CHAPTER

INTRODUCTION

Social sciences all over the world are seriously involved in academic researches. All these academic researches are aimed at knowledge production or producing knowledge. Knowledge, per say, is always new or only new knowledge is called knowledge. What is not new is either recognition or rememberance. Epistemology in India had studied these aspects in details. One can refer to the Nyaya, Vaisesika as well as other Indian systems for a deeper understanding.

Undoubtedly Social Sciences had been seriously producing knowledge. They had undertaken the laborious task of investigating into empirical data, co-ordifying, editing and publishing them, indeed they accomplished a great task.

But then what is knowledge? Is it merely cognitive alone? Is knowledge intellectual only? Aristotle said that the limit of assimilation is the limit of knowledge. Can assimilation be the final word in knowledge?

For the epistemology in the West that is rooted in Greek philosophy, knowledge is cognitive. Cognition, per say, is the result of sense-object- contact-experience. We come across empiricists like
Johnlocke, George Barklay, David Hume etc. taking the position that sense-object-contact-experience is the only source of knowledge. Rationalists like, Immanuel Kant accept sense-object-contact-experience, but also introduces the role of mind or reason into it. Kant would say that “Knowledge begins at the instance of experience, but knowledge is not confined to experience”. [Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason]

19th Century Europe had experienced what may be termed as a scientific euphoria. This was an immediate reaction to the long period of intellectual stagnation of Europe. Many “ISMS” sprang forth in Europe which started and ongoing affair. Positivism was one such Europeanism that precipitated in the scientific euphoria period. Many factors influenced the development as well as application of social sciences in the Western world, beginning from Empericism, Rationalism, Idealism, Materialism, Marxism, Positivism, Existentialism Linguistic Analysis, Modernism, Structuralism, Post Modernism, Post Structuralism etc. Ultimately, the vast majority isms of the West do have similar, epistemological edifice, of viewing plurality and multiplicity through differential theories. For most of them knowledge is empirical, intellectual and cognitive.

In Indian epistemology, knowledge is to be taken as more than merely cognitive. Knowledge worth the name must also be affective. Knowledge must affect the knower, refining and purifying him. If this affectivity does not occur, then such knowledge is either empty or meaningless. Indian knowledge system makes a
distinction between knowledge and wisdom, Vijnana and Jnana as well as aparavidya and paravidya. Wisdom Transcends cognitivity and it is experiential or anubhava. Anubhava is beyond mere cognitivity. It belongs to another realm or level akin to the area of noumiena in Kant’s Philosophy. For Kant, noumiena is “necessarily unknown and unknowable”.

This is different from the perspectives of Indian knowledge system. For Indian knowledge system, Kant’s realm of naumiena is not unknowable; it can be known through anubhava or experience. Now if we look at all the efforts of Western isms in this Indian perspective of affectivity of knowledge, we could be seriously disappointed.

Hence Indian epistemology and Indian ways of knowing has to be seriously understood, taught and spread. One should adopt this as one of the fundamental duties of every Indian in any personal capacity. In my humble efforts to look at the father of our Nation though the theories of Buddha may be marked as a rudimentary attempt to this desideratum.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To analyse the social background, which led to the formation of Buddhism.

Buddhism came as a reaction to the Vedic orthodoxy that began to alienate common people through decedent practices. The downword growth of Vedic Hinduism needed to be rectified,
corrected and redeemed. The inbuilt dynamism of Indian Society is capable of making reparations from time to time through the long list of reformers. The context of Buddha was demanding active presence of serious social reformation and Buddha was the foremost one, who came as reformers.

2. To elucidate the fundamentals of Buddhism.

The Philosophy of Buddha is clear and distinct. Fundamentally Buddha was trying to understand suffering of man. He was addressing what he had directly experienced; he was trying to understand the problem and attempting to correct as well as to resolve. The basic principles of Buddhism amount to this.

3. To analyse the basic principles of Gandhism.

The Mahatma was never trained in philosophy as such. He had also not written philosophical treatises. He did not also belong to any schools of Indian philosophy as such. But Bapuji was the embodiment of the entire Indian philosophy itself. Most probably, Gandhiji himself might have not been aware of who or what is influencing like most of us, Indians. When we look at the Mahatma, we see direct influence of many Indian philosophical systems on him that makes him feel, think and act. Indeed his life was action itself. One could say that he put into practice much of Indian philosophy. One could also say that the principles of Gandhism are practical Indian philosophy.
4. To analyse the impact of the Buddhist philosophy of ahimsa in Mahatma Gandhi.

The influence of Buddha on Gandhi is tremendous. Among all Buddhist principles, the idea of ahimsa is what brings them close to one another more than anything. At many places in Gandhi, the influence of Buddha is direct and explicit. Buddha taught people to love all living as well as non living beings. He demanded endless mercy. Violence is directly contradictory to endless mercy, love and such principles. Buddha upheld ahimsa as one of the cardinal principles. We can find the same spirit in Mahatma and naturally the Mahatma was also drawn to the ahimsa ideal. Here again we see the Mahatma actually practicing the ahimsa conceived by Buddha and practically taking it not only to common Indians but also to the entire world.

5. To compare and contrast the philosophies of Buddha and Gandhi

We find many points of similarity between Buddha and Gandhi. Buddha gives out the theory and Gandhi goes around putting them into practice. Philosophers had constructed a Gandhian philosophy out of the Mahatma's thinkings, writings and doings. To compare this with the principles of Buddha can give as the feeling that the only difference between them can be that of theory and practice.
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

For Indian knowledge system, knowledge must affect the knower. Knowledge must refine and purify. Thus knowledge is not merely cognitive. To a large extent; education in India still carries the colonial hang-over. Our academics have a tendency of blindly accepting of what is done in the West and glorifying it at times. It may not be wrong to say that our education is not yet Indianised. We have not yet made sufficient efforts to unearth, understand as well as popularised what lay buried in the dark clouds of ancient Indian wisdom.

The influences of the West can be sometimes negative. Western epistamology and theories of conflict, contradiction, particularity, specificity etc can negatively affect the generality, universality, unity as well as the monistic approach that had been powerfully sustaining the veracity within Indianess. We must make efforts to invent the unifying principles that transcend perephorical and apparent differences for co-existance, unity of Indian society and ultimately the integrated existence of Indian nation inspite of differences which are only apparent since they are really not differences but only variations, varieties of one principle that could be termed as Indian culture. This perhaps is the most significant aspect of a study like this.

Twenty first century world has turmoil implicit within more than any from past history. Unlike the past violent times in history, this potential turmoil which is often akin to a volcano can explode anywhere, any time. Terrorism all over the world is just one
example. Strong nations with hidden interests who appears to be externally friendly, but in reality not trustworthy could be another instance. Peace is what one ought to aspire from India, a nation and a culture with deep built in spirituality which had always stood for peace, tranquility, co-existence, spirituality and universal brotherhood. This land had produced great minds that left their indelible mark in the history of man. To list them shall be a long and time consuming affair. I believe that Indians can be instrumental in building a peaceful world for tomorrow with our back ground which is unique. To this end, I approach an ancient Indian and a modern Indian, the Buddha and the Mahatma and to take lessons from them. The Mahatma was greatly influenced by the Buddha. What Goutama Buddha philosophized and conceived, the Mahatma-the father of the nation- tried to put into practice in concrete terms. My main objective runs around this "ideal – actual relationship" that of actualizing the ideal.

HYPOTHESIS

It is not necessary that there should be traffic blocks always. A little discipline can avoid road blocks which are usually for long hours. If no one tries to overtake in a crowded traffic, we shall not have road blocks. A small thing, but no one practices. There is a strong analogy between this and the current global situation. Nations can co-exist; societies can co-exist in perfect harmony, provided there is a slight shift in their world views. This is only a small thing but does not get practiced, in actual situations. Though the entire population of the world is involved here, the whole population can be directed through few world leaders and the
ideologies influencing them. I believe that, if Indians are able to make the kind of peace, spirituality and co-existence that had been handed down to us by our great ancestors, to the world leaders. This could be a beginning towards world peace.

It was Mahatma Gandhi, in whom we had the distinct experience of finding a practitioner of Indian culture and spirituality. The influence of Buddha on Gandhi is tremendous. The moorings of Buddha on Gandhi, and Gandhi put them into practice through taking philosophy to people also remains our points of interests and investigations.

**METHODOLOGY**

A method is inevitable for any proceedings. Since the area is spread cutting across the so called boundaries of discipline, at the very outset it is a natural demand that the methodology must be interdisciplinary to begin with. Analysis is a method towards clear, distinct and better understanding. Analytical method amounts to breaking a complex whole into parts, understanding each part separately and then re-constructing the whole again for a better wholistic picture. Thus analysis must be followed by synthesis if the analytic process of understanding has to be completed. Though not really in this sense, one can see, Immanuel Kant speaking about “synthetic unity of apperceptions.” To an extent synthesis becomes the important process of an analytical enterprise. Wittgeinstein began linguistic analysis through his early work *Tractitus logico philosophicans* with the belief that linguistic analysis can depict or unpack reality. The “Vienna Circle” develops logical positivism and
linguistic analysis as the tool of knowing from this. Interestingly after sometime Wittgenstein himself contradicts and negates his early theory and confirms that language cannot give meaning. In his later book, Philosophical Investigations, he says that do not ask for meaning, you can only ask for the use of language. To know the use is to know the meaning but meaning as such is not given in language.

However, linguistic analysis still continues as a method for many. I donot adopt the method of linguistic analysis here. The most important aspect of a methodology used here lies in the techniques of connecting the ideal with the actual. This at once demands a travel between conceptual and empirical phenomena. A bridge need to be build since the area of study has a wider horizon, to use inter-disciplinary methodology becomes imperative. I propose to unpack relevant concepts of Buddhism and then to investigate into their moorings upon the speech and action of Mahatma Gandhi. Further I wish to investigate into a technique or method of making these moorings extendable to world leadership as it happened to Martin Luther King. How the philosophical reflections of Buddha mediated through Mahatma Gandhi to become applied philosophy taken to people shall be very instructive in my attempt to apply Buddha through Mahatma Gandhi to contemporary world.

**AREA OF THE STUDY**

The area of study is Social Sciences. To better the society should be the ultimate objective of social scientific knowledge
production. Both Buddha and Gandhi had been trying towards this though their thinking as well as doings. The area directly involves Indian philosophy and philosophy as such. The six systems of knowing (Shad Darsanas), Buddha in particular, is the philosophy of Mahatma. Indian culture as well as spirituality falls under the area of study. There shall also be bearings of actual situations, political and other.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A methodology to understanding Indian knowledge in today’s terms is yet to take roots. The ancient methodologies are either lost or not very practical in contemporary times. The absence of an effective and adequate methodology to an Indian understanding is indeed a great limitation.

The second chapter of this thesis explains that the Vedic context as the context of the Buddha. Attempt had been made to understand the Vedic period through many Vedic practices and rituals. Some attempts to look at the mythologies are also done to comprehend the rigidity that resulted subsequently. When the flexibility of the Vedic period turned rigid dynamism gave way to static existence and there began the era of downfall. Society turned into isolated groups with limited interactions and less knowing one another that restricted the growth and development of Indian culture, tradition, spirituality and the Hindu Dharma itself. It is in this background that the Buddha emerges as a spiritual leader and a great social reformer who had later become an Avatar itself.
The third chapter deals with the philosophy of the Buddha. This discusses briefly the four noble truths, the twelve links, eight fold path, different schools of Buddhism and many Buddhist scholars who recorded Buddha’s oral teachings both directly and indirectly.

In the fourth chapter, Buddhism becoming an influential aspect for common people is discussed. Buddhism further becomes simplified through many sects to out as many people as possible. In this process the ideas of Buddha got spread to many countries through great followers of Buddha wherever his teachings reached, there again originated great minds in those society who further recreated Buddha. In this manner Buddhism reached all over the world, it became intelligible too. Common people in far flung lands, with many scholars re-inventing and re-interpreting the Buddha.

In the fifth chapter the Buddha and the Mahatma are seen together. An attempt is made to understand important links between these two historical figures.

The Sixth chapter deals with how Gandhian thought is taken to common people. The Gandhian principles reached not only common Indians but also common people all over the world.

In the last and seventh chapter, which is conclusion the actual significance of both Buddha and Gandhi in contemporary Indian Society is attempted to understand. Perhaps many social problems which are present today are like traffic blocks. A small difference in perspective at the right point might be able to make these problems
vanish. Efforts are made to see Gandhian philosophy and Buddhism as a solution which could provide these much wanted perspectives towards problem solving.