhi is great as a man. That is why he is the Mahatma - a terminology most befitting him. The Indian Nation treat him as the “Father of the Nation”.

The Mahatma was essentially a spiritual person, a

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