Gandhi, viewed by some as a saint and a politician by others and both by still others, was comprehensive but an integrated individual who touched and sought to illumine every aspect of life — social, political, economic, cultural, moral or religious. A votary of Ahimsa and Truth, an inveterate believer in man's inherent goodness and capacity for suffering, possessed of an indomitable will expressing itself in an iron discipline extending over the many decades of his ascetic life on earth, Gandhi was a saintly figure whose spiritual striving and search for Truth resulted in the political awakening of India. His revolutionary significance lay in his attempt to release the energies of the masses, suppressed under the heals of imperialism for centuries.

Gandhi's distinction as a political leader and a moral genius was evident from his endeavour to adjust the complex structure of traditional Indian society to the essentially modern phenomenon of struggle for national emancipation. He was not the "Father of the Nation" in the sense that he initiated the national movement, for the groundwork had been laid long before he appeared on the scene. What he did was "to give the masses for the first time a sense of involvement in the nation's destiny while persuading the old leaders to accept his leadership".¹

Before the advent of Gandhi, political activities in India centred mainly round the urban bourgeois while the dumb and inert masses huddled in tens of thousands of villages remained mostly untouched. "The classes and the masses", as has been observed, "had drifted from one another till they had hardly any point of contact. Gandhiji set to restore the points of contact and re-establish unity". Gandhi, the New Voice or the New Factor on the political horizon of India, gave the primary place to the rural masses who ever remained his main source of political power. He was the first political leader of modern India to bring the rural masses of the country into the field of active political action. This constitutes his major contribution to the national movement which has been acknowledged even by his severest critics:

The achievement of Gandhi consisted in that he, almost alone of all the leaders, sensed and reached out to the


3 (a) "It was quiet and low, and yet it could be heard above the shouting of the multitude, it was soft and gentle, and yet there seemed to be steel hidden away somewhere in it; it was courteous and full of appeal and yet there was something grim and frightening in it; every word used was full of meaning and seemed to carry a deadly earnestness". Jawahar Lal Nehru, *Mahatma Gandhi* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1966, first published 1949), p.12.

(b) "As the outcry against the bills (Rawlatt Bills) gained volume, a new factor appeared a little cloud on the political horizon which grew and spread rapidly till it covered the Indian Sky". Ibid., p.11.
masses.... This positive achievement of Gandhi is bigger than all the idiosyncrasies and weaknesses which may be brought against him, and constitutes his real contribution to the Indian Nationalism”.

M.N. Roy wrote in his Memoirs that the method of non-violent mass struggle against the established regime advocated by Gandhi had harnessed the spontaneous mass discontent in support of the Congress and Gandhi practically overnight became the leader of the country. Roy believed that masses hailed Gandhi as their liberator because he could speak in a language understood by masses: “In my opinion, Gandhiji will go down in history neither as a prophet nor as a saviour of the masses, but as their political awakener”. By identifying himself with the masses through his voluntary vow of poverty, he secured the allegiance and even the adoration of the masses.

Establishing thus an unspoken but a strong alliance between the rural masses and urban middle classes, Gandhi became a symbol of unity among the various social and political forces.

6 In September 1931, when custom officials at Marseilles asked him to identify his belongings, Gandhi declared, “I am a poor mendicant. My earthly possessions consist of six spinning wheels, prison dishes, a can of goat’s milk, six homespun lion clothes and towels, and my reputation which cannot be worth much”.

in the country but he never forgot that the true revolutionary power in India lay in the hands of the Indian masses who lived in the rural areas. Gandhi declared that his followers must, in mode of conduct and life, speech and thought, habit and clothing, food and habitation, identify themselves with the masses. He chose those political idioms which made an immediate appeal to them. He thus tried "to rouse the personal sense of responsibility of each man separately, and he did succeed through his extremely rational arguments in awakening within each individual his sense of responsibility and involvement". 7

Gandhi made nationalism a practical and intelligible creed for the masses and espoused the interests of the peasants and the illiterate. He minimised the sharp distinction that had hitherto existed in Indian political life between the city-dwellers and Indian peasantry and between the educated and the illiterate. Under Gandhi's leadership the Congress for the first time became a mass organisation when "the peasants rolled in and, in its new gattb, it (the Congress) began to assume the look of a vast agrarian organization with a strong sprinkling of the middle classes". 8 Gandhi stood for the common man, for the humblest, the lowliest and the lost. He transformed himself into the common man and the loincloth on the bare body "was no emblem; it was an indivisible part of his inner being. In all his thoughts and emotions, his identification with the common

7 Nirmal Kumar Bose, Gandhism and Modern India (Gauhati : Gauhati University, 1970), p.3.
man was complete and he became a replica of the masses of India", as he was convinced that no one could represent the masses unless he completely identified himself with them:

We must share their sorrows, understand their difficulties and anticipate their wants. With the pariahs (untouchables) we must be pariahs and see how it feels to clean the closets of the upper classes and have the remains of their tables thrown at us. We must see how we like being in the boxas, miscalled houses, of the labourers of Bombay. We must identify ourselves with the villagers; who toil under the hot sun beating down on their bent backs and see how we would like to drink water from the pool in which the villagers bath, wash their clothes, and pots and in which their cattle drink and roll. Then and not till then shall we truly represent the masses, and they will respond to easy call. 10

The magic of his personality inherent in a total abnegation of his own self and ripeness born out of dedication and sincerity, gathered a charisma around him and provoked popular mass appeal. In less than thirty years' time he transformed a people — not its educated middle class alone — from a conglomeration of individuals — inert, fearful, weak, without hope, without faith — into a nation committed to and involved in a struggle for all round social change.


The saintly politician thus led his countrymen to perform dramatic acts of self-sacrifice in the service of the nationalist cause. The spinning of Charkha and the wearing of khadi were an integral part of his programme. The simple white "Gandhi Cap" became a symbol of sacrifice. The spinning of Charkha provided a sense of participation in the political process. Another significant achievement of Gandhi was the involvement of women in the nationalist movement. Gandhi's religious idiom demonstrated his deep immersion in the Indian tradition. The prison sentence became a part of the drama of renunciation and suffering he had envisaged as the way Indians must follow to find true freedom: "Prison became the substitute for the banishment to the forest that plays the central role in the great legends of India, where the hero accepts the sentence gracefully and turns the forest into a spiritual retreat from which he returns tested, strengthened, and purified". 11

Before the advent of Gandhi on the Indian scene, Indian masses, crushed under the dead wood of fatalism and passivity, were ill-equipped for any aggressive or militant struggle. Instead of quarrelling with the facts, Gandhi gave a new orientation to the social and political outlook of India by building up a movement of non-cooperation in which passivity and endurance of the masses were turned into sources of strength and energy. This was the first phase of Gandhian revolution to be followed by

fearlessness and the revival of the spirit of self-respect—a psychological revolution. After the fear of jail had disappeared, Gandhi thought of freeing the people from the fear of loss of property. Then followed the willingness to lose one's life when Gandhi gave the call of "Do or Die". The non-violent Non-cooperation movement of the twenties, the Civil Disobedience movement of the thirties and the 'Quit India' Movement of the forties should be viewed as positive stages of strengthening the nation's fibre for the attainment of Swaraj.

Gandhi was not merely a political leader but an institution by himself. Seeking all along a total reconstruction of society in order to raise man to a higher order of social life, he expressed his views on almost every aspect of life.

12 Gandhi, however, pointedly remarks that his ideals must not degenerate into sectarianism: "Let Gandhism be destroyed if it stands for error. Truth and ahimsa will never be destroyed, but if Gandhism is another name for the sectarianism, it deserves to be destroyed. If I were to know, after my death, that what I stood for had degenerated into sectarianism, I should be deeply pained. We have to work away silently. Let no one say that he is a follower of Gandhi. It is enough that I should be my own follower. I know what an inadequate follower I am of myself, for I cannot live up to the convictions I stand for". Harijan, 2nd March, 1940, p.23.

13 Gandhi believes that great ideals of truth and ahimsa must be assimilated into life. Ideas are useful only if they are lived up to. The propagation of truth and non-violence can be done less by books than by actually living those principles. Life truly lived is more significant than books. "My writings should be cremated with my body. What I have often said recently that even if all our scriptures were to perish, one mantra of Ishopanishad was enough to declare the essence of Hinduism, but even that one verse will be of no avail if there is no one to live it. Even so what I have said and written is useful only to the extent that it has helped you to assimilate the great principles of truth and ahimsa. If you have not assimilated them, my writings will be of no use to you". Gandhi in Selected Writings of Mahatma Gandhi ed. Ronald Duncan (London: Fontana/Collins, 1971), p.271, hereafter cited as Selected Writings.
whether private or public and even infused new meanings into old concepts. It is rather difficult to portray an accurate picture of such a multi-dimensional personality within the short space at our disposal. We shall, therefore, make a brief mention of some of his ideas and programmes which are, by and large, relevant to the novels to be discussed in the succeeding chapters. Besides providing a context and perspective to the study of the novels, the elucidation of these ideas and ideals will enable us to examine what Gandhi meant by these ideas and what the novelists have taken them for. It is in this light that we shall study and analyse the creative response of the Indo-Anglian novelists to Gandhi and his ethos.

Satya

Gandhi called Satya or Truth the "philosopher's stone" or "the sole Talisman available to moral man". To him, Satya is the basis and the end of all existence. He calls Truth the very breath of our life. It is the essence of Dharma which is the observance of truth in action. The concept of Truth is, therefore, the essential foundation of Gandhian thought. Truth for Gandhi is identical with God:

The word Satya (Truth) is derived from Sat, which means 'being'. Nothing is or exists in reality except truth. That is why Sat or Truth is perhaps the most important name of God. In fact it is more correct to say that Truth is God, than to say that God is Truth. But as we cannot do without a ruler or a general, names of God such as 'King of Kings' or the 'Almighty' are and will remain generally current. On deeper thinking, however, it will be realized, that Sat or Satya is the only correct and fully significant name for God. 15

Satya is, thus, the source of eternal and universal values like truth, righteousness and justice — truth in the realm of knowledge, righteousness in the domain of conduct and justice in the sphere of social relations. Truth, in the narrow epistemological sense of common usage, is only a part of the wider meaning of Satya.

With truth as prior to all other human excellences and virtues, Gandhi explained that it is the ability to determine truth through non-violence for himself that distinguishes man from the brute, and truth must be discovered and created, found and enacted. It is in this sense that he looked upon every individual as a truthseeker. His belief in absolute truth which he calls God, implies that every individual embodies a portion of that truth, for God dwells in all human hearts. Gandhi knew that man is a moral agent only to the extent that he embodies and seeks truth. By truth is meant not merely the abstention from lies, but also honest perception of the reality: "As I proceed in my search for truth it grows upon me that Truth comprehends everything.... What is perceived by a pure heart and intellect is truth for that moment. Cling to it, and it enables one to reach pure Truth...." This process of experimentation, which presupposes our readiness to admit openly our errors, is the law of individual moral growth as well as of social and political evolution.

18 Gandhi, To a Gandhian Capitalist (Bombay: Hind Kitab, 1951), pp.49-50.
The deification of Truth as God was for Gandhi less intellectual and more practical: "A mere mechanical adherence to truth and non-violence is likely to break down at the critical moment. Hence I have said that Truth is God.\(^9\) The realization of the supremacy of Truth even carried him closer to the atheists and agnostics who were engaged in the service of humanity. Gandhi said to a friendly atheist: "Truth means existence; the existence of that we know and of that we do not know. The sum total of all existence is absolute truth or the Truth.... The concepts of truth may differ. But all admit and respect truth. That truth I call God."\(^{20}\) Gandhi pleaded for a truthful programme and a truthful party\(^{21}\) as he was convinced that truth binds man to man in association; without truth there can be no social organisation. Being aware of the cynical disregard of truth by politicians and an eternal struggle between forces of good and those of evil, of truth and falsehood, non-violence and brute force, Gandhi made it clear that truth is what we believe in our hearts, not what we profess.\(^{22}\) Gandhi explained that his creed is truth and non-violence in their extreme form.\(^{23}\)

For him, Truth can be pursued only through non-violence:

"There is no search greater than that of Truth. The only means of finding it out is through non-violence in its extreme form.

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21 Gandhi, Young India, December 8, 1921, Collected Works 21 (August 1966), 542.
22 Tendulkar, Mahatma 2 (December 1951), 24.
23 Gandhi, Young India, April 10, 1924, Collected Works 23 (March 1967), 403.
It is because we have ignored it that we seek to impose by force what we consider is truth upon others". He believed that Satya led him to Ahimsa, though he sometimes says that the two cannot be separated for they are the two sides of the same coin as the universe is governed by the law of truth or love.

**Ahimsa**

Gandhi's name is thus closely linked with the concept of Ahimsa or Non-violence, the elucidation and practical application of which is his positive contribution to political Philosophy. Gandhi, it is often believed, "will be remembered as one of the very few who have set the stamp of an idea on an epoch. That idea is non-violence". Even before Gandhi, non-violence had been preached and practised by men of religion but Gandhi developed it as a social and political weapon for the resolution of social conflicts.

Literally speaking, non-violence means 'non-injury' or 'non-killing' but it also implies complete harmlessness in word, thought or deed. Taken in a broader sense, Ahimsa presupposes renunciation of violent intentions to harm anyone. For Gandhi, non-violence to be true must be in word, thought and deed as non-violence is not a visionary programme. He emphasised that we must remain non-violent, but we must not be passive.

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brought renunciation, non-attachment and freedom from hatred, pride and anger into the fold of this concept as complete non-violence is active goodwill towards all. It was not merely a negative concept but a positive act involving love for all: "Non-violence is an active force of the highest order. It is the soul-force or the power of the godhead within us".  

Gandhi extended the meaning of Ahimsa so as to apply it to mundane activities of life, as he was convinced that what is possible for a saint is equally possible for any other individual: "The religion of non-violence is not meant merely for rishis and saints. It is meant for the common people as well. Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute".  

Thus Gandhi sought to demonstrate that Ahimsa was universally applicable, but he often inflated the term Non-violence so as to include all the moral virtues. Love, charity, forgiveness, humility, innocence, meekness, selflessness, fearlessness and non-attachment are some of the qualities which he often equated with Ahimsa, just as he included trickery, falsehood, intrigue, chicanery and deceitfulness into the meanings of Violence or Himaa.

Non-violence is thus regarded as a positive force superior to all the forces of brutality. The crucial ingredient in Ahimsa is the notion of self-suffering that implies a refusal to submit to the injustice and the voluntary acceptance of personal discomfort and tribulation: "Silent suffering

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28 Gandhi, Harijan 6 (1973), 326.
29 Gandhi, Young India, August 11, 1920 in Satyagraha, p.133.
undergone with dignity and humility speaks with an unrivalled eloquence. It is solid work because there is no ostentation about it. It is always true because there is no danger of miscalculation. Gandhi thus expected of the votary of non-violence to blunt the edge of the tyrant's sword, not by putting up against it a sharper edged weapon, but by disappointing his expectations that he would be offering physical resistance. Non-violence is, thus, a conscious and deliberate restraint put upon one's desire for vengeance. Gandhi calls non-violence the "soul-force". He explained that the individual votary of Ahimsa must learn that it needs a far greater physical and mental courage than the delivering of blows. Strength does not come from physical capacity but from indomitable will.

Non-violence, "a life force" or "the breath of my life" or "the law of our being" was, for Gandhi, fundamentally a creed that called for an act of faith. Non-violence presupposes rigorous ethical discipline which demands self-purification of its votary. Gandhi felt that without self-purification the observance of the law of Ahimsa is an empty dream. It proceeds from the inward strength. "Ahimsa is an inward growth depending for sustenance upon intense individual...

30 Gandhi, Young India, April 17, 1924, Collected Works 23 (March 1967), 449.
31 Gandhi, Young India, August 8, 1920, Satyagraha, p.133.
32 Gandhi, Harijan 3 (1973), 276.
33 Mahatma 6 (March 1953), 48.
Non-violence is not the weapon of the weak as it is not a mere passive quality but the mightiest force man is endowed with. Distinguishing non-violence from passive resistance, Gandhi holds that passive resistance is the weapon of the weak. "We may be weak and oppressed, but non-violence is not a weapon of the weak. It is a weapon of the strongest and the bravest."

Gandhi's insistence upon Ahimsa as a universally effective social philosophy often made it a "coercive instrument," although in its theoretical exposition Gandhi maintained that Ahimsa excluded any form of violation of free and voluntary consent: "It is never the intention of a Satyagrahi to embarrass the wrongdoer. The appeal is never to his fear; it is, must be, always to his heart. The Satyagrahi's object is to convert, not to coerce, the wrongdoer. He should avoid artificiality in all his doings. He acts naturally and from inward conviction."

Defending the use of the misleading phrase "moral coercion" Gandhi explained that Ahimsa is not a threat. But it is always difficult to draw a definite line between intimidation and persuasion, albeit Ahimsa in Gandhian sense always seeks to replace coercion by persuasion.

36 Gandhi, Harijan 6 (1973), 336.
37 Gandhi, Harijan 6 (1973), 111.
The Gandhian concept of non-violence is a growing concept of a way of life leading man and society to harmony:

Non-violence is like radium in its action. An infinitesimal quality of it embedded in a malignant growth, acts continuously, silently, and ceaselessly till it has transformed the whole mass of the diseased tissue into a healthy one. Similarly, even a little of true non-violence acts in a silent subtle, unseen way and leavens the whole society. Non-violence or soul-force does not need physical aids for its propagation or effect. It acts independently of them. It transcends time and space.

Non-violence is an attitude of mind and a temper of one's way of acting. It is love in action as it is the opposition of soul-force to the wrong-doer; hence it is a dynamic concept:

Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer, but it means the pitting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under this law of our being, 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.

The fundamental "operative assumption which Gandhi makes is that non-violence constitutes a positive procedure for promoting worthwhile social change". Inspite of the negative particle 'non', it is no negative force. It is not confined to the domain of the personal ethics alone. He (Gandhi) applied vigorously in the secular realm, and, thereby extended the scope of non-violent action to cover the political, economic and social regeneration. The theory of non-violence is thus more than a

39 Gandhi, Harilal 6 (1973), 327.
40 Gandhi, Young India, August 11, 1920, Satyagraha, p.134.
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system of moral philosophy as it invariably enables an individual to discover what to do upon specific occasion. Non-violence for Gandhi is love or goodwill for all.

Satyagraha

Gandhi evolved a revolutionary approach to political actions and social change in keeping with his concept of Satya and Ahimsa which lie at the heart of his entire social and political philosophy. His concept of Satya, with Ahimsa as the means, determined his doctrine of Satyagraha or active resistance to authority, while the concept of Ahimsa, with Satya as the common end, enabled him to formulate his doctrine of Sarvodaya or Non-violent socialism.

The term Satyagraha was coined by Gandhi in 1906 in the early phase of his South African campaign to secure the elementary human rights of Indian immigrants there. Gandhi felt that the phrase "passive resistance" gave rise to confusion. A small prize was announced in Indian Opinion for the best designation for the Indian struggle. Meegan Lal Gandhi suggested the word 'Sadhagraha' meaning "firmness in a good cause". Gandhi liked the word but it did not fully represent the whole idea he wished it to connote. He, therefore, corrected it to Satyagraha:

Truth (Satya) implies love and firmness (Agraaha) engenders and therefore, serves as synonym for force. I thus began to call the Indian movement 'Satyagraha' that is to say, the force which is born to Truth and love for Non-violence and gave up the use of the phrase "passive resistance". 43

Satyagraha is, therefore, relentless search for truth and a determination to reach truth. Later on, Gandhi declared:

"Satyagraha literally means insistence of truth. This insistence

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arms the votary with matchless power". This power may be called truth-force or soul-force. Satyagraha excludes the use of violence because man is not capable of knowing the absolute truth and is therefore not competent to punish. Gandhi preferred "Satyagraha" to "passive resistance" yet he sometimes used the phrase "passive resistance" because it was well-known and easily understood. In Hind Swaraj (1909) Gandhi defined passive resistance as a method of securing rights by personal suffering or soul-force. Although Gandhi sometimes used "Satyagraha" and "passive resistance" as synonyms in Hind Swaraj and elsewhere, he sharpened the distinction between them in Satyagraha in South Africa (1927).

People who offer passive resistance held themselves weak and helpless and their resistance would never make them strong. Two consequences follow when people offer Satyagraha believing themselves to be strong. Fostering the idea of strength, they grow stronger and their Satyagraha becomes effective. There is no scope for love in 'passive resistance' while absence of love in 'Satyagraha' is a positive breach of its ruling principle, as there can be no place for hatred in Satyagraha. Violence, whether secret or open, is the very reverse of satyagraha. Brute force is a negation of Satyagraha, but not necessarily of passive resistance. Satyagraha may be offered to one's nearest

44 Gandhi, Young India, February 27, 1930, Satyagraha, p. 78.
45 Gandhi, Young India, March 23, 1921, Collected Works 19 (March 1966), 466.
46 Gandhi, Young India, September 20, 1919, Collected Works 16 (July 1965), 152.
and dearest, whereas passive resistance cannot be offered unless they have ceased to be dear to us. Lastly, in passive resistance, there is always present an idea of harassing the other party, while in Satyagraha there is not the remotest idea of injuring the opponent.

Satyagraha postulates the conquest of the adversary by suffering in one's own person. The concept of Ahimsa is so fundamental to the doctrine of Satyagraha that Gandhi went so far as to say: "Satyagraha differs from Passive resistance as the North Pole from the South. The latter has been conceived as a weapon of the weak and does not exclude the use of physical force or violence for the purpose of gaining one's end, whereas the former has been conceived as a weapon of the strongest and excludes the use of violence in any shape or form". It is in this sense that Gandhi said that "Passive resistance is a negative thing, and has nothing to do with the active principle of Love. Satyagraha proceeds on the active principle of love".

He believed that a Satyagrahi must be one of the finest specimens of humanity like Socrates who suffered the punishment of death but upheld the truth: "Satyagraha presupposes self-discipline, self-control, self-purification, and a recognised social status in the person offering it. A Satyagrahi must never forget the distinction between evil and the evil-doer. He must not harbour ill-will or bitterness against the latter".

47 Satyagraha, p.6
48 Gandhi, Harlian 6 (1973), 111.
49 Gandhi, Young India, August 8, 1929, Satyagraha, p.77.
Civil-Disobedience and Non-cooperation were envisaged as peaceful devices for resolving conflicts in social and political life, but Gandhi was chiefly concerned with attitudes and values governing human actions. This invited criticism at the hands of those who regarded the doctrine of Satyagraha as an extravagant rationalisation of political expediencies in the attainment of immediate ends, but Gandhi firmly adhered to the idea of non-retaliation:

Satyagraha is like a banyan tree with innumerable branches. Civil-Disobedience is one such branch. Satya (truth) and Ahimsa (non-violence) together make the parent trunk from which all the innumerable branches shoot out. We have found by bitter experience that whilst in an atmosphere of lawlessness Civil-Disobedience found ready acceptance, Satya (truth) and ahimsa (non-violence) from which alone Civil Disobedience can worthily spring, have commanded little or no respect. Ours, then, is a Herculean task, but we may not shirk it. We must fearlessly spread the doctrine of Satya and Ahimsa and then, and not till then, shall we be able to undertake mass Satyagraha.50

Gandhi conceded that it is difficult to know what is truth, when to defend it to the point of civil resistance and how to avoid error in the shape of violence in one's pursuit after Truth. Still he insisted upon the universal applicability of the doctrine. Gandhi was also aware of the fact that the success of Satyagraha in practice equally depended on public opinion as an awakened and intelligent public opinion is the most potent weapon of a Satyagrahi. Intense suffering of a righteous man rouses public opinion and has an immediate appeal to the court of Conscience: "Satyagraha aims at converting an

50 Gandhi, Young India, April 1924, quoted in The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi, p.285.
opponent into a friend, that is, at creating circumstances favourable to a good cause". 51

Satyagraha is a most powerful process of conversion as "It is an appeal to the heart". 52 The Satyagrahi strives to reach the reason through the heart. The method of reaching the heart is to awaken public opinion.

It is required that a Satyagrahi should exhaust all other means before he resorts to Satyagraha. A Satyagrahi will, therefore, "constantly and continually approach the constituted authority, he will appeal to public opinion, educate public opinion, state his case calmly and coolly before everybody who wants to listen to him; and only after he has exhausted all these avenues will he resort to Satyagraha". 53

There are certain pre-requisites before Satyagraha is launched. There can be no Satyagraha in an unjust cause. Satyagraha demands absolute non-violence in thought, speech and deed:

There can be no Satyagraha in an unjust cause. Satyagraha in a just cause is vain, if the man espousing it are not determined and capable of fighting and suffering to the end, and the slightest use of violence often defeats a just cause. Satyagraha excludes the use of violence in any shape or form, whether in thought, speech or deed. Given a just cause, capacity for endless suffering and avoidance of violence, victory is a certainty. 54

51 Gandhi, Collected Works 23 (March 1967), 382.
52 Gandhi, Young India, April 24, 1924, Collected Works 23 (March 1967), 478.
53 Gandhi, Young India, October 20, 1927, Collected Works 35 (August 1969), 100.
54 Gandhi, Young India, April 27, 1921, Satyagraha, p.56.
A willing obedience to and tolerance of the laws of the state alone would entitle an individual to offer satyagraha against intolerable and immoral laws. Satyagraha presupposes the capacity and willingness to suffer, and it requires cool courage that comes from discipline and training in voluntary obedience. Satyagraha demands humility and correctness of stand, and it can be resorted to only for the good of others. Satyagraha, therefore, is a test of our sincerity as it is not a movement of "brag, bluster or bluff": non-cooperation is not a movement of brag, bluster or bluff. It is a test of our sincerity. It requires solid and silent self-sacrifice. It challenges our honesty and our capacity for national work. It is a movement that aims at translating ideas into action. 55

Certain guidelines for the behaviour of satyagrahis were also laid. A satyagrahi will harbour no anger but will suffer the anger of the opponent; he will never retaliate or swear or insult his opponent. He will behave courteously towards authorities but refuse to submit to the humiliating orders. A body of civil resisters is, therefore, like an army subject to all the discipline of a soldier, only harder because of want of excitement of a soldier's life.

The methods of Satyagraha may be broadly classified into four categories: purificatory, penitential devices; forms of non-cooperation or methods of civil disobedience; the constructive programme. 56 All of these may be employed by

55 Gandhi, Young India, January 12, 1921, Satyagraha, p.59.
56 Iyer, The Moral and Political Thoughts of Mahatama Gandhi, p.301.
individuals, groups or mass movements in the political arena and in different spheres of social life. The division is mainly for conceptual clarity and convenience of presentation only. Pledges, prayers and fasts come under the first head of purificatory, penitential devices; while hartal, boycott, strikes and fasting unto death are included in the modes of non-cooperation. Picketing, marches, non-payment of taxes and deliberate defiance of a specific law fall in the purview of civil-disobedience. Constructive programme calls upon satyagrahis to engage themselves in silent, active constructive work of reform and social service. Gandhi, in particular, stressed the need for working towards communal unity, the removal of untouchability, a programme of adult education and village improvement, peasant uplift, economic and social equality, promotion of cottage and small scale industries and the abolition of various social evils.

Satyagraha is thus Gandhian technique of social action which cannot be practised in isolation. It takes for granted social and political phenomena and the suffering people, as the quest for truth cannot be practised in a cave. Satyagraha is a dynamic weapon to fight evil in a non-violent way, but it is not a meek surrender before the evil-doer.

After his return to India in January, 1915 from South Africa, Gandhi settled himself and his associates in an Ashram on the bank of river Sabarmati near Ahmedabad. The inmates of the ashram modelled their living on the virtues of truth, non-violence and chastity. They were expected to abolish untouchability, practise fearlessness and do bread-labour. The ashram
served as a laboratory, thus training its inmates as prospective satyagrahis.

Satyagraha on Indian was offered by Gandhi first in Champaran in Bihar, where Gandhi administered the lesson of truth and non-violence to the simple and illiterate tenants of Indigo planters. The weapon of non-violent struggle was tested again in Ahmedabad over the textile workers' strike.

Then came the first real agrarian satyagraha when Gandhi had to intervene in a conflict between the peasants of Kheda district in the then Bombay Presidency and the local administration over the remission of land revenue in the near-famine conditions.

Then followed the Rowlatt Act of 1919 which has often been termed as the parent of the non-cooperation movement. Gandhi advised the people to observe hartal on April 6 and to observe it as a day of mourning on which no business was to be transacted by way of popular demonstration against the high-handed action of the Government in enacting the Rowlatt Bill.

"It seems to me to be in the fitness of things that it should be commenced with an act of self-purification. Let all the people of India, therefore, suspend their business on (the) day (the Rowlatt Act becomes law), and observe the day as one of


fasting and prayer... the duration of the fast should be twenty four hours.... This led to minor clashes between the authorities and the public at some places. The Government banned the entry of Gandhi in Panjab and Delhi. He was arrested on April 9, 1919 near Delhi. His arrest sparked off more violent outbursts by the public and further repression by the Government. The Jallianwala Bagh tragedy was a sequence of this agitation. Martial law, indiscriminate flogging and firing followed in its wake. The Jallianwala massacre turned Gandhi into a leader of the Non-cooperation Movement.

Gandhi identified himself with the Khilafat movement so as to cement Hindi-Muslim unity and, in return, to win the sympathies of the Muslims for the national movement. The Khilafat Committee accepted Gandhi's suggestion to start non-cooperation movement against the Government. Gandhi, who had already tested the efficacy of his weapon of non-violent civil disobedience, included in the programme of the movement the surrender of titles, gradual withdrawal of children from schools and colleges, owned, aided or controlled by the Government, gradual boycott of British courts by lawyers and litigants and the boycott of foreign goods. Establishment of national institution, private arbitration courts, popularization of Swadeshi, the revival of hand-spinning, Hindu-Muslim unity, and the removal of untouchability suggested the constructive side

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of the programme. Satya was proclaimed as the supreme strategy and ahimsa was to be the guiding principle of the whole movement.

Believing that complete Civil Disobedience is rebellion without the element of violence in it, Gandhi declared: "Our Non-cooperation is neither with the English nor with the West. Our Non-Cooperation is with the system the English have established with the material civilization and its attendant greed and exploitation of the weak. Our Non-Cooperation is a refusal to cooperate with the English administrators on their own terms". 

He held that Non-Cooperation is a protest against an unwitting and unwilling participation in evil. It is as necessary to reject untruth as it is to accept truth: "A program conceived in a religious spirit admits of no tactics or compromise with things that matter. Our present Non-Cooperation refers not so much to the paralysis of a wicked government as to our being proof against wickedness. It aims therefore not at destruction but at construction. It deals with causes rather than symptoms".

The Government reacted to the movement with repression. The Congress, thereupon, sanctioned the starting of Civil Disobedience. Gandhi wrote a letter in February 1922 to Lord Reading, intimating his decision to start Civil Disobedience after seven days unless the Government gave up its repressive policy. Before the expiry of the notice, on February 5, 1922,

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61 Young India, October 13, 1921 in The Essential Gandhi, p.166.
62 Young India, January 19, 1921 in The Essential Gandhi, p.166.
at Chauri Chaura in U.P., 21 policemen and a sub-inspector were burnt alive in a police station by an infuriated mob, Gandhi at once suspended the movement, although his action was bitterly resented as people could not appreciate Gandhi's attitude towards truth and non-violence in a political struggle. Gandhi was arrested on March 10, 1922 but released on February 5, 1924 on medical grounds. The removal of untouchability and communal tension claimed his attention for a couple of years thereafter.

On March 12, 1930, Gandhi started from Sabarmati Ashram his famous march to Dandi to break the Salt Laws. Accompanied by 79 selected disciples, Gandhi covered on foot a journey of 200 miles in 24 days. At every stage, villagers flocked to greet Gandhi and the scene received full publicity. Satyagrahis reached Dandi on April 5, 1930 and, after a day of fasting and prayers, picked salt from the beach and broke the law. This was, thus, the deliberate resumption of the Civil Disobedience movement. Picketing and boycott of liquor shops soon followed — a task which Gandhi entrusted mostly to women. The boycott of foreign cloth was also started.

The Government resorted to repression and arrests. Gandhi's arrest occurred on May 5, 1930 and he was detained in Yerwada Jail. The payment of taxes began to be refused. After Gandhi's unconditional release on January 26, 1931, Gandhi-Irwin Pact was signed on March 5, 1931. The Government agreed to withdraw ordinances, to restore all the confiscated property of the satyagrahis, to permit peaceful picketing of shops dealing in liquor, opium and foreign cloth etc. Gandhi, in turn, agreed to suspend the Civil Disobedience movement and to participate in the
Second Round Table Conference which opened on September 7, 1931. His participation yielded no positive result for the Congress and even before his return from England, the Pact had been broken and ordinance, arrests and detentions reigned supreme. He himself was arrested and that marked the resumption of Civil Disobedience Movement.

In November 1940, Gandhi started the Individual Satyagraha which implied a symbolic protest against the way the war was being waged on behalf of India. Gandhi himself selected individuals, who were to offer Satyagraha and court imprisonment. The movement continued for a year when it came to an end on the unilateral release of all satyagrahi prisoners by the Government. On August 8, 1942, a resolution demanding the withdrawal of the British from India was adopted. Gandhi declared that it was a decision "to do or die". On August 9, Gandhi along with other prominent leaders was arrested and the people were left leaderless. Their resentment took the usual form of hartals, processions and meetings. The Government dealt with the people ruthlessly and people at some places resorted to violence. It came to be known as 'Quit India' movement.

Gandhi was so greatly perturbed over the acts of violence that he started his fast for 21 days on February 10, 1943. His condition became critical but the Government insisted on the withdrawal of the 'Quit India' resolution and public repentance by Gandhi as conditions precedent to his release. Gandhi survived the ordeal but he was, however, released on May 6, 1944 on medical grounds. The 'Quit India' movement was, thus, the last mass movement started by Gandhi for the attainment of Swaraj.
Gandhi claimed that his power in the political field was derived from his spiritual experiments with himself. Regarding himself as "an humble seeker after truth", he considered his national service as "part of my training for freeing my soul from the bondage of flesh". He believed that his "devotion to truth has drawn me into the field of politics" and "that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means". He sought to spiritualize political life and political institutions and declared that politics divorced from religion is like a corpse, fit only for burning: "To me political power is not an end but one of the means of enabling people to better their condition in every department of life".

In his endeavour to make religion practical and politics religious, Gandhi adopted the path of Karma Yoga or spiritual realization through social action, as religion in India has always served as the enduring basis of social organisation. Gandhi believed that "politics today encircles us like the coils of a snake from which one cannot get out, no matter how one tries, and the only way of wrestling with the snake is to introduce religion into politics."

63 Gandhi, Young India, April 3, 1924, Collected Works 23 (March 1967), 349.
64 Selected Writings, p.281.
65 Gandhi, Young India, July 1931, Collected Works 47 (September 1971), 91.
66 Gandhi, Young India, May 12, 1920, Collected Works 17 (September 1965), 406.
Thus rejecting the dichotomy between politics and moral principles derived from religious convictions, Gandhi discarded the compartmentalization of human life on the one hand and gave religion a larger connotation on the other hand. By religion, Gandhi was really concerned with religious values rather than with the formal allegiance to dogmas and sectarianism:

Let me explain what I mean by religion. It is not the Hindu religion which I certainly prize above all other religions, but the religion which transcends Hinduism, which changes one's very nature, which ever purifies. It is the permanent element in human nature which counts no cost too great in order to find full expression and which leaves the soul utterly restless until it has found itself, known its Maker and appreciated the true correspondence between the Maker and itself. 67

Religion for Gandhi meant social and personal morality. Gandhi held that a society governed in terms of double standards is self-destructive. Political and personal morality must coincide and extend to all human beings in all walks of life.

The purification of politics through the rejection of double standards was the first major commitment of Gandhi to public life, as he was convinced that what is individually reprehensible cannot be politically admirable. Freedom, therefore, for Gandhi is: "Not a mere acquisition of political power or the right to vote, but it is a passage and advance into a new life, which will make all things undergo a transformation and where all forms of human oppression and exploitation will cease." 68

68 P. Nagaraja Rao, Mahatma Gandhi (Patiala: Panjabi University, 1972), p.79.
By his insistence on the adoption of pure means to reach noble ends, Gandhi demonstrated the practicability of an ethical and spiritual life in political and social spheres. Purity of means was not just a practical expediency but a firm moral pre-occupation with him. In *Hind Swaraj* he wrote that it is wrong to presume that there is no moral connection between the means and the ends: "We can't get a rose by planting an obnoxious weed. The means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree; and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree."\(^69\)

In Gandhian philosophy means and ends are convertible\(^70\) terms since he regards means as the end in the embryo. This can be partly traced to Gandhi's metaphysical belief in the law of karma, and he could view that ends are dependent upon the means. It was his basic belief that in politics, as in all spheres of human actions, we reap exactly what we sow. The teachings of ancient Indian philosophers about the ethics of self-perfection thus became meaningful in the pursuit of social and political goals.

The emphasis on the purity of means is partly due to his conviction that man can only strive; he cannot command results. We can control the means but not the end: "If one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself."\(^71\)

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\(^70\) M.K. Gandhi, *Young India, Collected Works* 11 (March 1964), 435.

Thus Gandhi could reject the doctrine of double standards applicable to individual conduct and political actions. He forcefully countered the maxim that ends justify the means. But his emphasis on the importance of means should not be misconstrued as implying that the end, is, with Gandhi, only a secondary consideration. He reiterated his firm faith that means used should in no way detract from the moral character of our end. The two are inseparable and should be equally pure.

The means and ends are not discontinuous with one another. Means, in Gandhian sense, stand for the progressive realization of the ends. Gandhi’s view that means determine the ends derives its significance from the fact that he set the end of man as perfection. The obvious implication is that if perfection is the end set before us, it cannot be attained by impure means. He, therefore, urged his followers to concentrate on the purity of means.

Thus, Gandhi’s insistence on the purity of means may be comprehended by a reference to the social idealism which implies an application of his ethics to society. The transformation sought for and the end aimed at are desirable social conditions for society and even approximations to the ideals thus considered desirable indicate social progress. Gandhi was an idealist in the sense that he emphasized the possibility of a continuous march of mankind towards perfection but he tried to relate his ideals to the existing social actualities. He, therefore, preferred to describe himself as a practical idealist rather than as a visionary.

Swami

Satyagraha is not simply a negative weapon. It is not
used merely to prevent a person or a group from committing injustice, but its greater significance lies in seeking a new social order based on justice and equality. Freedom is the first pre-requisite of this order. Gandhi had a very comprehensive view of freedom. For him it was not just transference of political power to Indians. The word 'Swaraj' which Gandhi uses for freedom has a very comprehensive connotation. According to him, Swaraj cannot be attained until it secured a completely exploitation free society. Swaraj, literally meaning 'self rule' denotes in common parlance a constitutional, democratic political order, but it had larger ramifications for Gandhi: "Swaraj for me means freedom for the meanest of our countrymen. I am not interested in freeing India merely from the English yoke. I am bent upon freeing India from any yoke whatsoever. I have no desire to exchange 'king log for king stork'. 

By Swaraj Gandhi meant the government by the consent of the people who have contributed by manual labour to the service of the state. Real Swaraj, he explained, 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. He maintained: "Swaraj is to be obtained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority".

The Swaraj of Gandhi's dream, being egalitarian and secular, recognised no race or religious distinction, and it precluded all possibility of being partial to some or prejudicial

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72 Gandhi, Young India, June 12, 1924, p.195.
73 Gandhi, Young India, January 29, 1925, pp.40-41.
to others. 42 As rule of all the people, it would establish the rule of justice and ensure complete independence of alien control and complete economic independence: "So at one end you have political independence, at the other the economic. It has two other ends. One of them is moral and social, the corresponding end is Dharma, i.e., religion in the highest sense of the term.... Let us call this the square of Swaraj, which will be out of shape if any of its angles is untrue." 75

Swaraj, which was thus a prelude to Ramrajya (the kingdom of God on earth) represented Gandhi's dream of the perfectibility of man and society that must be perfect democracy in which inequalities based on possession and non-possession, colour, race or sex do not exist and where justice is prompt, perfect and cheap and where there is freedom of worship, speech and the press — all this because of the rule of the self-imposed law of moral restraint. For the attainment of social happiness, Gandhi thought in terms of Ram Rajya with its implications of sovereignty of people based on pure moral authority.

The Hindu-Muslim Unity

Of the four main pillars of Swaraj of Gandhi's conception, undoubtedly, the Hindu-Muslim Unity was the most important one, the other three being Khadi, Prohibition and the removal of Untouchability. 76 Gandhi believed that Swaraj for India must be

74 Gandhi, Young India, March 5, 1931, p. 1.
an impossible dream without an indissoluble union, between the Hindus and Muslims of India. This unity must not be a mere truce and it cannot be based upon mutual fear as it must be a partnership between equals, each respecting the religion of the other. It was his considered opinion that there can be no 'inborn enmity' between Hindus and Mohammandans. Hindu-Muslim unity means unity not only between Hindus and Mussalmans, but between all those who believe India to be their home, no matter to what faith they belong.

Hindu-Muslim unity, according to Gandhi, is possible only if we have mutual toleration and faith in ourselves, and, therefore, in the ultimate goodness of human nature as unity "consists in our having a common purpose, a common goal and common sorrows". This unity cannot be a mere policy to be discarded when it does not suit us: "We can discard it only when we are tired of Swaraj. Hindu-Muslim Unity must be our creed to last for all time and under all circumstances". Before Hindus and Muslims dare think of freedom, though Gandhi, they must be brave enough to love one another, to tolerate one another's religion, even prejudices and superstitions, and to trust one another.

Gandhi strongly repudiated the charge that he was

77 Gandhi, Young India, October 6, 1920, 18 (November 1965), 326-27.
78 Gandhi, Young India, October 20, 1921, Collected Works 21 (August 1966), 320.
79 Gandhi, Young India, February 2, 1920, Collected Works 17 (September 1965), 46.
flattering the Mussalmans for gaining a political end: "such a thing is impossible for me, because I know that unity cannot be achieved by flattery. Courteousness must not be mistaken for flattery, nor impudence for fearlessness."81

Hindu-Muslim Unity, notwithstanding his belief in the truth of all religions, evaded Gandhi throughout his active political life in India except for a brief period during the Khilafat agitation and Non-Cooperation movement. Henceforth, the gulf between the Muslims and the Hindus went on widening and the two-nation theory propounded by Mr. Jinnah led to the division of the country into India and Pakistan. All efforts on the part of Gandhi to repudiate the two-nation theory and to unite the people proved futile. The holocaust that followed in the wake of Partition greatly distressed Gandhi, but he continued making efforts to bring intercommunal peace and harmony, and died as a martyr in the cause of Hindu-Muslim Unity.

The Removal of Untouchability

Gandhi's frustrating efforts to forge unity with the Muslims were matched in some ways by his crusade against untouchability. He said in no uncertain terms that there could be no Swaraj without the removal of the curse (of untouchability) from our midst.82 The curse of foreign domination and the attendant exploitation thereon was, he argued, the justest retribution meted out by God to the Indians for their exploitation of one sixth of their own race and their studied degradation in

81 Gandhi, Young India, June 12, 1924, Collected Works 24 (March 1967), 234.

82 Gandhi, Young India, September 29, 1921, Collected Works 21 (August 1966), 213.
the sacred name of religion. 83

He believed that it was idle to talk of Swaraj so long as we did not protect the weak and helpless, so long as it was possible for a single swarajist to injure the feelings of any individual. His efforts for the removal of untouchability formed an integral part of his mission in life, and it could not be isolated from his other activities as he held that "I am only a Bhangi, a Chamar, a farmer and a servant", 84 and he wanted to be honoured as such.

Gandhi’s crusade against untouchability became known as far back as 1915 when he made it clear that no untouchability would be practised in his ashram. Within a month of the establishment of Ashram, an untouchable Dudabhai along with his family was admitted into the Ashram but this created a flutter all around. Gandhi had to face a harder battle when Kasturba and Magan Lal Gandhi showed their reluctance in living with the untouchable family. Kasturba was given an option either to observe the Ashram rules or to leave the Ashram. She reconciled herself to the situation and Gandhi won his first battle against untouchability. Since then the removal of untouchability remained the major item of the constructive programme, conceived by Gandhi, as an integral part of struggle for freedom. He called upon the caste Hindus to render the belated justice to the untouchables by ending the inhuman institution of untouchability: "I am anxious to see an end put to untouchability because for me it is an expiation and a penance. Hinduism has committed a great sin in giving sanction

83 Gandhi, Young India, October 13, 1921, Collected Works 21 (August 1966), 286.
84 Gandhi, Young India, April 23, 1925, Collected Works 26 (November 1967), 290.
to this evil and I am anxious if such a thing as vicarious penance is possible ___ to purify it of that sin by expiating for it in my own person". 85

It was mainly due to Gandhi that the Congress constitution made it obligatory for anybody joining the national organisation to declare himself against untouchability. Gandhi claimed equality for the untouchables in Hindu society. This included the right to enter Hindu temples and the freedom to draw water from the wells owned by the caste Hindus.

At the Round Table Conference in 1931, Gandhi vehemently refused to support the demand for separate electorates for the Depressed Classes, for he regarded it as the perpetuation of untouchability. He was convinced that "separate electorates to the 'Untouchables' will ensure their bondage in perpetuity".86

On August 16, 1932, Gandhi wrote to the Premier about his resolve to oppose the Communal Award by resorting to a fast unto death from September 20, 1932. The news of Gandhi's fast caused sensation all around and September 20 was observed all over India as a day of fasting and prayer. There was a spontaneous upsurge of realising the urgency to fight an age-old evil. Temples, wells and public places were thrown open to the Depressed Classes. A Conference of the leaders of Caste Hindus and Depressed Classes was hastily held at Bombay where an agreement was reached after sustained negotiations. This agreement, popularly known as the

86 Gandhi, Young India, November 11, 1931, The Removal, p.206.
Poona Pact increased the representation of the Depressed Classes to the provincial legislatures but revised the electoral system. Gandhi broke his fast when the British Government set its seal of approval on the pact. The scrapping of separate electorates was only the beginning of the end of untouchability. Even before Gandhi, many Hindu religious reformers had criticized the practice of untouchability and made a plea for its abolition. But the revolutionary significance of Gandhi lay in the fact that he provided leadership for social action for their abolition.

On May 8, 1933, Gandhi embarked on a twenty-one day purificatory fast for Harijan work and welfare. The fast which was broken on May 29, 1933, opened a new chapter in the history of struggle against untouchability. Another anti-untouchability fast was undertaken by Gandhi against the Government's refusal to allow him to continue Harijan work from inside the Yervada prison. It was the fast unto death, and it commenced on August 16, 1933. On August 23, 1933, the seventh day of the fast, Gandhi was released unconditionally on medical grounds. The fast, however, "marked a religious reformation, a psychological revolution, a purge of Hinduism's millennial sickness. It was food for India's moral health."

Soon after Gandhi's fast in the Yervada prison in September 1932, an Anti-Untouchability League was formed. This

League was afterwards called The Servants of Untouchable Society. Later, it was renamed as Harijan Savak Sangh. The object of this Sangh was eradication by truthful and non-violent means of untouchability in Hindu society with all its incidental evils and disabilities suffered by the so-called untouchables, hereinafter described as Harijan, in all walks of life and to secure for them absolute equality of status with the rest of Hindus.

With a view to propagating his ideas on the removal of untouchability, Gandhi started the publishing of a weekly called Harijan. The first issue of Harijan Weekly was issued from Poona on February 11, 1933. The weekly contained Gandhi's articles and his replies to the points raised by his critics on the subject of untouchability. The main aim of the weekly was to educate the masses and arouse their conscience against this inequality and human degradation, and to seek cooperation from all sections of the society for the anti-untouchability movement. The Harijan became a channel of communication between Gandhi and other social reformers and also between Gandhi and his opponents.

On November 7, 1933, Gandhi set out on a countrywide tour to promote the anti-untouchability campaign. The historic tour began at Wardha and ended at Varanasi. During the next nine months Gandhi wore himself out by covering 12,500 miles (20,006.4 Kms), penetrating into some of the remotest parts of the country. Besides the northern states, Gandhi visited the South and East India. Gandhi also made collections for the Harijan fund. He collected about rupees eight lakhs. The millions of men, women and children

90 B.R. Nanda, Mahatma Gandhi, p.192.
who contributed to his begging-bowl became fellow-soldiers in the campaign against untouchability.

**Brahmacharya**

Etymologically, *brahmacharya* implies the discipline which leads to the realization of Brahman but in common parlance brahmacharya means control over sex-function. Gandhi believed that brahmacharya consists in the fullest control over the senses in thought, word and deed. An impure thought or anger is a breach of brahmacharya. Gandhi prescribes brahmacharya as one of the most important vows for a satyagrahi as the means of the purificatory discipline.

Gandhi had no doubt that *brahmacharya* is a mental condition as it cannot be cultivated merely by outward restraints. A satyagrahi observing brahmacharya shuns neither man nor woman. Observance of this vow sublimates his sexual energy, and enables him to rise above the consciousness of sex so that all women become mothers, sisters and daughters to him. Towards the close of his life Gandhi felt that a brahmacharya may, if occasion demands, even share his bed with a woman out of sense of duty.

Gandhi commended the control of the palate as useful aid to brahmacharya. This vow means that one should be extremely simple in our food, eating not to please our palate but to keep

91 Gandhi defines brahmacharya as "that correct way which leads to Brahman". *Harijan*, June 22, 1947, p.200.


In proper working condition.* Dietetic restrictions, fasting, abstinence and avoidance of courses suited to a life of pleasure are, therefore, recommended.

**Gandhi's Economic Thought**

As a humanist and national leader, Gandhi was touched by the poverty and sufferings of the Indian peasants, artisans and workers in the midst of dazzling display of affluence. Whereas he did not formulate any theory of economics —— his thinking on economic issues, of course, marked gradual evolution —— he was, nevertheless, confronted with economic questions since Gandhian struggle for freedom sought the involvement of all classes, particularly the vast mass of peasants, artisans and workers. In his bid to cultivate a cohesive force of all interests to fight out British imperialism, Gandhi had, perforce, to reconcile the conflicting interests of all classes. His pronouncements on economic problems, as such, can be best appreciated in this light, because the solutions offered by him invariably aimed at minimizing the area and basis of conflicts between the different classes and interests and his 'economics' was interchangeable with his 'ethics':

> True economics never militates against the highest ethical standard, just as all true ethics to be worth its name must at the same time be also good economics. An economics that includes Mammon Worship, and enables the strong to amass wealth at the expense of the weak, is a false and dismal science. It spells death. True economics, on the other hand, stands for justice, it promotes the good of all equally, including the weakest, and is indispensable for decent life.94

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Gandhian economics, therefore, is a variant of normative economics which proposes an ideal economic order. In quintessence, Gandhi, like Ruskin whose Unto This Last ( ) influenced him immensely, was an idealist thinker bent upon solving the practical problems posed by the real social life of the day. That explains the asymmetry and contradictions which, at times, crop up in his economic ideas. Gandhi's economic thinking concentrates on the economic behaviour of the village man, not only as one finds it but also as it ought to be.

The blueprint of his economy percolated from the self-contained and self-sufficient villages of the ancient past to which he has added a highly moral content by incorporating into human conduct the truism that happiness is largely a mental condition that calls for the irreducible minimum of primary needs relating to food, clothing and shelter: "The mind is a restless bird", Gandhi observed, "the more it gets the more it wants and still remains unsatisfied". "Therefore", he went on, "the ideal of creating an unlimited number of wants and satisfying them seems to be a delusion and a snare". And he concluded: "Civilisation, in the real sense of the term consists, not in the multiplication but in the deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants".96

Rural Reconstruction: Gandhi believed that villages of India still preserved all that was the best in the ancient Indian


96 Alternative, p.9.
society because they were not polluted by the evils attendant on modern industrial civilization. He was contented with small villages which set a limit to man's indulgences and he resolutely stood for village industries and decentralised productions. He called upon the people to go back to the villages and to take to spinning. Hand-spinning, he believed, was the only remedy for the under-employment and poverty of the villagers. His ideal was a federation of Village-society where each of the units managed its own affairs.

The gospel of Charkha and the economics of Khaddar were the main planks of Gandhian economic thinking which sought to provide employment to the hungry millions in the villages. The emphasis on the spinning wheel helped the growth of the idea that cottage industries could supplement big industries. The increasing use of electric power could facilitate the growth of small scale industries in the villages. Gandhi's continued emphasis on the villages forced many Indians to think of the poor peasants in the villages in human terms, to realise that behind the glitter of a few cities lay this morass of miseries and poverty, and to grasp the simple truth that the true test of progress lay not in the creation of a number of millionaires or in the setting up of big cities, but in the

98 Gandhi, Young India, June 17, 1926 in Sarvodaya, pp.22-25.
100 Ibid., 149-170.
change of the status of the peasant and the poor. Gandhi's idealisation of the villages was the logical outcome of his insistence upon the attitude and values of life. He said:

You cannot build non-violence on a factory civilization, but it can be built on self-contained villages. Even if Hitler was so minded, he could not devastate seven hundred thousand non-violent villages. He would himself become non-violent in the process. Rural economy, as I have conceived it, eschews exploitation altogether, and exploitation is the essence of violence. You have, therefore, to be rural-minded before you can be non-violent, and to be rural-minded you have to have faith in the spinning wheel. 101

Views on Machinery: Gandhi's opposition to machinery follows from his abhorrence of modern industrialism as it is associated with slums, ugliness and exploitation. Moreover, his denunciation of machines was a part of his philosophy of life as the supreme consideration for Gandhi was man, and he believed that the machine should not tend to atrophy the limbs of man. It was his considered opinion that concentration of wealth in a few hands was necessary consequence of large scale industrialism, and it led to exploitation of man.

The champion of rural reconstruction, therefore, held that "Machinery is the chief symbol of modern civilization; it represents a great sin". Industrialization led to the gradual disappearance of Indian handicraft which resulted in the shocking conditions of the mill-hands. Gandhi was, therefore, driven to the sad conclusion that: "It is machinery that has impoverished

India. It is difficult to measure the harm that Manchester has done to us. It is due to Manchester that Indian handicraft has all but disappeared. 102

Gandhi was, in fact, opposed to the craze for machinery, not machinery as such. He conceded that even human body is a most delicate piece of machinery: "The spinning wheel is a machine; a little toothpick is a machine." 103 Gandhi could not appreciate the craze for labour-saving machinery as labour, thus saved, benefitted only a small fraction of mankind: "Man go on 'saving labour' till thousands are without work, and thrown on the open streets to die of starvation." 104 The impetus behind it all is greed as machinery merely helps a few to ride on the back of millions: "The saving of labour of the individual should be the object, and not human greed the motive." 105 Even on ethical plane, Gandhi could not approve of saving labour as he always emphasized the importance of manual labour. He held that the law of 'breadlabour', 106 should be the first moral law of life, and that every man should earn his bread by the sweat of his brow in some productive labour.

Gandhi's opposition to indiscriminate use of machinery sometimes gave the impression that he was an obscurantist. But he wanted man to be the master of the machinery rather than its

102 Hind Swaraj, p.93.
103 Ibid., p.8.
104 Ibid., p.8.
105 Ibid., p.9.
106 Gandhi, Village Swaraj, pp.35-36.
slave. His attack was on that kind of the use of machine that results in the exploitation of the labour of others. Gandhi was aiming not at the eradication of machinery but its limitations.

Production for Use: Decentralization of production is implied in Gandhian economy which involves the development of integrated agro-industrial economy with agriculture as the pivotal activity co-existing with small industries. Production for use and not for profit has to be the guiding principle of the decentralised agro-industrial economy: "The rich man will be left in possession of his wealth, of which he will use what he reasonably requires for his personal needs and will act as trustee for the remainder to be used for the society." It was his belief that possession of inordinate wealth by individuals would be held as a crime against humanity.

Trusteeship: The concept of 'Trusteeship' that Gandhi offered as an alternative to class war and violent expropriation of the means of production, anticipated a humanitarian capitalist. Trusteeship, which thus provides a means of transforming the capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one, is based on the faith that human nature is never beyond redemption. It does not recognise any right of private ownership of property except in as much as is necessary for one's welfare, but it does not exclude legislative regulation of ownership and use of wealth. It seeks to reduce and even obliterate the difference between maximum income allowed to individuals in society: "A non-violent

system of government is clearly an impossibility, so long as
the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists.
The contrast between the palaces of New Delhi and the miserable
hovels of the poor, labouring class nearby cannot last one day
in a free India in which the poor will enjoy the same power as
the richest in the land". 109