Man's social nature is his fundamental attribute. It was expressed by Aristotle when he said that man was a social animal. Aristotle significantly adds that the person who is incapable of sharing a common life is either below or above humanity, 'either a beast or a God'. It is evidenced in man's reflection on society ever since the beginning of recorded thought, the reflection that it was not good for a man to be alone. Man is dependent on society for protection, comfort, nature education, equipment, opportunity and the multitude of definite services which society provides. He is dependent on society for the content of his thoughts, dreams, aspirations, even many of his maladies of mind and body. His birth in society brings with it the absolute need of society itself.

But it is also misleading to say that it is only society that lives and breathes in its individuals and man's consciousness is only an expression of the social consciousness. It can also be stated that it is only in the individual that society lives.

For a proper understanding of man and society one must know in what sense is man a social animal? In what sense do we belong to society? In what sense does society belong to us? These questions are aspects of one fundamental question - the relation of unit, the individual to the group and to the social system.

Two opposing answers have been provided by the scholars over many centuries, in the shape of the social contract Theory and the social Organism theory.

A number of philosophers have viewed society as a contract deliberately set up by individuals for certain ends. According to some, such as Thomas Hobbes in the seventeenth century, 'society is a means for protection of men against the consequences of their own untrammeled natures'.\(^2\) To others, society is an artificial device of mutual economy a view suggested by the economic philosophy of Adam Smith\(^3\) and his followers. Similarly, the eighteenth century individualists maintained that man was born free and equal in his state of nature and his establishment of social contract merely set up social conveniences of order and


All such theories view society as based on some kind of original contract between the individuals themselves or between the people and the government. This view has been used as an argument for the 'protection' of the individual 'from society' and sometimes it has been used for the opposite purpose of enhancing the role of political organisations in society.

The organismic theory of society presents a totally different picture and regards society as a kind of organism. This view conceives society as a biological system, a quarter organism alike in its structure and its functions, exhibiting the same kind of unity as the individual organism and subject to similar laws of development, maturation and decline. Society's cells are individual persons, its organs and systems are associations and institutions. This theory in its extreme form identifies special structures of society with biological organs and systems, some writers finding in society counterparts of the brains, the lungs or the limbs of the organism. Less extreme organicists, like the early sociologist Comte, have been more concerned to show that the

5. Ibid., pp. 354-417.
unity of society and the participation of individuals within it are to be thought of in terms of organism. And others seek to demonstrate that society passes through the organic processes of birth, youth, maturity, old age, and death.

Closely related to the organismic position is the theory that society should be thought of not so much as a greater body but as an inclusive mind. This too is both an ancient and a modern doctrine, expressed for example in Plato's Republic, in the Hegelian school of political philosophy, and applied by such psychologists as William Mac Dougall who speaks of the reality of the group mind. The exponents of this theory insist that society is itself a mind, a mind common to its members.

The identification of society with an organism or with a mind like the social contract theory finds its way into

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contemporary thinking on many levels, observed Oswald Spengler, who claims that 'societies pass through the organic cycle from birth to death, and in the official doctrines of totalitarian governments, such as the Nazi and Fascist, which envisioned the nation as a living fatherland of which the individual citizens is merely a manifestation and to which his entire life must be devoted'.

The inadequacies of these two theories become apparent when one attempts to consider certain factual evidences of the inter-relationship between the individual and the social order. R.M. Maciver and Charles H. Page have cited the following three paths to explore the interrelationship between man and society.

1. **The Feral Cases**: The dependence of man's human nature upon his membership in a society is supported by some evidence of a quasi-experimental kind. It is of course hardly possible to make experiments by isolating infants from all social relationships. But the chance or accident in the following incidents have furnished sufficient evidence.

   The famous case of Kaspar Hauser is peculiarly

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significant because this ill fated youth was in all probability bereft of human contacts through political machinations and therefore his condition when found could not be attributed to a defect of innate mentality. When Hauser at the age of 17 wandered into the city of Nuremberg in 1828 he could hardly walk, had the mind of an infant, and could mutter only a meaningless phrase or two. He mistook inanimate objects for living beings. And when he was killed five years later a post-mortem revealed the brain development to be subnormal. The denial of society to Kauspar Hauser was a denial to him also of human nature itself.¹⁴

Another interesting feral case involves two Hindu children who at the ages respectively of about eight and under two, in 1920, were discovered in a Wolf den. The younger child died within months of discovery but the elder, Kamla, as she was named, survived until 1929. Kamla brought with her almost none of the traits that can be associated with human behaviour. She could walk only on all fours, possessed no language save wolf like growls, and she was as shy of humans as was any other domesticated animal. Only as the result of the most careful and apparently sympathetic training was she taught rudimentary social habits. Before her death she had slowly learned some simple speech, human eating and dressing habits, and the like. Her sense of human

self-hood was utterly lacking when she was found and gradually emerged thereafter. But the emergence of individuality was altogether dependent on her membership in human society.15

Another case sociologists and psychologists have studied is of Anna, an illegitimate American child who had been placed in a room at the age of 6 months and isolated there until her discovery five years later in 1938. During her confinement Anna was fed little else than milk, received no ordinary training and had almost no contact with other beings. This extreme and cruel social isolation, which provided the scientists one more laboratory case, left the child with few attributes of the normal five year old. When Anna was discovered she could not walk or speak, she was completely apathetic, and indifferent to people around her. As in the case of Kamla, Anna responded to careful treatment provided after her release but died 4 year later in 1942. Anna's case illustrates once again that human nature develops in man only when he is social man, only when he is one of many men sharing a common life.16

2. The Growth of self: Study of process in which the child develops the capacity for society furnishes another body of

evidence of the fundamental unit-whole relationship. The emergence of the capacity for social life, is an aspect of the growth of self hood. The child does not merely imitate the social usage of adults but in the process of imitation his own social nature is gradually revealed.

3. **Man's peculiar dependence upon the social heritage:** Every individual is the offspring of a social relationship, itself determined by pre-established mores. Further, every person is essentially a term in a relationship. The individual is neither beginning nor end but a link in the succession of life. Man is born to a society the process of which determines his heredity and parts of which become in time his internal mental equipment. The social heritage which changes continuously because of our social experiences, evokes and directs our personality.¹⁷

Herbert Spencer, though he considered society as an organism, pointed out one great difference when he said that society has no 'common sensorium' no central organ of perception.¹⁸ For it is only individuals who think and feel. For feelings and thoughts are like, not common; they are experienced by individuals as individuals. Individuals do not belong to society, as the cells belong to the organism. The


only centres of activity, feeling, function are individuals themselves. The only society we know is one in which these selves are bound together, through time and space by the relations of each to each which they themselves create or inherit. And conversely, it is only because they are a part of society that individuals are endowed with interests, inspirations and goals. It is only in society that individual nature can thrive. Thus the relationship between individual and society is not one sided: both are essential for the comprehension of either.

Man has therefore to be treated more than a biologically, psychologically and sociologically determined being, he has also to be considered as an ethico-religious entity. The notion of individual has to do with man not only as an empirical phenomenon but also as a being that seeks perfectibility. Highlighting this particular aspect, Nagarjuna has observed "The sense of 'I' is at cross-roads, it has a double reference. It shares at once two orders of being, the conditioned and the unconditioned; it is at once a universalizing as well as particularizing tendency. It can work as much for liberation as for bondage. It can work nonclinging as well as by clinging".19

If the sense of 'I' traverses the path of

particularizing tendency, the empirical self becomes absolute bringing in its wake distinctions of 'I' and 'not I' and treating them not as relative distinctions but absolute ones. If, on the other hand, the sense of 'I' inclines towards the universalizing tendency, the empirical self is treated only as a centre of experience, a baseline from which can one begin the search for the unconditioned and the quest for the real nature of one's being. It then leads to the realisation that the ultimate nature of the conditioned is itself the unconditioned reality and that there exists an essential relatedness among determinate beings. When the sense of self incorporates an ethico-religious dimension and emphasizes the necessity of development, it then becomes necessary to transcend nature and chart out a pattern of development uniquely suitable for each person. Such a perspective recognizes biological, psychological and sociological realities but refuses to be bound by them. In this perspective, man is subject to the laws of nature, to be sure but he possesses self-awareness and is capable of creating the forms of his own existence independent of the environing conditions. It recognises the importance of certain internal transformation impinging on the process of self-development unique to man.

Gandhi admitted man's animal ancestry "we were perhaps, all originally brutes. I am prepared to believe that we have
become men by a slow process of evolution from the brute".\textsuperscript{20}
Again, "Man must choose either of the two courses, the upward or downward, but as he has the brute in him, he will more easily choose the downward course than the upward, especially when the downward course is presented to him in a beautiful garb... The downward instinct is embodied in them (men)".\textsuperscript{21}

Is man's nature all evil? Gandhi emphatically asserted: "Man's nature is not essentially evil. Brute nature has been known to yield to the influence of love. You must never despair of human nature".\textsuperscript{22} For him, while man is rooted in and springs from the animal world, he has the capacity to rise above it and can only, if he so recognizes the wills, set on a journey to give free play to his moral and spiritual propensity for self development. The true nature of man, according to Gandhi is his soul with in him. This soul is described by him as 'self-consciousness' divine spirit etc. The presence of this element of divinity in man has brought about this significant transformation of man from his animal origin. In his own words, "We were born with brute strength, but we were born in order to realize God who dwells in us. That indeed is the privilege of man, and it distinguishes

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\textsuperscript{20} Harijan, 2.4.1938, p. 65.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 1.2.1935, p. 410.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 5.11.1938, p. 341.
\end{flushleft}
him from the brute creation". In his view, the attributes of being uniquely human are neither fixed for all times nor immutable. He believes that goodness in man can be articulated, strengthened and perfected. Once the good of man is aroused, man moves on the path of self realization. He pegs this hope on the perfectibility of human nature.

'Man' according to Gandhi, 'will ever remain imperfect and it will always be his part to try to be perfect'. He knew that man at the present stage of his being was not perfect, but that did not hamper theoretical possibility of further development which amounted to his perfectibility. This idea of human perfectibility is a key point for the philosophy of non-violence. And this belief logically leads to the conclusion of conversion and remaking of man. In his own words, "In the application of method of non-violence one must believe in the possibility of every person, however, depraved, being reformed under human and skilled treatment". Or as he put it: "When I was a little child, there used to be two blind performers in Rajkot. One of them was a musician, When he played on his instrument, his fingers swept the strings with an unerring instinct and every body listened spell bound to his playing. Similarly there are

23. Ibid., 2.4.1938, p. 65.
25. Harijan, 22.2.1942, p.49.
chords in every human heart if we only know how to strike the right chord, we bring out the music."26

For Gandhi, self development is learning to be human, a learning that is characterized by a ceaseless process of inner illumination and self-transformation. It is basically an understanding of one's true being and letting that being unfold itself. Since presumably a genuine knowledge of self entails a transforming act upon the self, to know in this sense is not only to reflect and comprehend, but also to shape and create. For to know oneself is simultaneously to perfect oneself. But this self knowledge does not depend on the knowledge of the phenomenal world. Nor is it to turn totally inward ignoring the claims of the phenomenal world. This process must however, take place not in some Himalayan cave away from the phenomenal world but in the lived world. Gandhi, therefore, emphasizes the spiritual sanctity of life and wants to completely identify himself with the life. As he says, "The ocean is composed of drops of water; each drop is an entity, and yet it is a part of the whole; 'the one and the many'. In this ocean of life, we are little drops. My doctrine means that I must identify myself with life, with everything that lives, that I must share the majority of life in the presence of God. The Sum-total of this life is God".27

26. Ibid., 27.5.1939, p. 136.
27. Ibid., 15.2. 1948, p. 33.
To share in the majority of life is to establish identity with the many that is comprised in the one. To do so one must know the source and regulator of life. Since this source lies deep within one self one has to transform his own nature. This process of self transformation must take place in this world only. The necessity of remaining in the world arises because, on the one hand, the world is essential for self development and, on the other, the world has to be reshaped in the image of freedom and morality that one seeks to attain in one's own life. As such the quest for self-realisation becomes, for Gandhi, also the quest for actualising the spiritual and moral values one aspires for in the institutions and processes of the social order. The principle of inwardness that characterizes the process of self transformation also thus becomes the ground for turning outward to the external world.

But the turning outward is not a licence for manipulative imposition of one's will on others and one must abstain from imposing one's way on others.28 As a matter of fact, this perspective is completely ruled for two reasons. First, to try and impose one's own view on others about the true nature of things is to commit the error of absolution

ignoring the vital difference in things and values. The perception and manifestation of different shapes of meaning necessarily mean the recognition and acceptance of relativism within the frame of Advaita. In the words of Gandhi, "I am an Advaitist and yet I can support Dvaitism (dualism). The world is changing every moment, and is therefore unreal, it has no permanent existence. But though it is constantly changing, it has something about it which persists and it is therefore to that extent real. I have therefore no objection to calling it real and unreal and thus being called an Anekantavadi or a Syadavadi".

Second, the recognition of the many particles of reality coupled with the perception of the many as the manifestation of the same reality prevents any exclusivity in so far as any insistence on pursuing just one path excludes the possibility of accommodating the divergent interests and concerns of human beings. The reluctance to impose one's way on others is the recognition of and consideration for the integrity of the other and also a recognition that one can never fully comprehend the other to the same extent and in the same degree as one can comprehend oneself. Gandhi emphasized, "It has been my experience that I am always true from my point of view, and am often wrong from the point 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". Continuing, he says, "The seven blind men who gave seven different descriptions of the elephant were all right from their respective points of view, and wrong from the point of view of one another and right and wrong from the point of view of the man who knew the elephant. I very much like this doctrine of the manyness of reality".  

The recognition of the manysidedness of reality within the framework of the essential unity of existence leads to the rejection of exclusivism. It recognises the essential uprightness of the many positions, that can be taken to define reality. As such many paths, many ways can co-exist. By implication, it also recognizes that human phylogeny has its own structure and that it cannot be fully explained in terms of some general laws governing animal kingdom as a whole. The rejection of exclusivism also points to the fact one must abstain from imposing one's way on others in order to preserve their integrity. Such an outlook leads necessarily to the adoption of satya and ahimsa as the basic principles of social interaction. Ahimsa is more than abstaining from injuring any living being whether by body or mind. Ahimsa in

30. Ibid.
its positive aspect means to Gandhi, "The largest love, the greatest charity, if I am a follower of ahimsa, I must love my enemy. I must apply the same rule to the wrong-doer who is my enemy or stranger to me, as I would to my wrong-doing father or son. This active Ahimsa necessarily includes truth and fearlessness".32 The Ahimsa is inclusive and is based on compassion. He elaborates, "There is as much difference between ahimsa and compassion as there is between gold and the shape given to it, between a root and the tree which sprouts from it. Where there is no compassion there is no ahimsa. The test of ahimsa is compassion. The concrete form of ahimsa is compassion."33

To pursue ahimsa in one's life does not mean a submission to collective social sanctions. As a matter of fact self-transformation of Gandhi means 'neither isolated self control nor an uncritical submission to the concerns of society'.34 Nor does it undermine either social collectivity or the individual self. On the contrary, it forces one to transcend the duality of the individual and society. Gandhi conceives of the relationship between the individual and society as analogous to that between the drops and the ocean. The drops, even while they can claim individuality, can not

33. Ibid., vol. XL, p. 192.
survive without the ocean and the ocean will lose its identity without the drops. The question of the relationship between the individual and society cannot, in Gandhi's view, be discussed in terms that gives primacy to either. Tu Wei-Ming highlights the same in the following words, "Ideally the dangers of self isolation and social coercion can be conquered if a fundamental change has been made in the dichotomous way of perceiving the relationship between the self and society. In a practical sense, the source of such a change is located neither in the self nor in society exclusively. It has to be sought in both, and indeed in the between".  

The dichotomy between individual and society, according to Gandhi, is fake. The essential unity of all things, the stress on many-ness of reality and insistence on respecting the integrity of others - all these point to the interrelatedness of the individual and society. Again the efforts to attain self-realization implies the awareness of the existence of others. It recognizes the inseparability of man and society as necessary condition for self development. "The inner search for self-realisation", in the words of Professor Ramashray Roy, "Then externalizes itself and is manifested in an endeavour to identify with the surging sea of life

without life that, in sum-total is God. In seeking such an identity the self extends itself beyond its physical boundaries and transforms itself in sociality for attaining authenticity. In this conception, society is not conceived as something out there but as an extended self. The process of self-disclosure is thus transformed into the process of co-disclosure.36

Gandhi put more emphasis on the universal manifestation of these values than on the desirability of universalizing one's basic value commitments. To put it differently, it is true that the basic value commitments must be applicable universally. But it is also true that the felt need for universalizing the value commitment will not automatically enable one to relate oneself meaningfully with the whole universe. In Gandhi's view there are certain limitations which do not permit men to easily rise above their immediate surroundings. For example, the very physiological construction of man enables him to extend his sympathy and fellow feeling only to a certain extent. Man is so made by nature as to require him to restrict his movement as far as his hands and feet will take him. "I am so constructed that I can only serve my immediate neighbours, but in my conceit I pretend to have discovered that I must

It is in view of these considerations that Gandhi put much emphasis on swadeshi. To be committed to swadeshi is to commit oneself to transforming the context in which one travels in search of the spiritual. This transformation can not be ensured if one makes claims on others and on society and demands service from them. That is why Gandhi speaks of the necessity of selfless service to others. Once the necessity of selfless service is recognised as the essential component of the process of self-transformation, the consciousness of rights disappears. In its place, duty-consciousness envelops one's perspective on others. Self service and duty consciousness are the essential instruments of self-transformation.

His emphasis on self discovery through self-transformation is thus a call for recognising the ethico-religious possibilities lying buried deep under worldly concerns and developing them to their fullness. This is essentially a ceaseless process of inner moral and spiritual transformation. It is no excelling in worldly pursuit given to progressively realization of hidden skills and potentialities through transforming nature. It is the development of one's true nature which like a seed grows and

finds maturation in a congenial environment both personal and social.

It is true that self-transformation is an inner experience that underlines inwardness. But two of its concomitants—the need to give and be received as well as that of pursuing the goal of self-disclosure in the world of here and now—make sure that this inwardness does not turn into an escape in a privatised world. The self-transformation process does not only deepen and broaden one's understanding of oneself. It also transforms one's relation with the external world. To identify oneself with the sea of life is also to initiate the process of one's integration with the outer world. Such an integration becomes possible only by extending the boundary of self. This extension is not self expansion of anthropocentrism. It is extension of self within a strictly defined parameter of self-limitation emphasizing the necessity of enfoldng everything into the embrace of empathy and fellow feeling. Harmony therefore is not only a personal aspiration, but also a societal goal and cosmic ideal. Society then turns to be a network of extended selves rather than a mechanical aggregate or an all consuming totality. This perspective retains the primacy of the person but treats him as a drop of the ocean. Also, this perspective locates humanity in a highly complex web of
interdependency.  

Such a perspective projects an outlook which enfolds everything into its embrace of empathy and fellow feeling. However to care for the world without turning to what is immediate is an anathema in this view. Recognizing the frailty of human nature and its attachments, such a perspective does emphasize the desirability of universalizing one's basic value commitments to be universally manifested. This concrete path offers itself in the principle of swadeshi. This is again, not an event of exclusiveness or narrow parochialism. Each individual or unit has to strike the universal concrete in terms of the milieu of its own cultural heritage. Only by proceeding from wherever we are - geographically, spiritually, or emotionally - can we make the integral effort needed for the progress and peace of the whole humanity.

But this process must start from individual. With out self-effort no amount of social ordering will yield any result. As Gandhi says, "In the West, when they talk of amelioration of the lot of the masses, they talk of raising the standard of life...how can an outsider raise the standard when the standard is with in everyone of us. We can only strive to increase man's opportunities of realising and

38. Roy, Ramashray, Gandhi: Sounding in Political Philosophy, op. cit., p. 43.
fulfilling his duties and of getting nearer to God". To increase man's opportunities of realizing and fulfilling his duties and getting near to God will depend, on how close the social order - the arena of man's making and doing - conforms to the basic value between self and society. However, the individual, for Gandhi, remains important not because the individual is prior to society but because he is the most active component of society and corporate growth is dependent entirely on individual growth. As Gandhi says, "And the one discovery I have made is that, really speaking, there is no distinction between individual growth and corporate growth, the corporate growth is therefore entirely dependent upon individual growth and hence that beautiful proverb in the English language that a chain is no stronger than the weakest link in it". The importance of individual growth as an essential condition of corporate growth does not, however, means the supremacy of the individual over society since the individual cannot become a person if society is subordinated to the needs of the individual. As a matter of fact, in Gandhi's view one of the important traits of personality is the person's willingness to sacrifice himself for the sake of society.

Thus Gandhi tried to reconcile individual freedom with

40. Ibid., vol. XXXIV, p. 505.
social obligation. To him, society was just like a family and the relation between individual and society is one of the close interdependence. He rejected alike the unrestricted individualism that ignores social obligation as well as the belief that individual is a mere cog in the social machine. In his own words, "I value individual freedom, but you must nor forget that man is essentially a social 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 to learn to strike the balance between 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". 41

In the Gandhian scheme of things the individual is to put his energies at the service of the society voluntarily. He will be free to choose the shape this service should take. It may sometimes happen that the individual may have ideas about the good of society different from that held by the majority of people. Creative people have often pursued their own bent without caring for what society thought of them and the latter had often just tolerated them in their life time, discovering the worth of their work at a much later date. But

41. *Harijan*, 27.5.1939, p. 144.
it has also often happened that the pursuit of such individuals have been considered inimical to the interests of society. They have suffered persecution and even martyrdom. This has happened again and again in history. Then the need for a satyagrahic stand becomes imperative. The individual has to stand up for what he considers to be the truth and the real interests of the society, and take the consequences. Gandhi visualized the members of ideal society to be so enlightened as to be in a position to conduct their affairs through mutual consultation without the need of any kind of coercion. But he also recognized the practical limitations and the need for a minimum government at least for a transitional period, and a democratically processed legislation. In this context, Gandhi recognized the need for the individual to submit to social control of his own free will.

The satyagrahi recognizes the right of the majority to legislate and enforce such laws as they think to be necessary in the interest of society. But the majority might hold a view and pass a law based on it that appears to be immoral to the individual. Then it becomes incumbent on him to offer satyagraha against it for changing the views of the majority. Gandhi believed that no power on earth can make an individual do anything against his own will.42 What Gandhi wished to

stress was that every act contains its own propaganda and needs no other. 'Movements, societies and sects waste their time and energy saying what every one ought to do; whereas the individual must act without waiting for others'. 43 The man of peace may appear to be out of place in a society full of strife, yet he can work and act among his fellow men, refusing to surrender to the spirit of evil. 44 In a well-ordered society industrious and intelligent men can never be a menace; if they have any defects, the very order of society corrects them. 45 The only effective sanction against the evil doer in any society is enlightened public opinion. Gandhi reversed the ancient Indian maxim "As the king so the people", and declared, "As the people, so the king". 46 If, however the masses are carried away by the passions of the moment, it is possible for the conscientious individual to stand apart.

Gandhi refused to believe that society is governed by laws of growth which are beyond the ability of any individual to alter. The individual can show his superiority to any system. He recognized that the hypostatization of the

45. CWMG, vol. VIII, p. 270.
state and of society arises out of failure to distinguish between what exist now and what we think out to be. The distinction between state and society must ever be made, but not at the cost of regarding either as being logically and morally prior to the individual. Those who like Hegel, hold that society and state are prior to the individual use the word 'individual' in a special sense,\(^{47}\) to mean self conscious moral person. They argue that men become self conscious and moral only in society, where they can acquire the concepts which enable them to be objects of thought and criticism to themselves. To Gandhi, on the other hand, the human soul is autonomous in society because it is an integral part of the rational and moral order of nature. He proclaimed two values as ultimate satya and ahimsa. These could be invoked by every individual in every situation. He believed that good man will not live in solitude as a hermit, for he is naturally sociable and active. Virtue is a disposition or capacity of the ruling principle of the soul, assured and unchanging, worthy of choice for its own intrinsic quality, and its exercise is a continuous activity, i.e never interrupted by lapses and omissions because it can never be lost. The appeal to intrinsic, eternal values could be used to reject conservative as well as meliorist creeds that

justify the present by appealing to the past or the future and also the means employed by the distant ends they are supposed to subserve.

To Gandhi it is necessary to do what seems to be right in scorn of consequences, and every single act must be independently justified in terms of the ultimate and unchanging values rather than by the results that are expected to emerge. The appeal of the individual must in the last resort be to his own conscience rather than to reason.

'Conscience', according to Gandhi, 'is the voice of God, the final judge of the rightness of every deed and thought'. He wrote "There are times when you have to obey a call which is the highest of all, i.e. the voice of conscience, even though such obedience may cast many a bitter tear, and even more, separation from friends, from family, from the state to which you may belong, from all that you have held as dear as life itself. For this obedience is the law of our being".  

Further, in the matters of conscience, the law of majority has no place. Reportedly, in south African courts and subsequently in India, he appealed to a higher court than courts of justice, the court of conscience that supersedes all courts." The human voice can never reach the distance

that is covered by the still small voice of conscience. The only tyrant I accept in this world is the still small voice within". In August 1921 a correspondent complained that as a result of Gandhi's continual harping on conscience youngsters and grown-up were talking utter nonsense under cover of conscience. Youngsters have become impudent and grown-up people unscrupulous. Can you prevent this mischief? If you cannot, please withdraw the word from the use and stop the drivel that is being said in the name of that sacred but much abused word. Pray, tell us who has a conscience? Do all have it? Do cats have a conscience when they hunt to death poor mice? 

Gandhi conceded that the charge was not without substance. "Every virtue has been known to be abused by the wicked but we do not on that account do away with the virtue. We can but erect safeguards against abuse. When people cease to think for themselves and have everything regulated for them, it becomes necessary at times to assert the right of individuals to act in defiance of public opinion or law which is another name of public opinion. When individuals so act, they claim to have acted in obedience to conscience". He further contended that youngster as a rule must not pretend to have conscience which is a state properly acquired only through laborious training. "Willfulness is not conscience. A

50. Young India, 2.3.1922, p. 129.
child has no conscience. The correspondent's cat does not go for the mouse in obedience to its conscience. It does so in obedience to its nature. Conscience is the ripe fruit of strictest discipline. Irresponsible youngsters therefore who have never obeyed anything or anybody save their animal instinct have no conscience, nor therefore have all grown-up people. The savages for instance have to all intents and purposes no conscience. Conscience can reside only in delicately tuned breast". 51

The important consequence of this clarification is that there is no such thing as mass conscience as distinguished from the conscience of individuals. The collective conscience is said to embody something other than the totality of individuals that compose it. He could not believe in the moral priority of any collective agency over the individual. At the same time he thought it safe to say than when a man makes every thing a matter of conscience, he is stranger to it. It is true that 'conscience makes cowards of us all'. A conscientious man hesitates to assert himself, he is always humble, never boisterous, always compromising, always ready to listen, ever willing, even anxious to admit mistakes. 52 Gandhi was thus led to idealize the conscientious man, reducing in this way the practical and universal force of

51. Ibid., 4.8.1921. p. 244.
52. Ibid.
his stress on conscience. He fortified himself with the thought that the world has no difficulty in distinguishing between conscience and an arrogant or ignorant assumption of it. The introduction of conscience into our public life is welcome even if it teaches only a few to stand up for human dignity and rights in the face of the heaviest odds. "These acts will live for ever whereas those done under whims are like soap-bubbles enjoying a momentary existence."\(^5^3\)

At time Gandhi took extremely individualistic position. "I do not want any patronage, as I do not give any", he retorted, "I am a lover of my own liberty and so I would do nothing to restrict yours.I simply want to please my own conscience which is God".\(^5^4\) Some years later, he was mainly concerned to assert that what must count with a public servant is the approbation of his own conscience. He must not be like a rudderless vessel, a person who, leaving the infallible solace of his own conscience, ever seeks to please and gain the approbation of the public. Service must be its own and sole reward.On a later occasion, he was asked whether in developing the new national spirit in India he would like to make patriotic feelings so strong that duty to one's country would be a higher good than obeying one's personal conscience. He replied that one's own inner convictions come

53. Ibid.
54. Ibid., 27.1.1927, p. 61.
first always, but in a nation where character is developed in all individuals, there can be no conflict between the dictates of one's own conscience and those of the state. Just as he idealized the man of conscience, so too he rather readily envisaged an impossible condition for a nation as a whole in which all men would be moved by the dictates of conscience, thus ruling out any real conflict between the moral and practical aims of rulers and the ruled. It is easier to uphold the sanctity of individual conscience if we can assume the continuing presence of a common outlook and similar moral response among the members of society. But the trouble arises, however, when the distrust of individual conscience gives way to the notion of a social conscience, the internalized expression of external convictions. Individual conscience, unlike the notion of social conscience, is intended as a defence against the group rather than as a method for inducing individual conformity to the group.55

As early as 1916, Gandhi declared that, there come to us moments in life when about something we need no proof from without. A little voice within us tells us, " you are on the right track, move neither to your left nor right, but keep to

the straight and narrow way".\textsuperscript{56} In 1920 he wrote that there are moments in life when we must act, even though we cannot carry our best friends with us; the still small voice within us must always be the final arbiter when there is a conflict of duty.\textsuperscript{57} Before one is able to listen to that voice one has to go through a long and fairly severe course of training, when it is the inner voice that speaks, it is unmistakable. The world cannot be successfully fooled for all time.\textsuperscript{58}

The nearest Gandhi came to giving a full account of this inner voice was in 1933. He wrote: "For me the voice of God, of conscience, of truth, or the inner voice, or the still small voice mean one and the same thing. I saw no form. I have never tried, for I have always believed God to be without form. But what I did hear was like a voice from afar and yet quite near. It was as unmistakable as some human voice definitely speaking to me, and irresistible. I was not dreaming at the time I heard the voice. The hearing of the voice was preceded by a terrific struggle within me. Suddenly the voice came upon me. I listened, made certain it was the voice and the struggle ceased. I was calm. The determination was made accordingly, the date and the hour of the fast was

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{CWMG}, vol. XIII, p. 311.
\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Ibid.}, vol. XVIII, p. 112.
\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Ibid.}, vol. XXIX, p. 290.
fixed... I have no further evidence to convince the sceptic. He is free to say that it was self delusion or hallucination. It may well have been so. I can offer no proof to the contrary. But I can say this, that not the unanimous verdict of the whole world against me could shake me from the belief that what I heard was the true voice of God".59

He not only denied that there was any question of hallucination but even claimed to have stated a simple scientific truth, to be tested by all who have the will and the patience to acquire the necessary qualifications. "You must try to listen to the inner voice but if you won't have the expression 'inner voice', you may use the expression 'dictates of reason', which you should obey, and if you will not parade God, I have no doubt you will parade something else which in the end will prove to be God, for, fortunately, there is no one and nothing else but God in this universe".60

Gandhi's belief in conscience led him to respect the conscience of those who disagreed with him. In the difficult days of negotiation that finally led to the partition of India, he wrote to Lord Wavell urging him, 'to dare to do the right'.61

59. Harijan, 8-7-1933, p. 4.
60. CWMG, vol. LII, p. 71.
He wrote in similar vein to Lord Pethick-Lawrence, who was in turn anxious to assure him that his own empirical and rational attitude did not rule out faith, just as Gandhi's faith in conscience did not rule out reason.  

Gandhi's test of the presence and power of individual conscience was the willingness to suffer for one's belief to the point of spiritual isolation and even public ridicule, involving if necessary political martyrdom and even physical death. A man of conscience is put on trial in a time of crisis, the hour of danger for himself and for the entire society or state. Gandhi is criticised that he invoked his conscience and the voice of God too often and too freely in the every day business of politics, yet there is no denying of the fact that towards the end of his life, just before and after the partition of India, he bravely accepted the consequences of his conscientious objections. He became, as he said, a voice in the wilderness, a figure of spiritual isolation lonely in Bengal amid the rejoicing crowds on Independence day, but respectful to the last of motives and the conscience of those who honestly differed from him.

Though Gandhi based his faith in the supremacy of individual on his view of conscience and of the duty that a man owes himself, his stress on action rather than on

62. Ibid., p. 198.
thought, led him to assert that the duty that a man owes himself is also owned by him to his fellow men. Society is the mirror in which we can look at ourselves and judge our actions with the eye of an impartial spectator. This is, as Adam Smith pointed out, the only looking glass by which we can, with the eyes of other people scrutinize the propriety of our own conduct. 63

Thus the individuality that Gandhi talks of is not the individuality which asserts itself by separating itself from others and makes demands on the other world. It is the individuality which while oriented to self-realization through self knowledge, is bound with others in a shareable commonality. It subsists on others not in a relationship of domination and exploitation but in a network of interdependence and harmony informed by ahimsa. Since self-development is essentially a process of co-development, the duality with in man and between man and the external world dissolves. In this perspective, morality becomes an integral part of self-development and regulates life activities and social relationships. Freedom of individual does not lie in removing obstacles to untrammelled action but creating conditions that are propitious to self development with co-development. Situating freedom does not mean obedience to

certain externally imposed restraints which enter into the definition of a particular situation. Nor does it mean to be able to respond randomly to a situation that impinges on freedom. Situating freedom means endowing it with content which is possible only by treating man as an ethico-religious entity and creating conditions for his self development. This is what Gandhi insists on and advocates for dealing with modern predicament.

Gandhi wanted to create a society that would neither be a jungle nor a straight jacket, but a home that would provide the maximum freedom for the individual's growth, not of a few but of each and every one in the human family. 'Individual which was the one supreme consideration', 64 for Gandhi, Would have to actualize himself in the final analysis and the social order would provide him a congenial climate. For him, it was neither a way of the individual first perfecting himself and then setting about to change society nor of changing society first so that its members would acquire the appropriate new qualities thereafter but a process in which individual change and social change continually react to and reinforce each other. As Vinoba has expressed it picturesquely, 'it was like walking on two legs: one step of

64. Young India 13.11. 1924, p. 378.
individual change, to be followed by one of social change'.

This concept of the ultimate authority of the individual logically paved the way for the development of his non-violent economic order. This can further be highlighted, if an attempt is made to understand his approach to labour-capital problems.