Chapter IV

THE VISION AND THE WAY AHEAD

If, one is to think in terms of the Missions of the great personalities that History had seen, the Mahatma’s mission indeed was that of transforming society into a better one. We can say that he was “the agent” of social transformation. Indeed, it calls for much vivacity and strength if one has to live the life of such an agent of social transformation and restructuring, but the Mahatma did not lack any of these. He was a paradigm case of inner strength and determination.

Let us follow the life of the Mahatma when he was the young Mohandas to reach that point when he first started acting as an agent of social transformation. This was in South Africa. And how did the Mahatma reach South Africa, of all places in the world?

In 1887, the Mahatma became a matriculate and joined Samaldas College in Bhavanagar, Gujarat. At the end of the first term, a family friend, Mavji Dave suggested that he be sent to England to prepare for the bar. The Mahatma
was very happy, he considered England to be the land of Philosophers and Poets, and a great centre of civilisation. But then for the Mahatma going to England was not smooth sailing. The first hurdle was his own mother and he had to take three vows to get her permission. The Mahatma writes that he had taken the vow not to touch wine, women and meat, on the basis of which he got her permission to go abroad.

"I vowed not to touch wine, women and meat. This done, my mother gave me permission"

But then, the elders of his community were against his going to England. They ex-communicated him from the caste. Thus, bound by the three fold vow and ex-communicated from the caste, the Mahatma sailed for England on September 4, 1888. In England, he joined the "Inner Temple", which was an aristocratic Institution. In England, he was fascinated by the idea of English nobility and so he wanted to become an English gentleman. He started spending more time and money on dress, learning dance and practising elocution.

However, this infatuation lasted only three months. He then became serious about his studies, and passed the examination on June 10, 1891. On June 11th, he was
enrolled in the High Court. On June 12, he left England for India. In the words of G Soares,

"Three years in England gave the young Gandhi a knowledge of law, a fastidious taste in European clothes, and a life long obsession with vegetarian dietetics".

In 1891, he went to Bombay and started practising, but it was a failure. Disappointed, he went to Rajkot and started drafting application forms etc. He had an earlier chance to know the British political agent at Rajkot in England. This person had something against the brother of the Mahatma; so he went to meet him. The agent did not want to meet him.

The Mahatma says: "This shock of encounter changed the course of my life".

This incident could be accounted as the first instance in the life of the Mahatma that set him think in terms of British colonial domination and the need of liberating India from the yoke of the foreign rule. Further incidents and the South African experiment came as catalysing factors on top of this. Thus, this could be seen as the first ever movement in the mind of the Mahatma towards a social transformation, a social restructuring that would make the
Indian society strong enough to over-throw British Colonial Rule from the Indian soil to reconstruct India as a free nation through a series of social changes and restructuring.

It was then, that the Mahatma got an opportunity to go to South Africa. One "Dada Abdulla and Company", sought his help to assist their counsel at South Africa with a case pending in one of the courts. In India, The Mahatma was far from being a successful lawyer. He was indeed struggling with heavy odds. The contract was for three years initially, but the destiny had other things in store for him that made his South African stay a very long one. Till the end of 1914 he had to stay there, with two breaks only in between, JB Kripalani says:

"These were the most formative years of his life. Here he lived and developed his Philosophy of life and the new technique of Satyagraha (civil resistance), of fighting group injustice and rectifying group wrong."9

The situations in South Africa came as yet another shock to him. The conditions of Indians were the first to catch his attention. The Indians were called either as "coolies" or "Semis" with total disrespect – there were contemptuous expressions widely used. Just a week in
South Africa made the Mahatma to explode himself against social injustice.

The Mahatma was traveling to Pretoria in the first class railway compartment. At Maritzburg, the TTE noticed an Indian, traveling in the first class and in spite of his valid ticket and education, he was thrown out of the train with his bag and baggage. This event, the second shock, went deep into his mind. The Mahatma says: "I began to think of my duty. Should I fight for my rights or go back to India..... The hardship I was subjected to was only superficial – only a symptom of the deep disease of colour-prejudice. I should try, if possible to root out the disease and suffer hardships in the process. Redress for wrongs it would be only to the extent that would be necessary for the removal of the colour prejudice".

The journey from Durban to Pretoria proved to be one of the most creative experiences of his life. It was his "moment of truth." Hence forth, he would defend his dignity as an Indian and as a man. In the words of EK Erikson: -

"It was during that wintry night that he (Gandhi) resolved that South Africa was indeed a country for him."
The experience of humiliation was common to all, and but new experiences were subjected to his reaction. For one full year he did not react. He stood as a silent witness to everything that he had observed everything. He himself remained a victim of such wrongs. But then, he woke himself up to a sense of duty, so as to identify his means and ends. He decided to defend the dignity and rights of man.

"Among the Indians in South Africa, he was the only person equipped by fate to reform a situation which under no condition could be tolerated."

He settled down in Natal. The Mahatma earned a living by giving guidance to other Indian lawyers. His main occupation was not of the lawyer: it was public work without any remuneration. The Anglicised "coolie" lawyer was thus slowly evolving, into what we know of him today as the Mahatma. His contacts with Christians, and his thrust for deep knowledge of other religions made him an authentic Hindu. At the same time, his capacity for political leadership was also becoming more and more evident. He organised the Indian community and founded the Natal Indian Congress in 1894. This gave solidarity and courage to the helpers and the helpless Indians in South Africa. In
the columns of the “Indian Opinion” he exposed the grievances of the Indians and their cases.

The Mahatma was becoming more and more a public figure. It was during the Boer war, (1899-1900) that he organised an Indian “Ambulance Corps” which brought some recognition and respect to the Indians. At the time of the Zulu rebellion in 1906, he had raised a Stretcher Bearer corps as a gesture of good will. It was during the Zulu rebellion that he thought of leading a simple life.

On returning home, he consulted with his wife and took the pledge to observe Brahmachārya for life. He says: “Thus Brahmachārya, which I had been observing willy-nilly since 1900, was sealed with a vow in the middle of 1906.”

Gandhi gave greater importance to fasting or having only one meal on holidays

1906 saw a turning point in the life of the Mahatma in particular and in the Lives of South African Indians in general. The Transvaal government passed the Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance, which became notorious as “the Black Act.” This was designed to strike at the roots of Indian existence in South Africa. The Mahatma held a
meeting of all Indians in September 1906. The meeting resolved not to submit to the Act, and suffer the consequence of civil disobedience without retaliation. This was the humble birth of the great “Satyagraha” movement. The Mahatma took Indians through the path of self suffering without hatred to the regaining of self respect. This battle of non-violence started in September 1906, caused much suffering to the Indian community. It also gave much anxious moments to the Government. Finally, in 1914, Gandhiji reached an agreement with General JC Smuts and in the same year the government published “The Indian Relief Bill,” granting most of the demands of the Indian community.

"Thus ended the great struggle of Indians in South Africa under the leadership of Gandhiji, based upon truth and non-violence and utmost regard for the means used".15

Such experiences in South Africa paved the way to the making of the Mahatma. After accomplishing his "mission", the Mahatma left South Africa for good on 18 July 1914. He was indeed, most needed in India: Perhaps history was laying in the waiting for the great son of a great nation, to redeem her from many years of bondage. Then the Mahatma went to England and after a short stay there, reached Bombay in January 1915. By then, the
personality of the Mahatma was well known to most Indians, and his achievements and struggles towards social transformation in South Africa was much applauded. Naturally, Gandhiji was given a very warm welcome in India and everyone expected a lot from him. On return to India, the Mahatma's political ‘Guru’, Gopala Krishna Gokhale advised him to keep his eyes and ears open for one year, but mouth shut. It was accepted by the Mahatma, and for one year, he maintained political silence. Keeping mouth shut, but ears and eyes wide open, he travelled the length and breadth of India to get a direct experience of the Indian situation, as the Indian situation had its distinct differences from those of his experiences in South Africa.

In order to protect the interests of the indigo cultivators at Champaran\textsuperscript{16} and the tile workers in Ahmedabad, he started a fast and then called for a Satyagraha\textsuperscript{17} campaign. He also conducted a ‘no rent’ campaign on behalf of the peasants at Kheda, Gujarat. In short the Mahatma suddenly turned virulent in The Indian political scene, with that determination and programme which indeed were his exclusive specialties. The year 1919 saw the Mahatma campaigning for Satyagraha against the Rowlat Bill. By 1920, he became the unquestioned leader of “The Indian Freedom Struggle” and the organisation to conduct it; the Indian National Congress.
The national movement headed by the Mahatma made Indians shed off their fears and ambitions. He says in his autobiography.

"It is not the guns of Britan, but the imperfections of the Indians themselves that kept their country under British domination." 19

Thus the demand of the Mahatma to the Indians was to analyse themselves to find out their defects that had made foreign rule a possibility in India. Through such knowledge, the Indians must shun all their vices and express the strong determination to be free. Dhirendra Mohan Dutta says:

"The political freedom of India was only an important means. The real goal was a complete social renewal beginning with the internal transformation of the individual." 20

The Mahatma’s concept of social transformation is of the “Bottom up” pattern as compared to the “top down” pattern. The kind of social transformation the Mahatma envisaged is totally and diagonally opposite of that of the Marxists. A classical example of the top down pattern of
social transformation is that of the Marxists. Marxism is a theory that envisages social transformation by way of violent revolution that overthrows existing political system irrespective of whatever it is and to substitute Marxist pattern of political rule in its place. The primary objective is thus to establish political supremacy, and then extend their revolutionary pattern of transformation to the entire society, leaving no area of society untouched. In a way, it is not really a social transformation, it is just an instance of replacement of a social structure with totally a new one, after having destroyed the former. Here the change begins at the top, and it is further imposed downwards with force. It is a bottom-up pattern of social transformation. According to Gandhi transformation begins at the level of individuals. First it begins as internal transformation in the individuals, then it flows out of individuals as a small stream to join with other similar streams flowing out from individuals who are as well subject to such internal transformation to finally become a formidable flow of energy that could fall mountains and reshape man's history itself. To make the internal transformation of individuals a reality, the best means the Mahatma found in religion itself, culture itself, and in short, in the greatness of India itself.

Today, we call him the Mahatma. What does it mean? Of course every Indian must understand the literary
meaning of the Sanskrit term Mahatma which is Maha + atma to mean a great soul. But that is one thing – meaning of a term is one thing, and it is quite a different thing when it comes to the concept or definition. What is the concept of the term “Mahatma”, or, how is the term ‘Mahatma’ defined to fit into comprehension in terms of ‘popular’ understanding? Let us see what the “Maha Bharata” says: "According to the Maha Bharata the title is applied to a person whose thoughts, words and deeds are in complete harmony.”

Indeed, no finer expression can be thought of to define the term “Mahatma.” And indeed it is a real tough thing, next only to impossibility for a human being to live in such a way with thoughts, words and deeds in perfect harmony, with utmost effort it may become possible for some to keep words and deeds in harmony considerably. But how about thoughts? And it has to be born in mind that it has to be a continuous life long affair; never flitting and never failing. Undoubtedly, only a real great soul, a Mahatma can perform this task, Gangadutta, (Bheeshmacharya) was a Mahatma: but one should bear in mind that nobody can be a Mahatma at the time of birth, but it makes any man a mahatma. Gandhi, is indeed a Mahatma - he has proved it to us through “living the life of” a Mahatma. The great son of a great mother, Mother India.
It was Tagore who first called Gandhiji the Mahatma in his poem "The great soul in beggar's garb." Shy as his basic nature was, the Mahatma protested like Pythagoras: but the title struck him for good. Regarding his title, Gandhiji wrote: "Often the title has deeply pained me: and there is not a moment I can recall when it may be said to have tickled me."

Further: "Truth to me is infinitely dearer than the 'Mahatmaship' which is purely a burden."

Obviously, the Mahatma was indeed a Mahatma not to have been tickled by the Mahatmaship; as he was Mahatma enough to have felt the Mahatmaship a burden on himself. No wonder.

The story of his life itself is that of a story of transformation. It was that of a remarkable transformation of a shy, stubborn boy into an ambitious conventional barrister into the half naked fakir and ultimately into the Mahatma. From an erring, faltering, stumbling and struggling youth Gandhi rose to the eminence of being called a Moral genius. The secret of it lay in the incessant struggle, sleepless discipline and efforts from good - to - better daily surpassed.
One can see that the Mahatma himself is the best example of his bottom up programme of social transformation. The tremendous (and stupendous as well) transformational stages that happened internally within the Mahatma is out there in front of every one to touch and feel. In all cases of externally manifested changes with the Mahatma, series of internal transformations proceeded systematically and well timed as an antecedent. Thus the making of the Mahatma was indeed through a long internal varying stages of metamorphosis.

Undoubtedly, Mahatma was a complex character. Several traits of his complex character were born and nourished in his family. He was greatly influenced by the saintliness and austerity of his mother as well as the uprightness of his father. Kathiawar was a religiously pluralistic society, where different religions coexisted. His father used to engage himself in intellectual discourses on religion. These had gone a long way in shaping the Mahatma’s attitude towards religion. In his own family Vaishnavism, the influence of Jainism etc. had gone much in the direction of contributing to the Gandhian principles of Ahimsa and his advocating vegetarianism. He preferred to be called a vegetarian.
The South African episode in his life had given him much real insight into colonialism, apartheid, etc., and situation of the Indian's under such adverse conditions. He could obtain much political maturity which made him capable of taking the leadership of the people of India and the freedom struggle. The political condition of India was favourable to welcome the mahatma because the country needed him to save her from the British Yoke. The socio-political situations of India offered much challenges to the Mahatma, who at once realised that this is a great opportunity for him to try out of his ideas and his Philosophy.

"Gave way to the builders of empire, and territory, not trade, because of the primary concern of the British in India"  

It was in the year 1858, that the British crown took in its own hands, the rule and destiny of India and its 300 million Indians. Thus a Viceroy came to in India to rule India on behalf of the Queen.

One must understand this background thoroughly to understand the Mahatma's call for weaving Khadi, with Charka. His call to boycott foreign goods must be seen in this light. Truly the son of India was giving it all back to
the British, and the colonial rulers did not know how to react; they really did not know what to do with MK Gandhi. The Mahatma was slowly turning down into an "atom bomb."

The Rowlatt Act and the massacre of Jalianwalla in 1919 forced the Mahatma to reconsider his loyalty to the British Empire. In 1920, he wrote to the Viceroy:

"I can retain neither respect nor affection for a government which has been moving from wrong to wrong to defend its immorality."

Perhaps there cannot be a strongly worded admonition to the colonial rulers within any frame work of culture and decency. Finally, through the congress resolution of 1942, the patriot in MK Gandhi roared like a lion to the British to "Quit India"

Other factors that affected the Mahatma and influenced him were for the poverty and other suffering in the Indian villages, the caste distinctions of Hindu religion, social evils like untouchability, antagonism etc. One can witness the Mahatma taking painful efforts to counter this right through his life.
The Mahatma came in contact with many modern thinkers. Among them he made special mention about Rajchandra, Tolstoy and Ruskin. In his own words, the Mahatma says:

"I would say that three men had a very great influence on my life. Among them, I give the first place to poet Raichandra, the second to Tolstoy and the third to Ruskin. If I had to choose between Tolstoy and Ruskin I would not know to whom to give preference. At present, however, I give the place to Tolstoy."

Raichandra was a jain by religion and a student of Philosophy. Gandhiji was struck by his simplicity and independence of judgement and his ability to combine religion and business in practice. The Mahatma says that Rajchandra was his refuge in moments of spiritual crisis and religious doubts. Rajchandra had captivated the Mahatma's heart in religious matters more than any body.

It was in South Africa that the Mahatma came in contact with the writings of Tolstoy. Fascinated as he was, he wrote to him, and a few letters were exchanged between them. Tolstoy's style of life, the harmony between his words and deeds and his uncompromising principle of
returning good for evil had a very powerful impact on the Mahatma. The Mahatma says:

"There is no doubt about it that Tolstoy's writings had a powerful effect on me. He strengthened my love of non-violence. He enabled me to see things more clearly than I had done before."\(^2^9\)

Among Tolstoy's works, "The Kingdom of God is within you" influenced Gandhi most and left an abiding impression on him. After reading this book Gandhi seemed to have claimed that his lack of faith in non-violence had vanished. Tolstoy's emphasis on the doctrine of "bread-labour" inspired Gandhiji to form his views on work and service to others. He even said that Tolstoy had been his teacher for years. One should not think that the Mahatma was a blind follower of Tolstoy; the Mahatma made it amply clear that he would consider Tolstoy as one of his teachers though he could not agree to many of his ideas.

As for Ruskin, the Mahatma found his own principles deeply reflected in his writings. Ruskin's book "Unto the Last" brought about a revolutionary transformation in the life of the Mahatma. He started changing his life in accordance with the idea of the book. The founding of the Phoenix settlement near Durban in South Africa was a
direct out come of Ruskin's influence on the Mahatma. Phoenix life helped Gandhiji to develop his ideas on equality and universal brotherhood. Ruskin's idea on education was yet another factor that went deep into the Mahatma. Ruskin's "Unto the Last" was such, that the Mahatma translated it into Gujarati language under the title, "Sarvo - Daya." The meaning of the terms 'Sarvodaya' is 'welfare of all' to any Indians.

The Mahatma was a voracious reader. The long list of books read by the Mahatma is listed in his "Jail Diary." He had the habit of correspondence with eminent men, and he held such correspondence for long. The wisdom and virtue of Socrates as described by Plato in the "Apology" influenced the Mahatma greatly. He prepared an amended version of "Plato's Apology", in which he qualified Socrates as a non-violent resister. In Mahatma's own words:

"One purpose here is to discuss the substance of the concluding words of Socrates "defend" at the time of his trial. We can all derive a moral from it."\(^30\)

Indeed, the Mahatma identified sources of energy from all quarters and spent it lavishly towards the cause of Indian Independence. One may find striking resemblance of
ideas in the Mahatma's "Hind Swaraj" and Plato's "Republic" and this is not mere coincidence.

The influence of Gopalakrishna Gokhale on the Mahatma was well known. The Mahatma regarded Gopalakrishna Gokhale as his political "Guru" and even said that he had found all conceivable qualities of a Guru in him. Yet another great personality that went deep into the mind of the Mahatma was of the "Kabi Guru", Rabindranatha Tagore, as the Bengalis affectionately called him. Of course it was Tagore who called him Mahatma, and the Mahatma called Tagore the "Great sentinel."

The Mahatma had no formal training in Philosophy or any theories to that extent academically. It seems he was not very concerned about any systems or theories as a "frame work". He even seemed not to appreciate "ism", though such expression came from him in the context of people using the term "Gandhism." To quote him:

"I have simply tried in my own way to apply the eternal truths to our daily life and problems..... well, all my Philosophy, if it may be called by that pretentious name, is contained in what I have said. You will not call it Gandhism; there is no 'ism' about it"
Perhaps this phenomenon could find no better expression other than Mahatma's own words. Indeed the Mahatma believed in eternal truths and he was trying to apply those principles of eternal truths to life and day­today problems of life; that of himself, of Indians and of the Indian subcontinent itself. Philosophical systems, theories and all such things could have meant nothing more to him other than ways and means to end manifold problems experienced by him in existential situations present in India of his time. What else can any one expect of a "Karmayogi" such as the Mahatma? To him, the Indian situation was of prime priority and it ranked well ahead of every other thing.

To day it has become a formidable challenge to any student of the Mahatma to construct his Philosophy out of his words and deeds. Indeed, the only way to construct the Philosophy of the Mahatma, the Gandhism, is through whatever he *spoke*, what ever he *wrote* and much more than that; whatever he *did*. We must readily admit that there is a "Gandhism" in spite of the Mahatma's anowed irritated objections to the term. It is here that the greatness of the Mahatma assumes the attitude of a problem for many common and practical reasons; and purposes.
However, there is no doubt at all about the originality of the personality of the Mahatma. He was authentically an original man of rare vision and action. Though he did not claim that he had not originated any new doctrine, as, for him, he was cautiously carrying out the process of accepting as well as rejecting from the tradition and old Indian wisdom. It was characteristic of Gandhi to select from the tradition and contribute them into newer visions; and this at once called for originality as well as authenticity.

Perhaps it was natural for the Mahatma not to claim originality. Thus he was only acting in conformity with the genius of Indian tradition and that of our ancestors. The great Rishis of India had seldom claimed originality for themselves. They held the view that all their ideas could be traced to the old, time tested authorities. The seers never claimed that they could be originators of what they spoke; they only claimed that they are just commentators of what had been already stated of the old. Kripalani says:

"The Indian genius has generally worked impersonally and anonymously. Whatever the originality of the conception and the contribution, it is racial and not individual. The most original and revolutionary thinkers considered themselves as mere commentators, carrying on the old
traditions and maintaining an unbroken continuity. Every thought and institution according to them was "Puratana" and "Sanatana," old and eternal.\textsuperscript{32}

The Mahatma was also just following the wisdom of the Rishis to disclaim originality in thoughts and theories. Obviously, this disclaim is not without any grounds, both in the cases of Rishis as well as the Mahatma. Given the background of culture, tradition, wisdom and Philosophy of the Indian situation, it is rather a practical impossibility for an Indian to claim originality in the real sense of the term. It is really not logical to conceive of or think of not carrying the stamp; impressions of heavy thoughts of the old, from that of his ancestor. An Indian, in the true sense of the term can't be anything other than a product of thousands of years of tradition, culture, and in short, his heritage.

The Mahatma was trying to live in his Philosophy. He regarded his life an approximation to his thoughts and words. Indeed, his sole aim in life was to achieve coordination between thought, word and deed. His Philosophical meditations, Political and Social activities, ascetical practices, in fact, every small detail of his life, were oriented towards this goal. To quote the Mahatma:
"What I want to achieve, ......... What I have been striving and paining to achieve...... is self-realisation, to see God face to face, to attain Moksha. I live and move and have my being in pursuit of this goal. All that I do by way of speaking and writing, and all my ventures in the political field, are directed to this same end."33

It wouldn't take much effort for one to realise that the Mahatma was only following the footsteps of ancient Indian sages and teachers. In ancient India, Philosophy was sought not as an intellectual luxury but as an existential necessity. Philosophy was a view (and way) of life. But it becomes a way of life for spiritual realisation. There was harmony between theory and practice, Philosophy and Religion, not water-tight compartments. Knowledge of the self is the highest of all knowledge, and realisation of the self leads to Moksha, liberation of earthly or mundane existence. The Mahatma was only following their paths shown to us by the sages.

The very title the Mahatma chose to put for his Autobiography reveals much of his personality. Indeed, all his life was experiments or his entire life itself was an experiment, the experiment with Truth. In all his theories one can witness an element of experimentation. All his theories emerged gradually as a result of intense search,
deep meditation, and acute response to the trying socio political situations in which he found himself often. Ideas occurred to him by way of 'insight' or the prompting of his "inner voice."

Raghavan Iyer writes: - "Gandhi worked from within outwardly. Through praying each day, repeatedly consulting his "inner voice," probing his own motives, he would reach general conclusions. Then, after carefully considering the views of others, he would decide upon a course of action. This elusive and indefinable process which he called "heart churning," itself arose out of his unwavering conviction that constructive thought and timely action are inseparable"^{34}

From within itself he used to produce much arguments before finally arriving at any conclusions, and then only, obviously - they could become his convictions. He was indeed experimenting, constantly experimenting, with truth.

No doubt, the Mahatma was a Philosopher in his own right. Was he not a lover of Wisdom and a worshipper of Truth? He preferred Truth to his own life, and even to Moksha. It is really striking when he says:
"I cannot consider anything dearer to me than Moksha. Yet even that Moksha I would renounce if it were to conflict with Truth and Non-violence"\textsuperscript{35}

For the Mahatma, for the sake of truth, even the end of hundreds of men like him is just nothing by way of any sacrifice. Undoubtedly, The Mahatma was indeed a Philosopher who created his own Philosophy. True, he was not an academician; he had not created any Philosophical systems as most professional individualistic Philosophers do. But that doesn't make the Mahatma a non-philosopher. A just comparison of Socrates or even Confucius to Mahatma shall sufficiently prove that the Mahatma was not just a philosopher, but was a great philosopher. We have no doubt in our mind that Socrates was a great Philosopher. But it is a fact that Socrates had written nothing; he had not made any philosophy or philosophical system. He simply asked many questions without really giving away much by way of solutions, or answers, Plato himself says that Socrates said "gnothi seution" which means, "know thyself". In fact, we know the Philosopher Socrates more from the writings of his student, Plato. Wasn't Plato constricting the Philosophy of Socrates from the many talks he had with Plato himself and many others? How can we ignore the fact that Plato himself was a great system-
builder, and in his deft hands the loose thoughts of his master must have assumed definite form and shape?

Once we are able to look at the Mahatma with this spirit, it will be very easy and natural for us to call him an original Philosopher. The fact of the matter is that, the Mahatma’s Philosophy got side-lined in the priority that he assigned to the great action programme which he had worked out. The existential Indian situation demanded deeds and not words from him. Thus he acted the role of a Karma Yogi; but it is beyond and all possibilities of any iota of doubt that the Mahatma was also a full blooded Philosopher.

To explicate the Gandhian concept of social transformation, it becomes necessary to draw a distinction between two types of social transformations. One, revolutionary social transformation and Two, evolutionary social transformation.

Revolutionary social transformation is a change that is immediate and drastic. It operates from forces often without. The moving power or force of a revolutionary social change is most often an external agency. The one advantage of a revolutionary social transformation is that it is quick, and changing effects are taking place immediately.
But it has very serious drawbacks also which are many that renders revolutionary social transformation undesirable.

Perhaps one of the most suited example for revolutionary social transformation is that of the former Soviet Union. Here the agent of social transformation was the Bolshevik revolution lead by V.I. Lenin, who is regarded as the founder. The 1917 Bolshevik revolution brought about drastic changes and restructuring in Soviet Society. First of all, it resulted in making the USSR, forcibly bringing many nearby states together to form a Union of Republic. The force that brought these states together was the force of communism or Marxism, the theory that claims to be “specter that is haunting Europe” vide the “manifesto of the communist party” jointly published by Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels. Through a suicidely drastic theory of Economics that devastates all natural balances, Lenin succeeded in bringing forth such changes in the newly formed Union of Republics within the wink of an eye. The Philosophy of Marxism, which is materialistic in nature (Dialectical Materialism) naturally failed to envisage anything as worthwhile beyond materialistic economic phenomena in human nature. Lenin hoped to create “Ramarajya” in the Communist Union of the Soviet Republics through the forces of the theory of
Marxism, as his interpretations led to an extension of Marxism as Leninism. But as Marxism had already failed miserably in their conception of the "total man" and human nature, Leninism blindly followed suit. Total man is not merely a material self, whose satisfaction and happiness could be found through satisfaction of material needs. Taking care of material needs of the society; no matter how efficiently that may be done; can only make machines out of human beings, and at times mechanical monsters.

Take for instance the creativity of the Russians before the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 and after. The tremendous literary tradition of Russia became non-existent: they swapped the minds of Ruskin, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy etc. to the Devil ! There is hardly any thing worth the name literature after it became a communist nation. One can ponder and try to find more about this phenomenon, it shall be an exercise worth-while. In one word, the Russians of the old seems to have lost their soul; they became just matter of fact mechanistic phenomena.

Another phenomenon that calls out attention is the downfall of the USSR. With the collapse of communism, the disintegration of the USSR was instant. All the former members of the former communist union fell apart. Then we witness grave economic crisis and unspeakable poverty in
that one time rich state. The artificiality of communism made soviet people incapable of facing competition in an extremely competitive world, where survival of the fittest and struggle for existence is the law. After the collapse, the soviet people really did not know what to do with life.

Thus, the revolutionary social transformation depends on the operation of an external force. In case of the former soviet union, the revolutionary transformation in their society was brought about by the external force of communism. This force had nothing to do with the intrinsic or internal nature of that society. Thus, the force of communism is an artificial, alien force to their society. Through the operation of such artificial forces, the brought about changes shall also be artificial: they need constant artificial support for their continued existence. In other words, a change that is artificially brought about can only be maintained through the constant operation of artificial forces. If something goes amiss in the system and if something causes a change in the existing artificial forces, that shall drastically off balance the society. It goes without saying that with disappearance of that artificial force, it is only natural for that society to wither away as many fragments.
Precisely this is what happened to the former republic of the Union of Soviets. What brought them together was the forces of communism, what maintained them closely as a closed society was the forces of communism, and when that force, the artificial force of communism collapsed, the very nation fell apart. Every thing that was erected artificially, the economy, the polity, and the very social structure and all, miserably collapsed. Such is the after effect of a revolutionary social transformation. The transformation may be drastic, but with the disappearance of the external force that brought about this transformation, the transformation also collapses and ceases to be.

The aftermath of such a collapse of an artificial social transformation is not only miserable, but immensely pathetic also. During the course of Revolutionary social transformation which is drastic, many things in the society of the old and traditional, must have long been both drastical and destroyed. As a result, the society now wouldn’t have much to go back as well. So it is not only that they lost precious time through which they could have made slow but steady progress, but also they even go further back in time from a point where everything had to be started as new and fresh. This is a nutshell impression about revolutionary social transformation and history is the
witness; the transformation can only be temporary, and never a long-term if not permanent affair.

Evolutionary social transformation could be termed as opposite to what is known as revolutionary social transformation. While in revolutionary social transformation the changes are caused by forces from without, in evolutionary social transformation, the changes are from within. The moving power or force is provided not by an external agency, it is naturally produced from within from a necessity. When revolutionary transformation is easily perceptible and drastic, evolutionary transformation is gradual, slow, systematic, step by step, and often not easily perceptible. Revolutionary social transformation has to be temporary, but evolutionary transformation is permanent, though evolutionary transformation is a dynamic and on going process; unending so long as human society and civilisation remains dynamic.

An example of social transformation that could be termed evolutionary could be cited in India. But then to prove this point, we can compare the North Indian situation to that of Kerala situation, where the Kerala situation and social transformation in that society has a bearing of the character of a Revolutionary social transformation.
The Kerala society has its own peculiarities and problems. Owing to the presence of the mountain ranges in the East, an entry to Kerala was difficult. At the same time, the sea that stretches the full length of Kerala has resulted in the making of many ports, and much trading activities with people from different countries. Since this area had nothing substantial to offer to the outside world by way of philosophy, culture, knowledge etc. as compared to those of the rest of India, it must be noted that majority of the foreigners who were attracted to these regions were only traders, whose natural interests were in buying, selling as well as profit making. For them to come in contact with the intellectual strata was indeed a rare chance. This phenomenon of trade, and contact with traders of the outside world must have given fairly good material orientation and materialistic world view to the common people: thus making an impact by way of first materialistic foundation to the society. The foreign traders enjoyed considerable amount of freedom, so long as it paid every one had no much reason to make a complaint about the activities of outsiders. Traditional influence of Hindu religion was (is) latent to this society, and the numbers of strong adherents to Hinduism was indeed much less. This must have been one of the first reason of polarisation of the Kerala society into traditionally alight caste and the lower
caste groups. A study of the group behaviour of different caste system shall at once reveal this.

The influx of Arabs, the coming of Christian missionaries etc. could considerably change the Kerala society through and by way of religious conversion. The trading influence on the society had already prepared the society not to be stubbornly claimed to the old that does not pay, but to go for a new thing which might be profitable either directly or indirectly. This resulted in considerable amount of conversions into the new religions, caste structure and poverty etc. are only secondary reasons to religious conversions. Conversion of religion brought ideological, cultural changes into the once homogeneous society.

During the second phase, that is during the colonial reign, Christianity and westernisation were the main two external forces that influenced social changes in Kerala from out side the society as forces from without. This had alienated Keralites considerably from the traditional Indian main stream during those days itself. The changes brought into the society by these forces were quick and could only be turned as revolutionary in character. Thus, these factors brought about drastic and revolutionary transformation in
Kerala society that resulted in cultural alienation of the society in a considerable way.

All these forces jointly contributed to the social restructuring, reconstruction and changes in Kerala society. They all were severally as well as collectively, revolutionary in character. And that is the contention of my saying that social transformation that took place in Kerala Society is revolutionary in character.

Now let us turn to the social transformation of the northern part of India. Let us take the instance of two social agencies which were instrumental in bringing forth social transformation. They were, 1. The Arya Samaj, and 2. The Brahma Samaj. They both were evolutionary in character. As a result, the social transformation for which they were instrumental was naturally slow, gradual, but formidable and permanent. The moving power, or the force behind this social transformation were forces from within itself, there was no external agency operating. They brought about gradual changes in the society from within, without destroying the fundamentals and without devastating, alienating and estranging the society.

The Mahatma’s attitude to the Arya Samaj and the Brahma Samaj gives us ample evidences to prove his
attitude towards social transformation or his idea of social transformation.

It is sure that now it would not take much effort to reach into Gandhian concept of social transformation. Evidently, the Mahatma advocated the evolutionary pattern of social transformation. He envisages the internal transformation of individual members of the society as a substructure, and then the super-structural transformation of the entire society. The Mahatma finds the moving power or force of transformation within individuals as God or spirituality. Thus the most important means to social transformation in the Mahatma becomes Religion and forces of spirituality operating within each individual members of the society.

What must have been the end in Mahatma's conception of social transformation? In one word it could be termed as Ramarajya. The concept of Ramarajya stands for an ideal state of society of perfection. Where there is equality, justice, equal respect and such things. Many Philosophers of the past had aspired for ideal societies and ideal states. Plato's Republic is just one instance only. In fact folklores of every society talk of an ideal existential situation concerning the society as experienced by them in the distant past. For the society of Kerala, there is this
dream about an ideal society under the rule of an Asura King named Mahabali. The Jews dreamed about David’s Kingdom, that made prophet Isaiah to envisage the reestablishment of the glory of the Judea clan through the birth of a Messiah when the Jews were suffering under the Babylonian Captivity. The Mahatma’s concept of Ramarajya is nothing other than a combination of all these. Gandhi believed strongly that Nature would give everything that man needs but not his greed.

When it comes to theories of social transformation and restructuring, the Mahatma ranks indeed among the greatest political Philosophers of the rank of Plato. When it comes to religion and spirituality, the Mahatma assumes the role of a seer, a sage, not less than the rank of any Rishi. In the arena of action, the Mahatma is a Karma Yogi, who seemed to have been striving beside Arjuna when Sri Krishna was advising him and enlightening him. In short, the Mahatma presents one of the most apt ideas of social transformation, it’s means and ends.
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