CHAPTER VI

GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY TAKEN TO PEOPLE

When we set out to understand the life and work of Mahatma Gandhi, we must first apprehend the nature of this innermost intellect: if we fail to do this, we may end by getting to know that too only externally, Gandhism but not Gandhiji. In many instances scholars and researchers have achieved just this; they have plucked at the foliage and the flowers, unmindful of the root under the soil.

Gandhiji was a lifelong votary of truth. His devotion to truth was both on the absolute and the relative levels. On the level of absolute truth his devotion was related to a life style governed by truth in thoughts, words and deeds. According to him God is the absolute truth and all others are relative. As a sailor in mid-ocean rows on with his eyes fixed on the guiding star in the sky, every stroke of the oars carries him nearer the goal. That aspiration and faith, that unrelenting effort is demanded of every seeker after truth. For absolute truth Gandhiji turned to the Anasakti Yoga as expounded in the Gita: for relative truth he sought sustenance and support in the Vaishnavajana verses of Narasinh Mehta.¹

Gandhiji’s greatness of soul consisted in the wonderful correlation he achieved between the two levels of his quest for truth. Absolute truth, as he saw it, could be realized only at the end of a long and arduous journey, but relative truth is influenced and acted upon by the variable entities of time and place. There is then no
question of finality about what is impermanent, changeable; but it is
even so founded upon the immutable rock of one’s faith in right
values, right conduct and right view of human nature. Ramanama
was for Gandhiji was the way to the ultimate and absolute truth;
and, on the other hand, the numerous admissions of error on his
part bear witness to his sense of the ‘working’ or ‘operational’ truth.

It is not uncommon for many of us to overlook the
discrepancies between our ideals and our conduct. Many an
indiscretion and error hide under the fine cloak of high and noble
ideals. The Mahatma, whose inner intellect was atoned to his
conscience, had no need of such concealment, for he always
followed the dictates of the ‘inner voice’. It was this strict adherence
to truth at both levels that gave him the moral courage to wind up
the countrywide non-cooperation movement after the one incident
of violence at Chauri Chaura. Only when the supreme ideal of
attaining union with God gets a humanitarian hue and tone with the
feeling of oneness with the mass of humanity do we have that
blending of prajna and karuna which goes into the making of a
Mahatma.

Besides acquiring these two qualities of the mind, in order to
be a true Gandhian one has to inculcate a thorough personal
integrity in thought and action. In my opinion that is the key for a
proper understanding of Gandhiji’s life and thought. Gandhiji can
make allowances for our petty faults of follies, but not for our
dissembling and deception. He is prepared to wake up those who
are asleep, but he would not stir himself to awaken those who are
feigning to be asleep. His own life was like an open book. Of the
several different facets of the Mahatma’s life this theory and practice of truth was the most fundamental and the most resplendent. By way of illustrating how he maintained a co-relation between theory and practice, we may mention the fasts he undertook in the course of his life. Fasting for him had a spiritual significance; it brought to him a sense of the rareness of God. When, in the course of his Yervada fast in 1932-33, he was asked if his fasting was not a weapon of political blackmail, his answer was that the fast meant no more than a silent prayer of a sorrowful heart. But even as he had this lofty conception of fasting he always insisted on a practical preparatory course of a minimum balanced diet before proceeding on a fast. Spiritual ends cannot be achieved if we are unmindful of the material means. Cleanliness comes before holiness, he maintained.

THE INFLUENCES ON GANDHI’S PHILOSOPHY

The core of Gandhian philosophy is truth and non-violence. According to Mahatma Gandhi truth can never die nor can never it is burned down. He also opined that God was truth and truth was God. His truth takes no sides and is impartial under all circumstances. During his long career, he moved heaven and earth to propagate this truth, and through his ideology, his socio-political and educational ideas, he upheld truth. His mind has influenced with various religions but Hinduism, his own religion, provided him with the maximum spiritual satisfaction. He himself has admitted that he has not formulated any new principle or value but has just restated and reinterpreted the old principles of Sanathana Hindu Dharma. His Satyagraha stands on the foundation of the five
disciplines of Hinduism-ahimsa (Buddhism also), truth, non-
possession, non-stealing and brahmacharya, essential in the pursuit
of self realization.2

Gandhi believed in the unity of human life, which is a
synthetic whole. It cannot be divided into separate, watertight,
compartments of religious, moral, political economic, social,
individual and collective existence. All the seemingly separate
segments are but different facets of man’s life. They act and react
upon one another. In reality, there can be no problems that are
purely moral, economic, political, social, individual or collective.
They are inextricably intertwined.3 As a stronger supporter of soul
force, the Mahatma gave reference to Rama, Jesus, Buddha, Nanak,
Mohammed, Shankara, Kabir, Dayananda, Ramakrishna, Harish
Chandra, Prahlad, Sudama, Nala Damayanti, Angada and
numerous other religious reformers. In addition to this, Gandhiji
respected the prominent Indians of that time, like W.C.Bannerjee,
Surendra Nath Banerjea, Firoz Shah Metha, Bhandarkar, Badruddin
Tayabji, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Naoroji and
so on. It was Gokhale who taught Gandhi to spiritualise the political
life and political institutions of the country.4 He equated Islamic
teachings with that of Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity and
called it a religion of peace and believer in universal brotherhood.
Non-co-operation, exodus, resistance and even violence were the
Prophet’s phrases in the battle of life, wherein truth was everything.
5. Gandhi did not see any difference between a Hindu Yogi and a
Muslim Fakir. In South Africa, he came into contact with Rev.
Joseph Doke whom he revealed the contents of Gujarati version of
Bible which he was taught at school and was greatly influenced by it. The prominent works having deep linkage with Christianity like, The Sermon on the Mount, The New Testament and the Kingdom of God is within You etc. greatly influenced Gandhiji personally and philosophy. 6. Gandhi was much impressed and influenced by the concept of non-retaliation and non-resistance propagated by Christianity. The deep study of the Irish Home Rule Movement was another phenomenon which influenced Gandhi’s technique of Satyagraha. He compared Sinn Fein with that of the Swadeshi Movement. 7. The writings of Leo Tolstoy had much impact on the development of the philosophy of his life. They were physically separated from each other by thousands of miles, and yet their minds were being attracted to each other more and more. They admired and adored and ultimately almost completely assimilated each other. The Kingdom of God is within You, published in 1893 and Christianity and Patriotism, published in the next year created much impression on young Gandhi who was hardly in his twenties.

Gandhi was greatly influenced by the Jain doctrines of anekantavada. He says, “It has been my experience that I am always true from my point of view and often wrong from the point of view of my honest critics. I know that we are both right from our respective points of view. And this knowledge saves me from attributing motives to my opponents or critics. I very much like the doctrine of the many ness of reality. It is this doctrine that has taught me to judge a Mussulman from his own standpoint and a Christian from his. My anekantavada is the result of the two doctrines of satya and ahimsa”. 8.
Celibacy or brahmacharya is considered as an ideal physical strength and moral elevation to a Satyagrahi. His purity of thoughts, words and deeds would generate a feeling of leading a pure and disciplined life which would enable him to achieve success in whatever project he was the best armor for a Satyagrahi. Gandhi also laid emphasis on the control of immoral thoughts which were the basis of carnality.

Gandhi critically expressed his views about the British Raj in the Indian Home Rule and his idea did attract teeming millions of India. In spite of his education in the West during the formative years of his career when he happened to know much about Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism, the main source of inspiration was his own religion. ‘The Indian people, the co-partners with Gandhi in Satyagraha have this three-thousand-year-old doctrine of ahimsa as their background’. Gita and Ramayana also greatly moulded his thought. He stated that Gita opened to him a new view of life. That made him to act as a practical person in every sphere of life. Strong determination, firm conviction, righteous action and above all, other virtues necessary for a good human being were learnt by him through these scriptures. He considered Gita as his daily consulting dictionary. Edwin Arnold’s The Light of Asia influenced him very much. He got the ideas of Buddhism through this book. The reading of this book absolutely changed his style of life and convictions. This book helped him a lot for moulding his philosophy of non-violence. Gandhi’s own religion was vulnerable to Hindu culture, Buddhists, Jains and Brahman worshippers. His own faith developed on account of these influences. In short,
according to him, all religions teach that we should live together in love and mutual kindness. 10.

As a votary of Truth and Non-Violence, he strived for the greatest good of all irrespective of caste, creed and sex, and also sacrifices his all to realize his convictions. He is ready to sacrifice himself to save the rest. The repeated reading of the book Unto This Last written by John Ruskin not only influenced Gandhi, but also inspired him to put the teachings of Ruskin to practice in his thoughts and deeds. Of the books Gandhi read, the one that brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation in his life was Unto This Last. Later Gandhiji translated the book into Gujarati, entitling Sarvodaya; the welfare of all. 11. It was in the pursuit of truth that Gandhi made the discovery of non-violence and this discovery led him to make Satyagraha as a political programme during the long drawn struggle against the British Raj. His rich experience in South Africa made him to realize that sacrifice was nothing but an active cooperation with truth, pure and simple principles of life. He also got himself well-conversant with charity, compassion and celibacy which clung to him in all kinds of dealings with humanity. Gandhi believed that non-violence was not merely a personal virtue, but it was also a social virtue to be cultivated like the other virtues. Non-violence was a multi-hued concept and phenomenon and an essential component of this strategy as a form of political action and behavior. Adoption of non-violence by the national movement was also linked to the fact that a disarmed people had hardly any other resource.
Satyagraha, the most sharp and dangerous weapon of Gandhi is strictly adherent to truth and non-violence. He stated that for Satyagraha and its offshoots, non-co-operation and civil resistance were nothing but new names for the law of suffering. The origin of Satyagraha could be traced to the practice of Yajna. Between the original form of human and animal sacrifice and its contemporary manifestation in Satyagraha, it has undergone the intellectual refinement of the Upanishads and humanistic transfusions from Jainism and Buddhism.

Gandhiji’s ideas were very humble and simple. He had no use for pedantic, pedagogic, or technical jargon. We cannot categorize the thoughts and ideas of Gandhi separately. All his thoughts are interrelated and interconnected. His life has been, as has been so happily and aptly expressed by himself in the name that he has given to his autobiography, a series of ‘Experiments with Truth’. His writings contain the processes and the results of these experiments. They are voluminous. If a reader wants to have his views on a particular subject, he cannot easily get them in a handy form in one place, although collections of his articles and statements on particular subjects and aspects have been published. The reason is that he has never tried to write a systematic text-book on his own philosophy. But Gandhiji, being a greatest Indian in our modern history, it is my strong conviction that, there would be great interest generated in learning about Gandhiji’s modes of thought and his messages to humanity separately.
The Central Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi

The entire thoughts and philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi is fixed on two pillars, truth and non-violence. For Gandhi, it was not mere perception of truth which mattered; what was more important for him was speaking the truth, acting the truth and realizing the truth in every breath of life and action. Self-realization was another name for realization and establishment of the truth of life and being. Perception of any particular truth must be followed by a relentless effort to replace untruth and falsehood; in the context of human and social evolution, evil, injustice, exploitation of man by man were but forms of untruth which have to move from asato ma satgamaya, moving from untruth to truth, as the ancient invocation of the Upanishad.

Truth is the first among the vows of his Ashram, because it is perhaps the most important name of God. The devotion to this truth alone is the only justification for our existence. By the vow of truth, Gandhi means not that we adhere to truth as policy or merely those we speak the truth. But the Ashrmites should understand the word Satya or truth in a much wider sense. There should be Truth in thoughts, words, and action. Gandhi was convinced that if anyone observed this vow of truth, he would be able to keep all the rules of correct living without effort. By this vow Gandhi wanted the members of the Ashram to say ‘no’ when they meant ‘no’, regardless of the consequences. 14.

Gandhi used the Sanskrit word ‘Satya’ for truth. Satya is derived from the word ‘sat’ which means being. According to Gandhi, nothing exists in reality except truth. So truth is perhaps
most important name of God. Gandhi always equates truth with God.

Gandhi differentiated two types of truth, Absolute truth and Relative truth. Absolute truth is the really real reality i.e. God himself. He worshipped God as truth only and hence he changed ‘God is truth’ to ‘Truth is God’. Relative truth is the truth according to one’s will or the truth that one can experience. Living in the light of relative truth a man can reach the absolute truth. One should be truthful in thoughts, words and deeds. 15 In order to gain fitness for self realization or God realization, one should follow truth in all activities. God realization can be possible only through moral means. Non violence is the first article of faith. It is also the last article of creed”. 16 The origin of non-violence is from a Sanskrit word Ahimsa. The literal meaning of ahimsa is non-killing. But to Gandhi, non-violence means not harmlessness or non killing but it means to love everybody. For Gandhi, use of harsh words, ill will, cruelty, poverty, unemployment etc are various forms of violence. According to Gandhi, evil cannot be overcome by evil or violence. Effective way to oppose something non-violently is through suffering. Love does not harm others. Suffering is the Law of beings and war is the law of the jungle. Gandhi considers ahimsa as a positive and dynamic force. It is good will towards all life. To him Truth is the highest law and Ahimsa is the highest duty. And it is the surest and quickest weapon to oppose evil. 17

To Gandhi non-violence is of three types; viz. non-violence of the brave, non-violence of the weak and non-violence of the coward. Non-violence of the brave is the highest level of non-violence. The
brave man follows non-violence because of mental conviction. The brave man allows himself to be killed without killing. And he desists from killing or injuring, because he knows that it is wrong to injure. 18. The brave man allows himself to be killed without killing. To him non-violence is the law of life. Non-violence of the weak is the non-violence of the helpless. A man adopts it not because of his mental conviction but on account of his weakness to use violence. The weak and helpless are non-violent in action because they are unable to use violence. But in reality they harbour violence in their breasts and simply await opportunity for its display. 19. Non-violence of the coward is the passive non-violence of the coward. He has no courage to oppose. A coward is less than man. He does not deserve to be a member of a society of men and women. 20. There is a hope for violent man to be someday non-violent, but there is none for a coward. 21. Where there is a choice between cowardice and violence, Gandhi prefers violence. Affection, kindness, forgiveness, sweet words, sympathy, mercy, help, tolerance, patience, co-operation, mutual aid etc. are the positive forms of non-violence.

**Ashram Vows**

Ashram can be defined as “a traditional Hindu pattern of simple community living oriented to spiritual discipline and realization”. 22. In South Africa Gandhi founded two ashrams namely Tolstoy Farm and Phoenix Settlement. Gandhi got the inspiration for this community living from John Ruskin’s book “Unto This Last”. 23. In ashrams the inmates observe certain vows or solemn promises. After consulting with the inmates and his friends Gandhi drafted a code of rules. The members of the ashram had to
keep all these rules (vows). In Gandhi’s opinion vows are essential for self realization because without them one will not be able to overcome worldly temptations in daily life. The refusal to take vows is an indication of weakness.

The eleven vows laid down by Gandhi for the observance of the inmates of the Ashram were the following. Truth (Satya): Truth is the first among the vows because it is the most important name of God. As a vow truth means truthful in thoughts works and actions. By this vow, Gandhi wanted the members of the Ashram to say no when they meant no, regardless of the consequences. 24. Non Violence (Ahimsa): According to Gandhi non violence means to love everybody. It means goodwill towards all life. To Gandhi, exploitation is a form of violence. “Not to hurt any living thing is no doubt a part of ahimsa. But it is its least expression. The principle of ahimsa is violated by every evil thought, by undue haste, by lying, by hatred, by wishing ill to anybody”. 25. Celibacy (Brahmacharya): Brahmacharya means the search for or discipline which leads to the realization of Brahman, ultimate reality or God.26. It is the self control over all senses in thought, word, and action. This vow was the “corner stone” on which the Ashram life was based. It is not the suppression of one or more senses but complete mastery over them all. 27. Control of Palate (Aswad): Our food should be limited simple, spine less and if possible uncooked. Food is taken only to sustain life. This vow helps a lot to keep the vow of Brahmacharya. By this vow Gandhi wanted the members of the Ashram to abjure completely not only meat and alcohol but also, as far as possible, all conditions which would excite the animal passion. 28. Non-Stealing (Asteya): A
person following truth and non violence should not steal. But to Gandhi non stealing means not only not taking another person’s belongings without his permission but also receiving something which one does not need, improper multiplication of wants etc. One who takes everything that he does not need for his immediate use steals it from somebody else who is in need of it. This vow refuses to allow the desire for things belonging to others. 29. Non-Possession (Aparigraha): It is an extension of the vow of non-stealing. This vow denies private property. It is also laid stress on the importance of simple living and reduces wants. Absolute non possession means total renunciation. According to Gandhi it is not the reduction of wants but refinement of wants. 30. Swadeshi: As a vow Swadeshi demanded that every one should serve the country of their birth. It also laid stress on love the neighbor. Swaseshi is that spirit within us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote. 31. Fearlessness (Nirbhaya): Fearlessness was essential for the growth of other good qualities in human being. Fearlessness means freedom from all external fears and internal fear. The easy way to become fearlessness is to cultivate non attachment to the body. Without fearlessness non one can follow truth and Ahimsa. Gandhi reminded us that there was only one whom we have to fear and that was God. 32. Non-observance of Untouchability (Sparshabhavana) Untouchability is a socio religious practice of orthodox Hindus in India. It means pollution by touch of certain persons by reason of his birth in a particular family. According to Gandhi it is wrong to consider anybody as untouchable. Through this vow Gandhi
wanted to consider all human beings are equal. Untouchables were admitted in the Ashram and they were considered as equals with others. 33. Bread Labour (Sareerashrama): Every man must labour with his body at least for his food and cloth. It is the law of nature. One who takes the necessities of life without body labour is a thief. By this vow Gandhi wanted all the members of the Ashram to do some kind of bodily work. Equality of Religions (Sarvdharma Samabhava): In Gandhi’s opinion religion has to pervade all our action. To him religion did not mean formal or customary religion. His religion is ethical religion. In short religion means a deep faith in God. Different religions are different roads converging to the same opint andthat is God. So, one should respect all religions. According to Gandhi ‘religions are many, but Religion is one’. 34.

**Truth as a Means of Self-realization**

According to Gandhi the ultimate aim of man’s life is self realization. Self realization means seeing God face to face, realizing Absolute Truth or knowing oneself. He believes in the principle of spiritual unity. So the immediate service of the human beings becomes a necessary part because the only way to find God is to see him in his creation and to be one with it. So Gandhi reconciles self realization with service to society.

**Ends and Means**

End is the result product and means is the way by which the result is achieved. So ends and means are convertible terms and in separable. Ends are like the destination and means is the path to reach the goal.
One of the qualities that distinguished Gandhi from others is that his insistence on the principle of purity means. His insistence on this is based on practical reasons and sound logic. His faith in this principle is developed from his experience. He gave importance to the means because as human beings we cannot have control over ends; we have always control over the means.

According to Gandhi truth is the end and non violence is the means to attain the end. There is a belief that a good end can be achieved by any means. But this is wrong because the quality of the end is always governed by the quality of the means. Gandhi believe that the end many depends on factors that were beyond our control. He was of the view that good deed produces only a good result or end. To Gandhi self realization is the end and truth and non violence is the means.

**Man and Society**

Man is a social being. He has reality only in relation to the other members of the human family. Dependence on society teaches the lessons of humanity. As a practical idealist Gandhi had a very deep insight in to the real nature of man. His views about man were deeply related with his moral principles. All man possesses divinity in the form of Atman. So man is the manifestation of God. All human beings have an aim in this life, to realize his self. Gandhi considered man as a part of God. He looked upon man as the incarnation of God. Basically all human beings are good. He had a body so that he is influenced by the physical laws of Nature. We can bring changes in the individual through non violence.
Gandhi was conscious of the weakness of the man as an individual and as a member of a group. So Gandhi placed greater reliance on individuals than on groups. He believed in the inherent goodness of human nature. To Him human nature is in its essence one and that every man has the capacity for the highest possible development. Gandhi visualized an ideal society called Sarvodaya Society. The peculiarity of this society is all-round development of all without any discrimination. The basis of this society is truth and non violence. In Sarvodaya society all the individuals have equal opportunity. Gandhi gave supreme consideration to individual than society. Man cannot live away from the society because man is a social being. Development of man is possible only when his actively participated in the society.

**Satyagraha**

The most important revolutionary contribution of Gandhi to the whole world is Satyagraha. He is known the world over as the author and advocate of Satyagraha. The whole philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi can be summarized in one word, Satyagraha. The word Satyagraha is a combination of two Sanskrit words- “Satya” and “Aagraha”. ‘Satya’ means truth and “agraha” means “holding on” or “insistence on” or adhering to truth. But as a concept Satyagraha means non violent and peaceful adherence to truth. Gandhi identifies Satyagraha with love force or soul force. It is the relentless pursuit of truthful ends by non violent means. Satyagraha is a total and integral way of life based on truth and non-violence.  

The English word passive Resistance was first used to describe the non violent direct action of the Indians in South Africa.
Passive Resistance did not fully express the implications of Gandhi’s movement and was found to misleading. Satyagraha and passive resistance are methods of solving conflicts. But they differ fundamentally. Passive resistance is the weapon of the weak while Satyagraha can be practiced only by the bravest that have the courage of dying without killing. So in the course of the search for an appropriate name, Maganlal Gandhi suggested the word Sadagraha. It means “firmness in a good cause”. Then Gandhi modified it into Satyagraha. Satyagraha does not permit violence in any form even under the most favourable circumstances. Satyagraha is the law of love the way of loving all. It can never go hand in hand with any kind of violent activity involving injury to persons or property. The technique of Satyagraha is not to destroy the opponent but to convert or win him over by sympathy and self suffering. Mainly there are three major forms of Satyagraha; viz. non-co-operation, civil disobedience and fasting. “The basic assumption of Satyagraha is that human nature is essentially spiritual, rational and good.

Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi was a multifaceted personality with a clear vision and a definite approach to the political problems which India of his time faced. Our politicians of past era had failed in their mission of clearing our society of its deep rooted evils. As a karma-yogi and practical politician Gandhi tried to purify the Indian political scenario and to reform the Indian society. Gandhi’s vision of politics has a deep relation with religion. He declared that the whole of his life was saturated with religious spirit. He can’t live for
a second without religion. Politics and all other activities of Gandhi are derived from his religious belief. According to Gandhi; an immoral man should have no place in politics, because he would do any wrong for his political ends. And hence he advocated that morality is the essence of political actions. It denotes that individual should have high standards of morality, both personal and public. Gandhi had an in-depth faith in the inherent goodness of human nature. In his view service of humanity is the means to attain self-realization. By doing nishkama-karma we are doing service to God himself. To Gandhi prayer is a sacred part between God and man. It is a tool for self-realization. So Gandhi started all his activities with a prayer. Realization of God is the chief objective of human life. It is attained only through self realization. Gandhi himself proved that politics is a tool for social change. This change should be through self suffering or self less service.

Ramarajya

Gandhi firmly believed that the present state is based on centralization of power. It crushed individual freedom. Gandhi visualized an ideal society based on non-violence and maximum independence for the citizens. Gandhi denoted this state as Ramarajya; i.e. the Government which least governed the people. Gandhi considered Rama as an ideal ruler. He admired the way he gave an efficient administration to his people and all his subjects were happy and prosperous. To him Rama did justice even to a dog. ‘Swaraj is the synonymous with Ramarajya, the establishment of kingdom of Righteousness on Earth; i.e. the sovereignty of people based on pure moral authority. But in the present set-up the state
authority had been centralized and power had passed on to a few individuals only. To Gandhi political power was just as a means to social change. It was a tool for control of national life through national representatives. Such a state is the state of enlightened anarchy, where every one will be his own ruler.

According to Gandhi, Ramarajya is not a fight between historical figures Rama and Ravana, but a spiritual fight between the two forces of good and evil. The message of Ramayana is the great importance of moral code of conduct, a great awareness of God’s majesty and man’s sinfulness and finally a genuine device to promote the welfare of others. In the present scenario, Ramarajya means an ideal state where the subjects would be free from all evils. The administration is carried out on the basis of the voice of conscience. The ideal state or Ramarajya is based on truth and non-violence. It aims at village autonomy. It resists centralization of power and insists on decentralization of power. The jails will be reformatory houses and all will have desired freedom. The police would be all the servants of people and not their masters, and function as social reformers. Ramarajya aimed at the over all welfare of all people irrespective of caste, creed or sex. It stands for economic decentralization as well as political decentralization and promotes village and cottage industries. The people also promote the principles of simple living and high thinking.

**Democracy**

Gandhi was a strong supporter of democracy. He was a true democrat in thoughts, words and deeds. Gandhi opposed the present democratic system, which has represented centralization of
power. To Gandhi, centralization of power is regarded as violence or a social evil. In his democracy, there is no place for secrecy and requires change of hearts. He cautioned the world by saying that since democracy is a great institution it is likely to be greatly abused and as such democratic devices should be very carefully used. According to his concept of democracy, the government should be least governed living maximum autonomy and independence to the people. In his opinion, democracy based on violence cannot protect the weak. In a democracy based on non-violence, the weakest shall have equal opportunities with the stronger in the society. Gandhi bitterly criticized democracy coming with violence. Gandhi had a faith in spiritual democracy, which will be based on ethical ideals and without any external force.

**Panchayati Raj**

The political decentralization has been moulded by grass-root level democracy or Panchayati Raj. Gandhi’s concept of decentralization starts from the bottom where people are independent in making their policies. Non-violence is the basic principle of political decentralization. To Gandhi non-violence was the kingdom heaven. He believed that exploitation becomes a reality when power was centered in a single body like state. To Gandhi decentralization of political power and concept of Ahimsa are closely related. The observance of Ahimsa or non-violence is of utmost importance in decentralization. Swaraj, non-violent state and Ramarajya are significant milestones in Gandhian concept of decentralization. In the context of modern India decentralization would be primarily expressed in the development of self sufficient
village communities. He wanted India to evolve a decentralized structure of power based on the effective re-construction of self-reliant and self-sufficient villages.

The political decentralization has been molded by grass-root level democracy or Panchayati Raj. In Gandhi’s view the political structure was to be not a pyramid with the apex sustained by bottom. The structure should be ever widening never ascending circles with the individual as the center. Seventy percent of the entire population belongs to village. The village panchayat will have functioned with the help of five person annually elected by the adult population. The representative of a village must be a believer in the ideal of inter-communal unity with equal respect and regard for all religions. He shall come in contact with every village within this jurisdiction. He shall keep a record of his work from day to day and educate the village folk in sanitation and hygiene and take all measures for the prevention of ill-health. He should be the promoter of basic education and he should be a habitual khadi wearer. To Gandhi Panchayat Raj represents and upholds the cultural or spiritual ideal of simple living and high thinking. One of the important features of the Panchayati Raj is the economic self sufficiency at grass root level. It is the only way to eradicate exploitation of weaker sections and to bring happiness to the millions in Indian Society. Gandhi strongly believed that Indian villages can only rebuilt by the application of Panchayati Raj system.
Economic Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi

Gandhian economic philosophy is emerged in a context of the age old Indian tradition, political unrest and economic exploitation of the colonial British rule, and also as an answer to the problems or severe poverty and unemployment in British India. Great personalities like John Ruskin, Henry David Thoreau and Leo Tolstoy and major religions such as Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Jainism, and Buddhism etc. influenced Gandhi to formulate his economic ideas. Gandhi’s integral vision of man and society, his belief in the inherent goodness of man had become the basis of his economic ideas. According to him economic development and moral development are the two sides of the same coin. For Gandhi, economics which does not aim at moral progress of man and society is immoral and real economics should stand for social justice. The material progress devoid of moral progress will not last long. Gandhi gave emphasis to ethics or morality or moral well being of the people. According to him economics that hurts the moral well being of an individual is immoral and therefore sinful. This moral vision separates Gandhi from other economists. Modern economy is neglecting the moral values and ethics and is based on market driven forces.

Gandhi was critical towards the modern economic thinking which caters unlimited human wants and desires. Its sole objective is to bring happiness and leisure to man by fulfilling his unlimited, ever increasing wants. He criticized the principle of the unlimited character of human wants as a determinant of economic activity and
satisfaction an index of economic progress. He felt that wants were unlimited, and the more you attempted to satisfy them, the more they increase since human mind is like a restless bird.

Gandhi favoured an economic order which provides the basic necessities of life to all. To achieve this objective, wants have to be limited or minimized. So Gandhi said that what can be provided to one and all alone can be considered. Mad pursuit of wealth by a few should be stopped and the basic needs—food, cloth and shelter—should first receive attention. In this regard, Gandhi identifies an ethical man who represents his economic vision and an economic man who represents the modern economic vision. To Gandhi an ethical man aims at the moral growth, mental happiness and health of the dumb millions of the country. He has a deep faith in truth, non-violence and non-possession. He has a deep faith in the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. Gandhi’s ethical man will minimize his personal wants and lead a simple life. His aim will be the greatest good of all.

The meaning and purpose of modern economic activity is mainly to achieve greatest pleasure and happiness to the greatest number. Gandhian economic activity envisages the greatest good of all or the welfare of all in the society. Nobody is eliminated or neglected from the sphere of development. This is the basis of his sarvodaya philosophy. Secondly modern economic activity is concerned with the moral progress of the people. It is not at all concerned with the moral progress or ethical principles. Gandhi was more concerned with the moral well being of the people and fore he
the purpose of economic activity should be to bring peace in the society. Gandhi was aware about the predominance of agriculture in Indian economy. Agriculture occupies a predominant position in Gandhian economic thinking.

**Basic Principles in Gandhian Economics**

Decentralisation is a very dynamic concept in Gandhian economics. In fact it is one of the major principles of his economic thought. Industrial revolution has made a radical change in the production and distribution system. The centralization of economic power will create many evils such as; concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, it breeds violence and in turn exploitation, widens the gap between the rich and the poor, produce inequalities and injustice, promote maximum production, over exploitation of resources and so on.

A decentralized economic system will be village or home centered, it is small scale in nature, create more employment opportunities, ensures production by masses, makes use of local skill and talents, utilizes the resources of the village itself, enhance the better distribution of finished products, avoids competition, promote equality and social justice and will lead the society to self-reliance and self-sufficiency.

Gandhi was critical about the multiplicity of human wants. The possession of unnecessary private property is theft and it means exploitation of the poor. The concept of bread labour is earning of livelihood, by doing physical or manual work. Gandhi was against
all kinds of ownership and propagated the trusteeship formula in the realm of economics.

India is confronted with a number of problems. They are poverty, unemployment, pollution, population, exploitation, over competition, conflicts, growing consumerism and so on. Gandhian economic system offers a hope and dream to the problems listed above.

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF MAHATMA GANDHI

The word education is derived from the Latin word ‘educate’ which means ‘to bring up’. Education is as old as mankind. In every society, ancient or modern, simple or complex, primitive or advance one finds provision for education. No society has ever existed without some method of education.

Education can have different meanings. Generally education is considered as knowledge of letters. It is a process of acquiring knowledge. Education is a way of bringing up individuals. In general, education is a process of training individuals in certain desirable direction.

Education may be formal or informal. Informal education is incidental i.e. the education which one gains from nature and from living with others. It is important and useful but may not be deliberately planned. Formal education in the other hand is consciously and deliberately planned for the purpose of training the child through schooling.
Various philosophers, educationists defined education in many ways. Swami Vivekananda defined education as “education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man.” Acharya Vinoba Bhave defined education as “education means to attainment of self-sufficiency in learning.” Dr. S. Radhakrishnan defined education as “the training of the human soul in the pursuit of truth and practice of virtue.” Rousseau defined education as “the natural development of humanity.” John Dewey defined education as “the development of all those capacities in the individual which will enable him to control his environment and fulfill his possibilities.” Pestalozzi defined education as “a natural and harmonious development of all the faculties of the individual-head, heart and hand.”

Indeed education is a continuous process from beginning of one’s life till the end. Education will help the individual to develop his own personality, potentialities and thereby he can lead a harmonious life.

Aims of Education

There are various aims for education. Traditional civilizations had its own aims and objectives for education. In ancient Indian Vedic education, the aim of education was to know oneself. According to Plato, aim of education is to train the individual for diverse adjustments. In ancient Japan aim of education was to produce sound character. According to Tagore the aim of education is to attain the individual for citizenship. Swami Vivekananda put character formation as the main aim of education. According to
Rousseau the aim of education is to produce a natural man, free from the artificialities of human society.

In the modern society also, aim of education has many aspects. It is not simply knowledge accumulation but to develop in man, desirable habits, interests, attitudes, skills which will help him to lead a full and prosperous life.

Educational aims can be immediate and ultimate. Immediate aims are those which will fulfill the immediate needs. Ultimate aim is the final aim or the ideal aim which is the perfect happiness of individual.

Character formation has been the most important aim of education in all great civilizations of the world. The ancient system of education in India gave importance to character formation. Vedic as well as Budhist educational system gave utmost attention to character formation. Swami Vivekananda refers educational aim as ‘life building, man making and character making’. He said “If you have assimilated five ideas and made them your life and character, you have more education than any man who has got by heart a whole library.” He continued by saying that “If education were identical with information, the libraries would be the greatest sages in the world and encyclopedias the Rishis.”

In ancient Japan the most important aim of education was to produce sound character. Modern educationists like Herbert Spencer, Pestalozzi, and Vinobha were concerned about the character development of education. A society with men of good character means that the system of education prevailed there is
good. So character formation is one of the most important aims of education in all times, past and present.

“Knowledge is inherent in man, no knowledge comes from outside; it is all inside,” says Swami Vivekananda. It is there in the human mind. At particular times, many discover or unveil it. Pursuit of knowledge was the main concern of all systems of education in the world whether ancient or modern. All considered knowledge as supreme or power. According to Socrates “Knowledge is Power.” Attainment of this knowledge is considered as realizing the God in man. So ‘knowing oneself became the highest level of knowledge (Jnana)

The importance of body labour in life was a major concern in all human culture. It is based on the principle that ‘to live man must work.’ For that he needs some vocation and skill. So, all educational systems of the world gave importance to the vocational aim of education. By this, the child will be in a position to earn his livelihood by doing his vocation, which he gets from education. So it is very important that education should prepare man for a vocation.

Pestalozzi defined education as the harmonious development of the head, heart and hand of an individual. It is nothing but the total development of his personality. When Swami Vivekananda speaks of man-making education, he also stressed the importance of the peaceful, equanimous human mind. So education should aim at an integral development of personality.
Herbert Spencer is of the view that the aim of education is to prepare the individual for complete living. This is an important function of education. Complete living here means an integral vision of living. There are certain laws of complete living such as self preservation, securing a vocation, social function, functions of a member in home, and utilization of leisure time profitably. If these laws are taken care of, such a system of education will prepare the individual for complete living.

According to Gandhi all religions are different roads towards self-realization. Education helps the individual to know oneself, i.e. the Godhood in man. It is a process of God realization.

Morality is a major concept in all educational systems in the world. By this education, the individual become morally good and perfect. Moral education will help the individual to control his mind and increase the power of concentration by which he can attain knowledge.

All major systems of education aim at the individual’s development. Education should train an individual to become a good citizen. It is nothing but training of citizenship. It enables the individual to perform his duties and responsibilities truthfully. It will make him independent, self-reliant. It will liberate the individual or aims at the all round personality development.

Education will help an individual to develop a feeling for society. Societal needs must get priority in the system of education. Education should aim at making each individual socially efficient.
Such a group of socially efficient individuals make the society efficient and dynamic. Education is simply a process of socialization.

**Major Philosophies in Education**

Idealism: According to idealism the goal of education is to achieve self-realization. The function of education in idealist thinking is to develop the moral values in man. This is mainly teacher centered education. Philosophers like Plato, Hegel, and Kant were idealists.

Naturalism: This was based on the facts of science of nature. Naturalism is child centered. For the naturalist teacher, education is the fostering of the natural development of the child. In this scheme teacher assumes the role of an observer, only helps the child to learn. Darwin, Montessori was exponents of naturalist education.

Pragmatism: This scheme of education is an American way of thinking. It upholds the value of action and practicability. William James was the initiator of Pragmatism. Main exponents were Irwin Luis, John Dewey.

**Gandhi’s Views on Education**

In Gandhi’s opinion, the British education system was impractical and unproductive in the Indian context. “The greatest drawback of the present system of education is that it does not bear the stamp of reality that the children do not react to the varying wants of the country”.

These problems can be summarized as, it discarded the Indian system of education; changed the meaning of education; failed in meeting
the most urgent and pressing needs of national life; Created division in Indian society; Changed work culture; neglected and disregarded Indian languages and culture; gave prominence to foreign language.

Mahatma Gandhi was one of the great Indians who systematically applied his mind to the complex problems of Indian education. Besides being a political philosopher and a social reformer, he was also a great educationist in his own right. But his marvelous achievement in the field of politics and social reform and his experiments with truth and non-violence have been so spectacular that his outstanding contribution to educational theory and practice was generally passed over unnoticed. He firmly believed that Indian education is unequal to the task of societal change and development.

Gandhian educational thoughts were deep rooted in traditional Indian culture and Vedic education. Gandhi’s philosophy of education was derived from his own experiments with truth. According to Gandhi realization of truth is the ultimate aim of life. To Gandhi life and education are the two sides of the same coin. His integral vision of education can be seen from his definition of education. “Education is an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man-body, mind and spirit.” According to Gandhi, the end of all knowledge is to bringing about character.

Education for Gandhi is the art of putting all things in their right order so that every function, interest or activity, which has a contribution to make to the good life, may find its appropriate place. To Gandhi education
is nothing but training of heart, head and hand. His education is not simply reading, writing and arithmetic (3 R concept of education), but education to the heart, head and hand (3 H concept of education). He replaced the 3 R concepts with the 3 H concept in education.

According to Gandhi, the major aims of education are character aim, vocational aim, attainment of self-reliance, God realization, education to the heart, head and hand, training in truth and non-violence and training in citizenship. To Gandhi literacy is not the end of education. “Literacy is not the end of education or even the beginning. It is the only one of the means whereby man and woman can be educated”.

Education as envisaged by Gandhi is the all round development of the individual, intellectual, spiritual and mental. Gandhian education is based on a set of principles, which are related to the dignity of man’s head, heart and hand. It also rests upon certain values like self-reliance, independence, manual labour etc. According to Gandhi self-reliance is the basis of freedom and swaraj. Individual is not educated for himself but for the society. He should be able to provide for his own education. He should be able to stand in his own legs.

Development of character is the quintessential aim of Gandhian education. Character formation is possible only in a self-reliant man. Gandhian education is craft centered. By craft Gandhi made education self-reliant and according to him self-reliance is the sign of freedom. Gandhi never intended craft education as a substitute of book education. According to Kumarappa, a well-
known economist, “self-reliance is the basis of freedom while dependence is the essence of slavery.” Morality and religion have a place in Gandhian education. Gandhi envisaged an all round development of human personality through his holistic or integral education. It is a culmination of ‘earning by doing’ and ‘earning while learning’

With all the insights and experiments, Mahatma Gandhi analyzed the Indian problems in the colonial period. He realized that the English educational system, introduced by the British, did much to enslave our mind to the colonial values. The British system of education was only creating clerks and subordinate officers to assist the continuance of their exploitation in India. Gandhi felt the need for an alternative educational system. When Congress gained majority in the 1937 Provincial elections, Gandhi thought that it was the right time to think of an education for the masses. He decided to restructure the educational system. For that, Gandhi convened an All India Educational Conference at Wardha on 22nd and 23rd of October, 1937, inviting the educationists, sarvodaya workers and education ministers of the newly formed Congress governments in the provinces.

Resolutions passed at the Wardha National Education Conference were: that free and compulsory education is provided for seven years on a nationwide scale; that the medium of instruction should be the mother tongue; that the conference endorse the proposal made by Mahatma Gandhi that the process of education throughout this period should centre around some form
of manual and productive work, and that all other abilities to be
developed or training to be given should, as far as possible be
integrally related to the central handicraft chosen with due regard to
the environment of the child; and that hat the conference expects
that this system of education will be gradually able to cover the
remuneration of the teachers.

A committee headed by Dr. Zakir Hussain was appointed to
go into the details of the scheme, preparation of curriculum and the
syllabus. As the new scheme came into being at the Wardha
conference, it was called the Wardha Scheme of National Education
or Basic Education. In 1939 this scheme was implemented in the
provinces ruled by the Congress ministries in Bihar, Bombay,
Kashmir, and Madhya Pradesh.

The very important outcome of the conference was the
enforcement of article 45. According to which, the directive principle
of free and compulsory education was enforced in the provinces so
that local students introduced into it. Gradually constitutional
provisions began to be framed to safeguard educational rights to all.
It is on the basis of this conference and its recommendations,
Gandhian educational ideas were incorporated in the educational
system.

Basic education according to Gandhi answers the wants of the
people in India. Basic education is life centered which has certain
specific features. Basic education implies free and compulsory
education for all children between the ages of 7 to 14 years. Free and
compulsory education for seven years will create the right and enduring type of citizenship and literacy. Again, seven years' course will impart not only elementary education but also secondary education. Vocational efficiency is another important feature of basic education. It imparts love for work among children and teaches them the dignity of labour. Basic education is craft centered. It should be manual and productive. According to Gandhi, craft as such is not to be taught; the whole education is to be imparted through it. But the idea is not produce craftsmen out of students. Craft for Gandhi is the symbol of the love of manual labour. Craft should make the child self-supporting. The concept of charka symbolizes productive labour. It is the symbol of poor rural masses in India.

Basic education is self-supporting. Children are learning as well as earning. They earn from their work to meet the expenses of education. In basic education the word ‘self-supporting’ has been used in two senses. In the first place, the child after completing his course of education should be able to earn a living for himself. Secondly, education imparted in it should be self-supporting to an extent that the manual productive work of the children would meet the expenses of teachers’ salaries during the total period of 7 years. In basic education mother tongue is considered as the medium of instruction. Through active participation in social activities children are trained in leadership qualities, co-operation, team spirit and honesty. This will enable every individual child to exercise his rights and duties of citizenship intelligently, which will enable the citizen
to repay society for all the rights conferred on him, in the form of some productive service. Basic education is related with situations in the life of child in his home, village and those connected with its crafts and occupations. Otherwise, teaching under the Wardha Scheme will be carried through concrete life situations, which are related to craft, to social and physical environment.

Through basic education children are trained in peace and nonviolence. Through this, the boys and girls have to become true representative of our culture, and our civilization and of the true genius of our nation. Thus children will be taught through education, the superiority of non-violence over violence. According to Vinoba Bhave, “the only right kind of education is that which strengthens the forces of love and peace”. Correlation is the soul of Gandhi’s Basic Education. Correlation means establishing connection or association between the various parts of each subject or between various subjects, so that a unity may emerge out of the variety in knowledge. The purpose of good correlation, in Basic Education, is to establish relation between work and knowledge.

The content of Basic education suggested by Dr.Zakir Hussain is; The Basic Craft: In basic education craft is an important tool for self-reliance. This is based on the principle of self-supporting education. Another principle is the concept of bread labour. The craft should be one with rich economic possibilities enabling the child to pursue it as an occupation. The income can be utilized for the upkeep of the school. Realizing the importance of craft Gandhi
said, “It must be treated seriously and must be taught in a proper and scientific manner like the other subjects.”

The Mother Tongue: It is easy for anybody to speak and write his own mother tongue. It is the peaceful vehicle for child through which he is introducing to ideas, emotions etc. A foreign language puts an undue pressure on the part of children. So Gandhi gave importance to mother tongue as the medium of instruction.

Mathematics: The main aim of teaching mathematics is to develop in the child the capacity to solve the ordinary numerical problems related with his craft, house and society. It includes measurements of quantities, and values also. Social Studies: By studying social studies, the children will be familiarized with the history of human beings. It will help the student to get a clear understanding of his social as well as geographical environment. The study of social science generates a feeling of patriotism. This will help the children to develop a sense of rights and duties of citizenship. In general the course will impart an understanding of family, state, nation etc.

General Science: To give an intelligent outlook on nature; to form a habit of accurate observation; to familiarize with the major scientific principles. By these ways the child can use science to the betterment of human beings. Drawing: It occupies a major part in the Gandhian educations scheme. It helps to train the eye in the observation and discrimination of forms and colours and to develop memory of forms, to cultivate an appreciation for the beauty in nature and art and to inculcate the ability to make drawings of objects. Music: The main aim is to teach the children various songs and to develop in them a
taste for music. The Report gave thrust to this concentration of mind also. Hindustani: It can be one among the common language after regional language and Hindi.

**RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY OF MHATMA GANDHI**

The concept of religion in all civilizations was mainly centered on realization of the Supreme, Almighty, and God. It is experiencing God; it is a matter of heart than that of intellect. In fact religion is an experiential knowledge and reality rather than an experiment knowledge and reality. Swami Vivekananda gives a scientific definition of religion. “Religion is the manifestation of the divinity already in man”.39

If we scientifically study highly developed religions of the world it have two dimensions. Religion as a socio-political expression: It consists of the do's and don'ts of religion and the rules and regulations about food, dress, marriage, and other social disciplines, besides myths and legends. This will have a place in the census registers and which demarcate it from other religions. Religion as a path to the experience of God: It consists of the truly spiritual part, with its emphasis on personal morality, worship and adoration, and the disciplines designed to ensure the spiritual growth of man. Religion is a universal reality. It has formed for a peaceful relation with oneself, neighbours and God. Real religion loves everybody. It is meant for a peaceful, harmonious co-existence of human beings. Every religion has three aspects, Values, Symbols and Practices. There is diversity in practices and symbols, where as values are common in all religions.
Gandhi's Views on Religion

Mahatma Gandhi was a deeply religious man. But his view of religion was entirely different from that of many of his contemporaries. He defined religion as: “By religion, I do not mean formal religion or customary religion, but that religion which underlies all religions, which brings us face to face with our Maker.” For Gandhi religion means a belief in ordered moral government of the universe. According to him religion should pervade every one of our actions. Gandhi said, “you must watch my life, how I live, eat, sit, talk, behave in general. The sum total of all those in me is my religion.”

Gandhi was against all those who oppose religion. To those he said that no man can live without religion. He was of the view that refusal to accept the existence of religion and God is like “a man saying that he breathes but that he has no nose.” His concept of God is very much related with his concept of Truth. For him Truth is God. Religion to Gandhi represents the attainment of absolute truth. He said, “To me religion means truth and ahimsa, or rather truth alone, because truth includes ahimsa.”

Religion and Morality

In his concept of religion, Gandhi has given a predominant position for morality. According to him without morality no religion can exist. “There is no such thing as religion overriding morality”, he said. Morality is a man to man relation. A strong belief in God develops morality in man. The ‘Atman’ in man is the God- head.
divinity is there in everybody. Divinity makes the man a moral being. To Gandhi religion aims to the moral growth or moral well being of people. Otherwise it will become irreligion.

Another significant aspect with his concept of religion is the inseparability of religion and morality. “Religion is to morality what water is to seed that is sown in the soil”. All religions are governed by moral principles and in fact it has become a judging criterion. Gandhi was of the opinion that a person with a strong moral life will invariably be a religious man and vice versa. Morality doesn’t and couldn’t limited with any particular religion and it would be there in every religion.

As Gandhi has given more emphasis for morality his concept on religion is generally being termed as “ethical religion”. Ethical and eternal values like truth and non-violence were always occupied a central position of his religious ideas. The axiom which he developed at the end of his life Truth is God’ is a clear vindication of the same.

**Religion and Service**

The ultimate religious aim for Gandhi is seeing God face to face God realization. To Gandhi “the only way to find God is to see Him in His creations and be one with it.” So only through service of humanity one can realize, experience God. “To serve is my religion.” He was of the view that human body is meant solely for service. Life must be wholly and solely dedicated to the service of the poorest in the society. To him religion is service to the poor. To Gandhi, service
without humanity is selfishness. It is nothing but identification of oneself with all creatures. In this way religion foil Gandhi is a binding force of love between human beings and Nature.

**Respect for all Religions (Sarvadharma Samabhava)**

After scientific enquiry of what religion is all about, Gandhi came to the conclusion that there is a common factor in all religions. “Religions are different roads converging to the same point. All proceed from the same God.” So he propagated equal respect for all religions. Gandhi gave a new awareness among his countrymen about the common roots of all religions. He was aware about the existence of different religions. He justifies it by saying that ‘in theory, since there is one God, there can be only one religion. But in practice, no two persons I have known have had the same identical conception of God. Therefore, there will, perhaps, always be different religions answering to different conditions.”

Gandhi explained this multiplicity of religion in another way. “Even as a tree has a single trunk, but many branches and leaves, so there is one true and perfect religion, but it becomes many, as it passes through the human medium”. To Gandhi in essence, all religions are true and lead the human beings to God. So he advocated equal respect to all religions. It is not tolerance, he says, because there is an element of inferiority in the concept of tolerance. His concept of Sarvadharma samabhava can be considered as the only answer to solve the communal problems not only in India but
also in the entire world. It is nothing but the Gandhian principle of equal respect for all religions.

**Ways to practice religion**

Gandhi has experimented the means and ways for practising religion. He suggested following means for practising religion.

**Prayer:** According to Gandhi Prayer is the very core of man’s life as it is the most vital part of religion. It is nothing but a communication between man and God. It is man’s urging to unite with the divine. Gandhi defined prayer as follows: “Prayer is nothing else but an intense longing of the heart.” Real meaning of prayer according to Gandhi is devoted worship. Gandhi was of the view that prayer is necessary for all and no man can live without prayer. This can be seen from his following words. “As food is necessary for the body, prayer is necessary for the soul. A man may be able to do without food for a number of days -but believing in God, man cannot, should not, live a moment without prayer.”

He goes further and said that prayer is more essential for the well being of the soul than to food for the maintenance of the body. Gandhi was realized about the infinite power of prayer and he was of the view that prayer is the greatest binding force, making for the solidarity and oneness of the human family. Through prayer one will know oneself and realize the divinity inside. It is nothing but being one with God. It is indeed means right living and selfless service.
According to Gandhi, the object of prayer is not to please God but to purify ourselves or self-purification and it aims at selfless service to the poor. So invariably prayer is a way towards experiencing and practising religion. Fasting: It is the ultimate and most potent weapon in the armoury of Satyagraha. In addition to that it has got a religious bearing also. In every religion it is being taken as a method for self-purification and an innate longing to experience the transcendental; God.

Ashram Vows: The eleven ashram vows framed by Gandhi were in fact at endeavour towards practising religion. All these vows were religious virtues. The practice of these vows has given a different level and meaning of God realization. The following are the ashram vows: 1. Non-violence, 2. Truth, 3. Brahmacharya, 4. Non-stealing, 5. Non-possession, 6. Body labour, 7. Control of palate, 8. Swadeshi, 9. Removal of untouchability, and 11. Respect for all religions.

Communal Harmony

Mahatma Gandhi’s role as a leader of the Indian Freedom struggle was significant. But his place in history really rests on his unique role as a preacher of communal harmony. He was a champion for the cause of communal harmony. He stood as a spectacular role model in achieving communal harmony in India.

Gandhi treated communal harmony as a basic infrastructure for prosperity, development, peaceful co-existence and also for the
struggle for freedom. He was succeeded to a great extent in bringing together two alienated communities together.

**SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY OF MAHATMA GANDHI (SARVODAYA)**

Gandhi’s social philosophy can be termed as Sarvodaya. The term Sarvodaya is derived from two Sanskrit words ‘sarva’ and ‘udaya’. The literal meaning of the word ‘sarva’ is awakening or upliftment. So Sarvodaya means the welfare of all of upliftment of all members of society. Literally it means welfare of all. Mahatma Gandhi used this word as a title to his paraphrase in Gujarathi of John Ruskin’s ‘Unto this last’. Sarvodaya now stands for Gandhian order of life. Gandhi used this word ‘sarvodaya’ to mean all, round welfare of all, including the very last man, the down trodden in the society. Under ‘sarvodaya’ philosophy all members are treated equally. This concept can be found in the ancient civilizations of the world. The spirit was in the Indian culture and traditional thoughts. Kautilya’s Arthasastra prescribes ruler’s duty as the welfare of all people. In Isavasya Upanishad, omnipresence of God is emphasized. As a Jeevatman-human being, a part of the Paramatman-God, one should respect all living beings. Epics like Ramayana and Bhagavad Gita laid special emphasis on the welfare of all in the society. World religions like Christianity and Islam also had their influence on Gandhi in formulating his sarvodaya philosophy.

Sarvodaya philosophy has an upper hand among all the western theories of social development. It overtakes Darwinian theory which advocates the principle of ‘survival of the fittest’. Sarvodaya goes one step further from Adolf Huxley’s doctrine of
'live and let to live', and proclaims its character in these words 'live in order to help others to live'. Sarvodaya is much popular and greater than Anarchism, Socialism, Communism and Utilitarianism.

Sarvodaya is the social ideal of Mahatma Gandhi. It is a balanced all-round well-being and development of the whole mankind. Gandhi formulated the Constructive programme during his active participation in the freedom struggle. He realized that the total and integral development of Indians and India practiced through this Constructive Programme only. Communal Unity, Removal of Untouchability, Prohibition, Khadi, Other Village Industries, Village Sanitation, Basic Education, Adult Education, Upliftment of Women, Education in Health and Hygiene, Propagation of Provincial Language and National Language, Economic Equality, Welfare of Kisans, Labour, Adivasis, Lepors etc. are the Constructive Programmes proposed by Mahatma Gandhi.

The goal of constructive work is not to provide economic relief to the unemployed or to distribute some wages to the poor but to build up a non-violent social order.

Gandhi gave women perfect equality with men. He stood for removing all their disabilities- religious, social and economic etc. He believes that there are no fundamental differences between men and women. The physical differences between them may make some differences in the spheres of their activities.

Gandhi emphasized love to fellow men as the only basis for establishing right human relationship. This was based on the twin principle of truth and non-violence. He realized the oneness of all living being and worked for the welfare of all.
In sarvodaya society social order will be based on certain characters. And they are; equality, equal justice, equal opportunities, respect for all, sarva dharma sambhava, untouchability and varnasharmadharma. It aims at restructing the society on the basis of truth and non-violence. Sarvodaya social order envisaged will be a castless, classless society devoid of any type of exploitation. It provides a fair conducive environment for maximum development of individual towards God realization. Varnasharma Dharma occupies a predominant position in the sarvodaya social order, not as rigid as practices in India, but it would be rather a hereditary functionalism-inherited from generation to generation.

According to Gandhi sarvodaya society is free from the following seven social evils or social sins.

a) Politics without principle
b) Education without character
c) Science without humanity
d) Wealth without work
e) Commerce without morality
f) Worship without sacrifice
g) Pleasure without conscience

The economic order of sarvodaya is based on decentralization, trusteeship, bread labour, and swadeshi, predominance of agriculture, village and cottage industries, simple living, limitation of wants, self re-reliance, self-sufficiency, self-respect and co-operation. Economic order envisaged under sarvodaya is village based where production and distribution are made need based. Mechanisation is minimized in order to make use of the available
man power. This society will be devoid of difference between the rich and the poor. Co-operation is an eternal principle in the economic aspect of sarvodaya. There will be no kind of competition as in the case of market economy.

The political aspect of sarvodaya is based on decentralization, panchayatiraj, statelessness, party less democracy and so on. The political structure of sarvodaya is characterized by absence of state. When an individual is ruled by himself and he is moving towards the ultimate aim- God realization, there is no need of state intervention. Similar such individuals from the society and when such society attains this stage, the existence of the state will wither away. The intermediary state of Panchayat raj is envisaged at four levels. Grama Panchayat, Zilla Panchayat, Provincial Panchayat, National Panchayat.

Sarvodaya is a cherished dream of Mahatma Gandhi. A revolutionary concept of welfare of all is brought through sarvodaya in which all are taken into account-the tioller of the soil, the village handicraftsman, the peasant, the capitalist, the rich, the poor, the learned, the illiterate etc.
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