For a proper appreciation of the ideas of Gandhi on any topic, it is necessary to bear in mind two things. First, he was not a political philosopher as the term is usually understood. He did not present his political ideas in any systematic form and at one place; they have to be culled from innumerable passages occurring in his articles, in his interviews, speeches, and answers to the questions etc. He did not assign himself to the task of setting up an academic discipline. He was not a theorist; but was primarily an actionist - a Karmyogi. He himself admitted, "I am not built for academic writings. Action is my domain. What I understand, according to my lights, to be my duty and what comes my way I do." He did not weave the web of his theories in the cloistered atmosphere of his study; they grew and developed in the crucible of experience, in the course of his attempt to wrest freedom for his country and to solve the various practical problems as they emerged in the course of his long struggle against foreign domination. His solutions to the problems were

\[\text{Harjian, 3.3.1946, p.29.}\]
rooted in necessity. For a person in the position which Gandhi occupied it was incumbent that he took the most pressing problems and issues into account and offered his own solutions. And from these solutions and experiences, there emerged a definite political theory. Second, his genius was more spiritual or moral than intellectual. His whole life was cast in the spiritual and moral mould of which non-violence was the fundamental tenet.

Generally, non-violence is understood as a body of "norms, interdictions or sanctions regarding avoidance or control of violence as well as the practice of good in day-to-day behaviour."\(^2\) The meaning of non-violence can be divided in two types. The first type is where non-violence connotes avoidance of certain types of actions, e.g., killing of animals, hurting the feelings of others, harbouring malice and avarice etc. The second, connotation of the term 'non-violence' is a positive norm of social action, or as a system of values to be cultivated by man. Here it is not the withdrawal of certain temptations and self-denial of certain norms that connotes non-violence but the cultivation and radiation of certain values in the behaviour of man. There should be a positive attitude in

some form or the other, which requires of men to add something to his personality by righteous actions and sublimation of self.

The term 'non-violence' is not an exact equivalent for the Sanskrit word 'Ahimsa'. While writing in the Indian languages, and sometimes even in English, Gandhi used the Sanskrit word rather than its English equivalent. The word 'Ahimsa' literally means non-injury, or, more narrowly, non-killing, and, more widely, harmlessness, the renunciation of the will to kill and of the intention to hurt any living thing, the abstention from hostile thought, word and act.\(^3\)

Gandhi extended the meaning of Ahimsa and interpreted and applied it in his own manner. As early as 1916 he distinguished between the negative and the positive meaning of ahimsa. "In its negative form, it means not injuring any living being, whether by body or mind... In its positive form, ahimsa means the largest love, the greatest charity. If I am a follower of ahimsa, I must love my enemy or a stranger to me as I would to my wrong doing father or son. This active Ahimsa necessarily includes truth and fearlessness."\(^4\)

\(^3\)Monier-Williams, Sanskrit English Dictionary.
\(^4\)The C.G.C., Volume 13, p.295.
Thus he extended the meaning of ahimsa beyond non-killing or even non-injury. The principle of ahimsa, he held, is not to 'hurt by every evil thought, by undue haste, by lying, by hatred, by wishing ill to anybody... and by our holding on to what the world need.'

The path of ahimsa is the path of non-attachment and entails continuous suffering and the cultivating of endless patience. In its relatively narrower sense, it means not to hurt any living creature, by thought, word or deed even for the supposed benefit of that creature.

Gandhi's view of Ahimsa is quite significant in the sphere of politics. Mainly, there are two views of the nature of political power. The first is the Monolith Theory of power which assumes that the power of a government is a relatively fixed quantum (i.e. 'a discrete unit quantity of energy'), a 'given', a strong, independent, durable (if not indestructable), self reinforcing, and self perpetuating force. The theory assumes that the people are dependent upon the good will, the decisions and the support of their government. The power of the government is emitted from

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the few who stand at the pinnacle of command. Because of these assumed characteristics, it follows that in open conflict such power can not in the last analysis be controlled or destroyed simply by the people but only by the threat or use of overwhelming physical force. The monolithic view would not allow for the possibility of other types of effective pressures and control. Conversely, according to the other view of the nature of power, governments depend on people's good will, decision and support. Power is pluralistic. The supreme power in the state rests with the people. It is they alone who decide as to how the administrative machinery of a country has to be worked. The government of the country should be carried on according to the public opinion. The government exists not for its own good but for the good of the people. If the wishes of the people are ignored, they are always at the liberty to change the government.

In politics, the use of ahimsa is based, in Gandhi's view, upon this second view that government is possible only as long as the people consent, either consciously or unconsciously to be governed, for ahimsa means absence of any kind of compulsion, imposition or oppression. Political power is fragile, always dependent for its strength and existence upon a replenishment of its sources by the co-operation of a multitude of institutions.
and people. This cooperation from the people may or may not continue. The government can function with the consent of the people and the people of the country are at liberty to withdraw that consent whenever they feel that the government is not functioning according to their desires. It is natural for those in power to command and to use force, but those who obey commands are in majority and they could choose to express their will either by physical force or by soul force. Believing that there is only one choice between abject surrender and violence, and also that victory requires violence, people turn to threat or use of violence. The fact is however, that it is not true that violence is the only effective means of action. Throughout history, people in every part of the world have waged conflict and wielded undeniable power, by using non-violent action. Gandhi regarded non-violent struggle as a means of matching forces, one which have the greatest capacity for bringing real freedom and justice. In a passage addressed to the British rulers in Hind Swaraj, Gandhi wrote, "You have great military resources. Your naval power is matchless. If we wanted to fight with you on your own ground, we should be unable to do so, but if the above submissions be not acceptable to you, we cease to play the part of the ruled. You may, if you like, cut us to pieces. You may
shatter us at the cannon's mouth. If you act contrary to our will, we shall not help you; and without our help, we know that you cannot move one step forward."\(^3\)

Thus Gandhi was of the firm view that the exercise of power depends on the consent of the ruled who, by withdrawing that consent, can control or even destroy the power of their opponent. A resolution drafted by Gandhi and approved by the working committee of the Indian National Congress, read and passed by public meeting on January 26, 1930, contained this statement on non-cooperation and the withdrawal of voluntary submission to the British Raj. "We hold it to be a crime against man and God to submit any longer to a rule that has caused this four-fold disaster to our country. We recognise, however, that the most effective way of gaining our freedom is not through violence. We will, therefore, prepare ourselves by withdrawing, so far as we can, all voluntary association from the British government, and will prepare for civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes. We are convinced that if we can withdraw our voluntary help and stop payment of taxes, without doing violence, even under provocation, the end of the inhuman rule is assured."\(^9\) All the movements that Gandhi launched were


based upon the above theory. In other words, Gandhi used this technique to control, combat and destroy the opponent's power by non-violent means of wielding power.

In his attempt to apply game theory to human conflicts Anatol Rapaport\(^{10}\) divided conflicts in three categories: fights, games and debates. Firstly, Fights: It is a game of pure opposition and strictly competitive in which the opponents try to eliminate and destroy each other by the use of threats and physical sanctions. Secondly, games: in which the opponents try to outwit each other. Lastly, the debates, in which there is absence of threat and physical sanctions and the opponents try to convert each other. It is generally assumed that each participant's strategy is predicted on the strategy selected by the opponent. Information about all possible strategies, rules and pay offs or the probabilities, enable each player to decide rationally to maximise benefits while minimising losses. The last category is the only kind which could be productive and best possible for all. So the fights should be converted into games and the games into debates. Under Gandhi's conception of ahimsa its votary pits his refusal to hurt or injure his opponent—despite the inconveniences of such an attitude to himself—

against those who desire to fight or outwit him; and he seeks to convert them to the use of non-coercive methods to gain their ends by finding an area of common interest, based upon common humanity which would put the conflict of aims into a proper perspective. Indulgence in himsa is a result of short-sightedness and can destroy both the parties. Gandhi did not deny the existence of conflicts in human society and admitted their existence in every walk of life but sought to make ahimsa the basis of a method of action.

From the use of ahimsa in politics flows the individual freedom. Gandhi was against all kinds of impositions, even against those which are imposed for the benefit of the person concerned. He upheld the dignity and authority of the individual throughout his life. In Champaran, where he conducted his first struggle in India, he was served with a notice to leave the district. But he refused to comply with the directive and a summons was served on Gandhi to appear before the court. He pleaded guilty and read a brief statement before the court wherein he said, "I have disregarded the order served upon me, not for want for respect for lawful authority, but in obedience to the higher law of our being, the voice of conscience."12

12The CWK, Volume XIII, p.375.
writing in 1939 in connection with the State's Peoples' movement, he observed, "Civil liberty consistent with the observance of non-violence is the first step towards Swaraj. It is breath of political and social life. It is foundation of freedom. There is no room there for dilution or compromise. It is the water of life. I have never heard of water being diluted." with the outbreak of Second World War, India was made a party to the war. Rigorous curbs were put on civil liberties of the Indian people. He strongly pleaded for freedom of speech as an inviolable fundamental right of the citizens even during the pendency of war. Explaining his mind at a greater-length he observed, "But if they (the British) fight unto death for their freedom, and if they are at all reasonable, they must recognise our right... It is our duty to fight for that right... This liberty is a concrete issue, which needs no defining. It is the foundation of freedom, especially when it has to be taken non-violently. To surrender it, is to surrender the only means for attaining freedom." He asked, "If the individual ceases to count, what is left of society? Individual freedom alone can make

Ibid., Volume LXIX, p.356.

Marian, 22.9.1940, p.293.
a man voluntarily surrender himself completely to the
service of society. If it is wrested from him, he
becomes an automaton and the society is ruined." He
regarded the individual as the centre of the power. He
was categorical in his estimate of relation between
individual and the state. He held that the state derived
its existence and power from the individual.

The concept of the ultimate authority of the
individual logically paved the way for the enunciation of
the theory of non-violent non-cooperation with the state
and the exploitative system that stand in the way of the
all-round evolution of the individual. The emphasis on
the moral power of the individual is the keynote of his
philosophy. His anguish and indignation expressed in the
pages of 'Hind Swaraj' against modern civilization was
based on this fundamental belief.

But he tried to reconcile individual freedom
with social obligation. To Gandhi society was just like
a family, and the relation between the individual and the
society is one of the close interdependence. He rejected
alike the unrestricted individualism that ignores social
obligations as well as the individual as a mere cog in
the social machine. He wrote, "I value individual freedom,
but you must not forget that man is essentially a social

18 Ibid., 1, 2, 1942, p. 27.
being. He has risen to his present status by learning to adjust his individualism to the requirements of social progress. Unrestricted individualism is the law of the beast of the jungle. We have learnt to strike the mean between individual freedom and social restraint. Willing submission to social restraint for the sake of the well being of the whole society, enriches both the individual and the society of which one is a member.® But between the individual and society, the individual comes first, though society is, by no means neglected. Ultimately it is the individual which is the unit and in any scheme of social progress the first step always lies with him. Society must provide opportunities for the maximum growth of individual and individual in his turn must discharge his duties faithfully. In case, the either of the two goes wrong, the other should resist non-violently. Thus non-violence will reconcile individual freedom with social restraints. Non-violence implies that mechanics of control which maintain social cohesion will consist of internal and non-coercive external sanctions. The individual will use his opportunity to advance the greatest good of all while society will give to the individual maximum opportunity. The concept of ultimate authority of individual logically paved the way for the

16 Ibid., 27-5-1939, p.144.
emancipation of the theory of non-violent non-cooperation with the state and the exploitative system that stand in the way of the all round evolution of the individual.

Gandhi held the view that violence was an evil. Violence not only includes physical coercion but also economic coercion. Economic coercion exists whenever there is a concentration of economic power in a few hands. Beginning with the position that the exploitation is at the root of all violence, He built his economic system in a manner suitable to non-exploitative society. His panacea was to do away with concentration of economic power by proposing economic decentralisation at the various levels of the power hierarchy of the Indian society. He frequently asserted that, "If India is to evolve along non-violent lines, it will have to decentralise many things," and economic decentralisation is one of them.

Gandhi was of the considered view that concentration of economic power created the capitalist class which was exploitative of the talent and resources available in the society. This concentration has created a gulf between the privileged few and the under-privileged majority. He was aware of the fact that concentration of economic power went hand in hand with concentration of political power.

leading to the development of a dictatorial or authoritarian system. Taking into account all these obnoxious features, he opted for decentralisation of economic power. For this he advocated the establishment of cottage and small scale industries in the villages. His advocacy of universal use of Khadi by fostering the patriotic spirit for 'Swadeshi' is part and parcel of his comprehensive understanding of decentralisation through dispersal of economic power. His concept of village swaraj was co-equal with full self-sufficiency in economic matters of every village. He visualised a communitarian village that would look after food, clothing, shelter and educational needs of every individual in the rural area. A corollary to Swadeshi was Gandhi's stress on Khadi. Since Khadi was produced by the common man in every village the economic power was distributed to every village and to everyman. He put forth his theory of trusteeship to remove the wide disparity between the rich and the hungry millions. He thought that the trusteeship would prevent the concentration of economic power both in the hands of state and individuals. He believed that trusteeship could bring about a non-violent state and if the theory is put into practice it can become a major instrument for decentralisation of power for the greatest welfare of the people in the society.

19 Ibid., July 26, 1942, p.238.
In the modern absolute state there is no limit to the extent of this power. This power of the state to coerce is, according to Gandhi, a kind of organised violence in which lies the essence of the modern state. To quote him, "The state represents violence in a concentrated and organised form. The individual has a soul, but as state is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence." Besides state, even though its machinery be most democratic, is rooted in violence. His characterisation of the state as the organ of violence in a concentrated and organised form indicates how repellent he was to the omnipotence and the coercive character of the state. He further emphasised, "I look upon an increase in the power of the state with the greatest fear, because, although while apparently doing good by minimising exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of all progress." As one who believed in the sanctity of the individual and for whom the non-violence was a fundamental creed it was but natural that he would characterise the state in such a term. But


20 Ibid.
creed and subjective faith apart, he drew enough lessons from the world he faced—a world where imperialist domination, economic exploitation and racial discrimination were inseparably tied up with political power. His encounters with the racialists in South Africa and the British imperialists in India could only lead him to see the essential violent character of the state.

Gandhi thoroughly opposed the theory of the absolute power of the state according to which the laws of the state are the highest arbiters of the conduct of the citizens irrespective of the conformity of the laws of the general interests of the community. Obligation of the citizens to the state, according to this theory is unlimited and unconditional. Gandhi resisted this absolute and non-responsible power of the state. The glorification of the sovereignty of the state was a challenge to the moral right of man to shape independently his own destiny. Hence any concept of the exaltation of the absolute, uncontrolled and illimitable power of the state was, according to Gandhi, an attack on the moral fibre of civilization. He preached the right of inner conscience to oppose an unjustified law, statute, decree, ordinance or proclamation of the state. Both Western and Hindu political theorists give sanction for such resistance. "Our first duty" wrote Harold Laski, "is to be true to our
conscience."\textsuperscript{21} For Gandhi, "disobedience to the law of state becomes a peremptory duty when it comes in conflict with moral law."\textsuperscript{22} As early as in 1909, he wrote in \textit{Hind Swaraj}, "It is contrary to our manhood, if we obey laws repugnant to our conscience ... so long as the superstition that men should obey unjust laws exists, so long will their slavery exist."\textsuperscript{23}

Gandhi's main objection to the state sovereignty may be presumed to be based on the following grounds:
First, his metaphysical belief in the primacy of the spiritual authority over temporal authority of the political ruler. No ruler could claim to set himself up against God. Secondly, his faith in the inner moral conscience of the individual as superior to the organised might of the state. Thirdly, against the organised power of the legal sovereign, Gandhi stood as the prophet of moral power of the people.

He was convinced that stop-gap arrangements would not bring perfection. The mere correction of institutional structure would not bring the desired result. The final concept in Gandhi's political thought is 'Rasrajya' or the kingdom of God on earth. He stated that in this ideal

society, there will be sovereignty of the moral authority of the people and the state as a structure of violence would be extinct. The real remedy for man's rampant maladies is to foster the inner moral strength of the people. By 'Ramarajya', he did not advocate Hindu Raj as he himself clarified, "By Ramraj I do not mean Hindu Raj. I mean by Ramraj, Divine Raj, the kingdom of God. For me Rama Rahim are one and the same deity. I acknowledge no other God but the one God of truth and righteousness." He defined Ramraj as "sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority". Later, Gandhi added a concrete meaning to the term. In an editorial on 'Independence' in the Harijan on 5.5.1946, he wrote, "At the risk of repetition, I must say that independence of my dreams means Ramarajya, i.e. the kingdom of God on earth. In concrete terms, then, the independence should be political, economic and moral. 'Political' necessarily means the removal of control of British army in every shape and form. 'Economic' means entire freedom from British capitalists and capital as also their Indian counterpart. In other words the humblest must feel equal to the tallest. This can take

place only by capital or capitalists sharing their
skill and capital with the lowliest and the least. 'Moral'
means freedom from armed defence forces. My conception
of Ramrajya excludes replacement of the British army
by a national army of occupation."

In terms of Western Political Science this ideal
can be more concretely expressed as stateless society,
the enlightened anarchy, where life has become so perfect
as to be self-regulated. In this condition coercion will
be replaced by pure good-will. There will be no police,
no law courts, heavy transport and centralised production.
He visualised, "If national life becomes so perfect as to
become self-regulated, no representation is necessary.
There is then a state of enlightened anarchy. In such a
state every one is his own ruler. He rules himself in
such a manner that he is never a hindrance to the neighbour.
In the ideal state, therefore, there is no political power
because there is no State." But his astute, sense of
political realism led him to add, "But the ideal is never
fully realised in life. Hence the classical statement of
Thoreau that/government is best which governs the least." 27
Gandhi had a keen and solid sense of political realism.
He himself was not sure about the realizability of this
stateless society. He clearly stated, "I do not today

26 Ibid. 1.3.1946, p.116.
27 The CWM, Volume XLVII, p.91.
conceive of such a golden age. But I do believe in the possibility of a predominantly non-violent society. And I am working for it." Thus, inspite of his opposition to the coercive state and its sovereignty, Gandhi did not contemplate the deliberate destruction of the state machine but believed in the final elimination of the coercive state by increasing observance of non-violence in political action. This predominantly non-violent state was Gandhi's second best ideal.

Gandhi being built of tremendous opposites, a unique combination of philosopher and politician, sometimes spoke and wrote in terms of ultimate ideals and sometimes in terms of the immediate realizable objective. And there emerged two Gandhis – one the idealist philosopher and the other the realist politician. He dreamt of an enlightened anarchy and developed an ideal which might serve as the eternal beacon light to the distracted humanity and in his role as the foremost leader of the national liberation movement, the realist in him was sufficiently awake to the objective reality and he pressed forward for the establishment of a democratic political order. He took into consideration the limitations of human nature and of circumstances and conceded that the highest ideal may

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23 Narajan, 9.3.1940, p.31.
not be attained in the near future. His astute sense of realism impelled him to fight for the creation of a sovereign national state, which he knew would be far from perfect.

In 1916, on the occasion of the opening of the Benares Hindu University, Gandhi called himself an anarchist, but of a different type.\(^\text{29}\) (The reference was to the violent revolutionaries or terrorists as they were generally called). One may not be sure that the distinction that he made between the two types of anarchism was a result of his acquaintance with the prevalent literature of anarchist political philosophy. But as is generally known, he was influenced by Tolstoy's 'The Kingdom of God is Within You' to a considerable extent, who is generally described as the 'boldest heretic and revolutionary anarchist'.\(^\text{30}\) Though Leo Tolstoy did not call himself an anarchist, because he applied the names to those who wished to change society by violent means yet his basic doctrines and particularly his categorical rejection of the state and of property — fitted into general anarchist pattern. One may guess that Kropotkin also had influenced Gandhi. The biographer of Mahatma, D.G. Tendulkar, records, "Gandhi's three

\(^{29}\) The CWC, Volume XIII, p.214.

years' stay in England (1888-91) was eventful. Those were the years of great intellectual activity and unhindered freedom of thought and speech. The country as a whole had become a living university ... Kropotkin's 'Mutual Aid' was appearing serially in the Nineteenth century and Kropotkin himself was propagating his ideas in England.31 It seems likely that Gandhi's young mind was exposed to the anarchist philosophy preached by Kropotkin.

His occasional reference to 'enlightened anarchy' as the ultimate ideal and his definition of Rama Rajya as 'the sovereignity of the people based on pure moral authority', and other similar statements expressing abhorrence of the state as an institution, have lent the impression that he was a philosophical anarchist.

Dr. Gopi Nath Dahan and a host of other scholars subscribe to this view. To quote Dr. Dahan, "To Gandhiji the end is 'the greatest good in all'. He is a philosophical anarchist because he believes that this end can be realised only in the classless, stateless democracy of autonomous village communities based on non-violence instead of coercion, on service instead of exploitation, on renunciation instead of acquisitiveness and on the largest measure of local and individual initiative instead of centralisation."32

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Some scholars also described him as a religious anarchist or a pacific anarchist like Tolstoy.33

Like anarchists Gandhi held that force tend to degrade those who possessed it and those on whom it was exercised. State, which is the embodiment of force, was considered by him something degrading and demoralising to the ruler as well as to the ruled, and repudiated the state in all its forms. Thus in terms of ultimate ideal of stateless society, his views are very akin to those of anarchists. Although some of the elements of Gandhian philosophy bear resemblance to anarchist philosophy, yet he cannot be categorised as an anarchist thinker. The primary emphasis in Gandhian thought is not on the deliberate and violent destruction of the state machine, as it is found in some schools of Western anarchism, but on truth and non-violence which alone can be the basis of the enrichment and enhancement of the moral personality of man. Though Gandhi dreamt of an enlightened anarchy and led the movement for the establishment of a stateless democracy, yet his astute sense of realism led him to fight for the creation of a sovereign national state, which he knew would be far from perfect. Gandhi, unlike some anarchists, did not contemplate dispensing with the machinery of state as long as it was necessary. Gandhi rebuked the

government of the day for failing to do this or that
for the masses, implying thereby that he had a functional
and positive conception of state. Here his position is
distinctly different from that of the anarchists who are
out to abolish the state. Paul F. Power rightly commented,
"Unlike Tolstoy, Gandhi did not endorse a stateless
society for the temporal world. To do so would have
precluded him from struggling for national India's own
sovereignty... His approach to the ethical nature of the
state agrees with Max Weber's view, that the state is a
technical tool rather than something of intrinsic worth."
Further, shima as a spiritual force has no parallel in
the anarchist philosophy of Bakunin and Kropotkin. Again,
while the anarchists are apolitical or even anti-
political, Gandhi was intensely political. As a
politician he knew that politics refers to the disposition
of power. And so he moved for a shift of power from the
hands of foreign imperialists to a democratic national
state.

Gandhi's view about ideal state etc. also brought
him close to the Marxist philosophy. The main objective
of Gandhi and Marx was to improve the conditions and status
of men in the society in which he lives. Both of them
experienced that a transformation was necessary to improve

the conditions of human beings in the society. So their main goal was the 'Individual in society'. Both looked upon the state as an expression of force and visualised a stateless society or a state with minimum interference. Similarly, Gandhi like Marx, regarded private property as a source of evil and looked upon capitalism and landlordism as potent causes of human bondage. The points of contact between philosophy of Karl Marx and Gandhi appear to be very striking indeed. Yet, there are fundamental differences which are equally noteworthy.

Karl Marx enunciated the doctrine that economic systems are basic factors of history and that man and his institutions are but a reflex of the economic class-struggles which have raged throughout history. The attempt to establish a new social order characterised by freedom, according to Karl Marx, therefore, resolves into a struggle to establish a new economic order by the destruction of class domination. For Gandhi revolution means, by and large, spiritual revolution. In order to achieve a stateless, classless society of Gandhi's ideal, what is needed above everything else is a transformation of the individual. Elimination of capitalism by any means, violent or non-violent is the pre-requisite for the Marxists for the establishment of a classless and stateless society. There is nothing essentially immoral in the employment of
violence, when the goal aimed at is the establishment of a free society. And justifies the means to them. Marx and Lenin, however, rely heavily on violence as an unavoidable expedient and the only instrument of revolution since no other instrument is likely to succeed. Violence has to be employed as a temporary expedient in overthrowing the class of exploiters. But for Gandhi violence is evil. Non-violence is the root of all his philosophy. He wanted to conquer through love, affection, persuasion and not by the physical destruction. He made no distinction between the ends and means. He held that they were convertible terms. If the means neglect or violate the requirements of the moral law, the ends will not be what were intended and worked for. Further, Gandhi's programme is not the revolutionary seizure of power, which Marxism holds to be very essential for the higher phase of communism, the stage of withering away of the state, —but 'generation of power', from below which he hoped would avoid the incongruity of people's power with centralised state-power. Gandhi never approved of centralisation of state power even as a temporary expedient or as a transitional phase like the dictatorship of the proletariat. Many more differences can be pointed out.

between the philosophy of Gandhi and Marx, but the aim
of the present study is not to compare and contrast the
philosophy of Marx and Gandhi. Prof. Nirmal Kumar Bose
succinctly summed up the position when he said, "Gandhi's
conception of state is neither completely like that of
Anarchists nor of the Communists. It approaches the
former with regard to its aim of political and economic
decentralisation, and that of the latter in that the
interest of toiling millions will have a dictatorial
position within the state."

It can be noticed that
Gandhi did not ignore the demand or underrate the value
of the immediate and the temporary for the sake of
ultimate. Gandhi, in a rather exalted philosophical
mood, could well share Shelley's anarchist vision of man
in a world which still lies outside history and outside
time, but the realist in him would wake up again to come
to grip with the realities with a grim determination to
reshape this timebound world.

But he was very much suspicious of all the power
and rejected the normal notion of it. He was of the view
that all political institutions were instruments for the
pursuit of power, whether directly or indirectly. A few

37 Bose, Nirmal Kumar, Studies in Gandhism,
(Calcutta: Indian Associated Publishing Co.
Ltd., 1940), pp.85-86.

38 Battacharyya, Buddhadeb, Article, "Gandhi's
Attitude Towards Political Power", in
Bhavan, S.C.(ed.), Gandhi: Theory and Practice,
Social Impact and Contemporary Relevance,
(Bimala: Indian Institute of Advanced Study,
days before his assassination, he said at a prayer meeting, "I indeed wonder, if we can remain free from the fever of power politics or the bid for power, which afflicts the political world the East and the West." As a politician, especially at the time of independence of India, Gandhi showed an extreme suspicion of political power as ordinarily understood - the power over the lives of the people that is vested in governments and is sought by legislatures. As a political thinker, however, Gandhi was really trying to challenge the very notion of power, which has acquired in the modern world the kind of importance and autonomous character that some medieval philosophers gave to the universal essences which they believed to constitute reality.

Gandhi did not believe that it was possible for power to be organised as to ensure that those who seek it for its own sake nevertheless use it, to a considerable extent, for the public good. Even if one does not agree with Lord Acton that 'power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely', there is no denying the fact that power has a strong tendency to corrupt its...

holder. Hunt for power is the root cause of competition among the individuals. Interests collide in the race to acquire more and more power and, for this sake the probability of corrupt practices cannot be ruled out. In his own words, "possession of power makes men blind and deaf, they cannot see things which are under their very eyes and cannot hear things which invades their ears. There is thus no knowing what power intoxicated government may not do."42

Gandhi divided power in two kinds: one is detained by the fear of punishment and other by the art of love. Power based on love is a thousand times more effective and permanent than the one derived from fear of punishment.43 It is the coercive element of power which is the main target of Gandhi's criticism and suspicion. Coercion comprises the application or the threat of application of physical sanctions such as infliction of pain, deformity, or death; generation of frustration through restriction of movements; or controlling through force the satisfaction of needs such as those for food, sex, comfort and the like. Coercive element of political power has been highlighted by many authors of the subject. In his classic work 'Politics Among Nations', Hans Morgenthau writes, "Political power may be

42Young India, 13.10.1921, p.327.
43The CWME, Volume XCV, p.363.
exerted through orders, threats, persuasion, the authority of charisma of a man of an office, or a combination of any of these. In this way political power is bound to admit sanctions for its execution. It revives the ancient question of force or violence in one form or the other.

But to Gandhi, "the power that comes from service faithfully rendered annobles. Power that is sought in the name of service and can only be obtained by a majority of votes is a delusion and a snare to be avoided." In December 1947, Gandhi told his colleagues, the members of the Hindustani Talim Sangh, "by abjuring power and by devoting ourselves to pure and selfless service of voters, we can guide and influence them. It would give us more real power than we shall have by going into the government. But a state may come, when people themselves may feel and say that they want us and no one else to wield the power. The question could then be considered." He was of the considered view that it is natural for those in power to want to command and to use force, but those who obey commands are in a majority and can choose to express their will either by physical force or by soul force. If they

prefer physical force, than the rulers and ruled alike
become so many mad men, but if they choose to employ
soul-force, they can honourably disregard unjust commands.
He added, "Peasants have never been subdued by the swords,
and never will be. They do not know the use of swords, and
they are not frightened by the use of it by others. 47 What
is more, coercion has temporary results while love-based
conversion is everlasting. The use of coercion can
further complicate the conflicts rendering its solution
very difficult. "Soul force is matchless", he argued,
"it is superior to the force of arms." 48  Soul force
cannot be a weapon of weak, it is not a cover for cowardice,
but is the supreme virtue of the brave. Exercise of soul
force requires greater bravery than that of swords' man ship.
He admitted that "the strong will rob the weak and that it
is sin to be weak. But this is said of the soul in man,
not of the body. If it is said of the body, we could never
be free from the sin of weakness. But the strength of soul
can defy a whole world in arms against it. This strength is
open to the weakest in body." 49 This soul force is the power
of love and non-violence and acquired through the conquest
of passions. Time and again he stressed, "Non-violence

48 Ibid., p.81.
49 The CWHS, Volume XXX, p.414.
is a power which can be wielded equally by all—children, young men and women or grown up people, provided they have a living faith in the God of love and have therefore, equal love for all mankind. It is an active force of highest order. He acknowledged that with growing experience he could see with more and more clearness the immense power of ahimsa. Working under this law of soul power, "it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire to save his honour, his religion, his soul and lay the foundation for that empire's fall or its regeneration." From the ruffian attempting to violate a woman to the foreign army of invasion, all according to Gandhi can be subdued by the moral power exercised by non-violent individual or nation. Though he admitted that imperfect man cannot grasp the whole of that essence—he would not be able to bear its full blaze—but even an infinitesimal fraction of it when it becomes active within us, can work wonders. 

Gandhi recognised that the pursuit of power is a basic human characteristic; he was also convinced that just as power creates its own normative rules, moral values also create power and enhance the possibility of individual effectiveness and collective survival. The interplay of power and moral values is at the centre of

50 Harian, 5.9.1936, pp.236-37.  
51 The G.M., Volume XVII, p.133.  
52 Harian, 12.11.1936, p.326.
repeatedly insisted that politics could not be isolated from the deepest things of life. He said that when he found himself drawn into the political coil, he asked himself what was necessary to remain untouched by the immorality, untruth and political gains, and decided that a servant of the people must discard all wealth and private possessions. Usually politics is understood as organised disputes about power and its use, involving choice among competing values, ideas, persons, interests and demands. Elaborating this view Michael Curtis wrote, "The study of politics is concerned with the description and analysis of manner in which power is obtained, exercised, and controlled, the purpose for which it is used, the manner in which decisions are made, the factors which influence the making of those decisions, and the context in which these decisions take place." To be more clear and precise, Harold Lasswell puts it, Politics! who Gets what, when and how.

By his attempt at purification of politics, Gandhi tried to wash out this idea of using politics for personal gains. Politics should not be used for sharing and exercising power. But political work must ever be

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55 The CWMG, Volume XLVIII, p.51.
looked upon in terms of social and moral progress. When he spoke disparagingly of politics, he referred to the politics of power and regarded it as an overestimated segment of politics as a whole. To Gandhi, "political power is not an end but one of the means of enabling people to better their conditions in every department of life. Political power means capacity to regulate national life through national representation. If national life becomes so perfect as to become self-regulated, no representation is necessary." In Gandhi's view political power should be used for the benefit of humanity. To gain political power should not be an end but the means by which the lot of the masses is improved. Men are naturally unlike and, for this reason, distribution of power is bound to be unequal in any conceivable social and political system. As a practical course what may be desired is that the operation of the political system should be such, that no man's power to use his natural talents is diminished, rather it is increased to the extent that the elements of developmental and extractive power become consistent with each other. If at all one wants political power it should be for the reforms of the society and public welfare. Gandhi added, "when the energy to be spent in gaining that power means so much loss of
energy required for the reforms, as threatens to be the case if the country is to engage in a duel with the Mussalmans and sikhs, I would most decidedly advice the country to let the Mussalmans and sikhs take all the power and I would go on developing the reforms. Capacity to take political power should be in exact proportion to the ability to achieve success in the constructive efforts. He argued, "It is an illusion to think that M.L.A.'s are the guides of the voters. Voters do not send representatives to the Assemblies in order to be guided by them. On the contrary, they are sent there loyally to carry out people's wishes. The people are, therefore, the guides, not the M.L.A.'s. The latter are servants, the former masters." Gandhi further stressed, "if we look around the world we shall find that the best guidance is given by those outside. If that were not so, a rot would set in in all governments, because the field for guidance is vast and the Assembly is a very small thing. Parliaments are, after all, a mere drop in the ocean of national life." Replying to a question of Dr. Zakir Hussain about the need of ideal men to run the ideal society, Gandhi replied, "we can send men of our choice, without going into the government ourselves. Today, everybody in the Congress in running after power. That presages grave danger. Let

59 Ibid., pp.91-92.
60 Harijan, 28.4.1946, p.112.
us not be in the same cry as power seekers ... It is my firm view, that we should keep altogether aloof from power politics and its contagion.” When his attention was drawn to the need for acceptance of power, he categorically rejected its acceptance. Writing in Young India of May 7, 1931, he stated, “Office and power must be avoided. Either may be accepted when it is clearly for greater service.” He did not rule out the acceptance of office; if it was only meant for a greater cause. It would be then a conditional acceptance of power. He would not deny the very notion of power as such. Under certain circumstances it might be useful, but it would be qualified power capable of rendering good to the community.

When the Congress first decided to accept power in 1937, Gandhi’s misgiving about this decision bordered on a controversy. It is clear that Gandhi's initial reaction was that Congress should accept office only if it was found to be in the larger interest of the nation. He was reluctant to advice the Congress to accept power as an end in itself. Gandhi also felt that once the Congress was in office, it might be tempted to abuse power. The record of the Congress governments was not wholly approved

62 The CWNO, Volume XLVI, p.108.
by Gandhi, particularly its resort to force. Gandhi's objection to political power was not minimized with the establishment of the national government in 1947. He was even more sharply critical of the manipulation of power by the Congress. Gandhi was singularly alone in this respect of declining power even in a free state. Architects of other nations were absorbed in power soon after they were victorious. This was very true of those leaders who led a successful revolution and established powerful regimes in their country. But Gandhi was unique amongst all builders of nations. In his last testament on January 29, 1948, Gandhi warned the Congress about the dangers of the power politics and solemnly recommended its dissolution as a political party.63

Gandhi's rejection of power was not only negative, but quite positive also. He was not content merely with advising the Congress to decline power. His vision of a non-political society took a concrete form in the organization of constructive workers within the national fold of the Congress. He attached the greatest importance to the role of constructive workers. They were not to function merely as a subordinate and a secondary group to the predominantly political wing of the Congress. The constructive workers have to discharge a more important

duty by remaining outside the politics in the Congress. Speaking in the meeting of Gandhi Seva Sangh, he observed, "There shall be no politics in the Sangh. What is left after eschewing politics is constructive work." Then only the constructive workers could act as a corrective to the political workers in the Congress, and supplement its pre-eminent mission of the independence of India. He emphatically made it clear that the objective of the constructive work organisations, is 'to generate political power' and not to capture it. His programme of generation of power, he hoped would invest the people with power to shape their own destiny. The plea for generation of power has deep rooted significance. This means that power is not to be imposed from above, it has to evolve upwards. And in his scheme, dissemination of power is only possible on a non-violent basis.

The logical connection between decentralisation of power and his concept of ahimsa becomes very clear. On one hand, Gandhi was the foremost champion of ahimsa, on the other hand, he held the view that the state represent violence in an undiluted and organised form. Violence must be avoided in any case. Being a practical politician Gandhi had well realized that state cannot be eliminated. So in

64 The CWG, Volume LXXI, p.244.
order to eliminate the violence, the concentration of power must be avoided. He, therefore, advocated the decentralisation of power of the state. He declared, "The end to be sought is human happiness combined with full mental and moral development. I use the adjective moral as synonymous with spiritual. This end can be achieved under decentralisation. Centralisation as a system is inconsistent with a non-violent structure of society." Centralisation adds to the complexity of life which is a distraction in all creative moral endeavours. It damages initiative, resourcefulness, courage and creativeness and diminishes the opportunities of self-government. He further held, "Centralisation cannot be sustained and defended without adequate force." Centralisation leads to the concentration of power in the hands of a few and that, in its turn, robs the people of its supreme power in the matter of determination of public issues. Not only this, in an over-centralised state man loses his human dignity and becomes a cog in the wheel of the vast and impersonal state machine. Man becomes de-personalized. His programme of 'generation of power', he hoped would avoid the incongruity of people's power with centralised state power. That is why he laid much stress on Constructive Programme, 'the modus operandi' of non-violent revolution.

66 Harial, 18.1.1942, p.5.
For him, democracy was "the art and science of mobilising the entire physical, economic and spiritual resources of all the various sections of the people in the service of the common good of all."\textsuperscript{68} In order to mobilise the total resources of the nation a sense of belongingness on the part of the people must be imparted and institutionally organised. Decentralisation of power - seemed to Gandhi to be the anti-dote to the alienation. He wanted to give a new direction to the politics and for that he went to the roots. He believed that power to be effective and genuine from the stand point of the masses, must lie with the people which could only be possible in small communities of villages. In a conversation with Louis Fischer, the American Journalist, he explained, "The centre of power now is in New Delhi, or in Calcutta and Bombay, in the big cities. I would have it distributed among the seven hundred thousand villages of India."\textsuperscript{69}

He was of the considered view that under a free government the real power would be held by the people. He remarked that "there is no freedom for India as long as one man, no matter how highly placed he may be, holds in the hollow of his hands the life, property and honour of millions of human beings. It is an artificial, unequal and uncivilized institution. The end of it is an essential

\textsuperscript{68}\textit{Ibid.}, 27.5.1939, p.143.

preliminary to Swaraj. He was also very much critical of the powers of the Cabinet or Council of Ministers. He argued, "True democracy could not be worked by twenty men sitting at the centre. It had to be worked from below by the people of every village." He further stressed that true democracy or real Swaraj would come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it was abused. In other words, Swaraj is to be attained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control the authority. The real seat of power is the people. They can exert pressure on the leadership. If the individuals recognise the power in their hands and use it constructively to secure the social good (Sarvodaya) or to engage in Satyagraha against unjust laws and the repressive measures of the state, the monopolistic effectiveness of the state power would be reduced. The mightiest government will be rendered absolutely impotent if the people realising their power use it in a disciplined manner for the common good. Satyagraha is the appropriate method for seeking correction of wrongs perpetuated or ignored by the political authority. It is the way by which the law abiding citizens could adopt to exercise their power over the ruling elite.

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70 *The CWI*, Volume XXV, p.315.
72 *Young India*, 29.1.1925, pp.40-41.
Thus political power originally belonged to the people and should be transferred to them. When people come into the possession of political power, the interference with the freedom of the people is reduced to the minimum. In other words a nation that runs its affairs smoothly and effectively without such state interference is truly democratic. 73 Whilst power, superimposed, always needs the help of police and military, power generated from within should have little or no use for them. So he gave the slogan 'Back to the Villages'. 74 His most comprehensive statement in this respect reads as under, "Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus, every village will be a republic or panchayat having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world. It will be trained and prepared to perish in the attempt to defend itself against any onslaught from without. Thus, ultimately, it is the individual who is the unit. This does not exclude dependence on and willing help from neighbours or from the world. It will be free and voluntary play of mutual forces. Such a society is necessarily highly cultured in which every man and woman

73 Harilal, 11.1.1936, p.280.
74 Ibid., 18.1.1942, p.4.
knows what he or she wants and, what is more, knows that no one should want anything that others cannot have with equal labour .... In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units. Therefore, the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it. I may be taunted with the retort that this is all utopian and, therefore, not worth a single thought. If Euclid's point, though incapable to being drawn by any human agency, has an imperishable value, my picture has its own for mankind to live*. so far as possible every activity of these communities will be conducted on the cooperative basis. Such a village will be perfect democracy based upon individual freedom. The individual is the architect of his own government. The law of non-violence rules him and

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75 Ibid., 28.7.1946, p.236.
his government. He and his villages are able to defy the might of the world. The village panchayat is to conduct the government of village and is to be the legislative, judiciary and executive combined in one. The panchayat can only work through the laws of their own making. Public opinion will be the most significant force in the Panchayat Raj.

This deep attachment to the concept of decentralisation indicates the radical and fundamental nature of Gandhi's view of political power. He wanted to begin with the bottom. The common masses have to feel the thrill of participation in the exercise of political power. A small self-sufficient village community can certainly be an important force for the strengthening of the individual personality by the creation of a centre round which there can be the crystallisation of the sentiments of organic density. In small communities, active and creative participation in self-government or Swaraj is possible because genuine civil and social participation is facilitated. If democracy is to be the institutional mechanism for the concrete expression of the sovereignty of the people and if the consent of the govern has to be the justification of the exercise of the political power, decentralisation is bound to be a necessary element of democracy. The local
authorities are to be not mere branches of the central
government exercising delegated power but in the
Gandhian scheme they are to be almost autonomous republics.