CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION
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Gandhi and Humanism

The present scenario of disarray in world affairs creates a need for revising of Gandhian philosophy for new generations. Gandhi is not an academic philosopher. At the most he was interested in human affairs in all respects. Gandhi is well aware of both Indian philosophy and western thought. He was deeply influenced by Tolstoy, Ruskin, Emerson and Thoreau. Gandhi’s period during the South Africa also have deep impact on his thought. His theory was taken from Tolstoy, Ruskin, Emerson and Thoreau and practically implemented in South Africa and India. During the freedom struggle also he is deeply committed for these ideas.

Gandhi is basically humanist as he is thinking the welfare of all i.e. sarvodaya. His satya and ahimsa are also another aspect of humanism. Gandhi though not an academic philosopher produced enough literature to go through his ideas in depth. The early childhood influences of mythological stories of Satya Harishchandra and Sravana kumara also explains his mental development. He is basically influenced by every theory and personality in his life. Bhagavat Gita also has deep influence on him.
RENAISSANCE HUMANISM

Humanism implied dignity of man and his privileged positioning the world. The humanists emphasized the elegance of writing and speech as well as morality which stressed the uniqueness of man, his feelings and his potential. Humanism emerged as a broader intellectual influence, focusing attention on the nature, achievement and potential of humanity rather than on the power and mystery of divinity. Thus humanism was a conceptual and secular shift from religion to the potential of humanity. It also meant the study of the texts of antiquity with renewed interest.¹

At the heart of the Renaissance philosophy of man was an assertion of human dignity. The root of Renaissance individualism was the notion that each man should freely and harmoniously develop all aspects of his nature. There was a greater stress upon moral philosophy than on logic and metaphysics. The freedom of will was emphasized, while it was believed that human personality develops more fully in the context of family and civic responsibility. The secular conception of happiness included wealth, pleasure, health, and beauty as well as piety and virtue. True happiness consisted in the possession of both capital and virtue. True theology implied a historical sense, critical method and knowledge of languages, especially Greek and Hebrew.
“Humanism was based on scholarship. Pope Nicholas-V and his successors subsidized attempts to discover important lost works of Latin antiquity and to acquire copies of Greek authors from the destroyed Byzantine world, and research was done in a systematic and organized way. This new learning was patronized by kings and princes, and its findings circulated widely. These interests in old manuscripts influenced the princes and learned scholars and individuals to become collectors and to establish libraries (Pico della Mirandola). The majority of the new collectors were in Italy especially the Vatican (Nicholas-V). The increase in Greek and Hebrew texts in Christian libraries was also great significance.

The new attitude of the humanists was antiquarian in its devotion to classical models of style and conduct, but original in the human mind and body, and in the world around it. Humanism found literary expression both in the study of classical and religious texts, and in the original composition of new works in the vernacular. In art, men took over and imitated the styles of Rome and Greece. But they stressed at the same time individual differences and eccentricities of form in sculpture and painting.

Humanism thus meant an educational and cultural interest based on the study of classics. Humanism was a basic source of inspiration for all cultural changes of the Renaissance, greatly influencing literature, history, painting, sculpture and political ideas. The intellectual interest of the
humanists were primarily literary, rhetorical, and ethical and they typically wrote poems, orations, letters, plays, historical works of scholarship and a very wide range of moral treatises. Their literary language was normally Latin and their models were classical. In literature they turned to works of ancient pagans like Plato, Cicero and Livy, and of ancient Christians like St. Augustine and St. Jerome.

Although classical works had influenced medieval thought to some extent, scholars from the 14th century onwards set about attacking medieval thought. Medieval scholars had regarded their world as existing on a higher plane than Antiquity, their political institutions and social structures based firmly on Christianity because they had divine authorization. Antiquity was regarded as insecure and unenlightened till the rise of Christianity and its establishment in the Roman Empire. By the 5th century the humanist historians had reversed the entire emphasis and the medieval world now became known as the “dark ages”.

The humanists invented the distinctively modern art of textual criticism by detecting the remedying textual errors. Vall’s (1407-1457) principle of linguistic change was the underlying basis of modern linguistics. Valla discovered that human language undergoes historical development and changes with the passage of time, and then Latin lacked a secure foundation because its linguistic development was not taken into account. Valla also
insisted that while writing good Latin, the period it was used in, must be defined and that only words and grammatical practices used the, should be used. This philosophical technique led to a drastic re-evaluation of historical documents and their credibility. Some of them were considered forgery because historically and linguistically they contained gross anachronisms.

**Degradation of human being to the level of a commodity**

Another frightening aspect is the sad fact that man is nowhere in the reckoning now. He has been pitiably reduced to the status of a consumer and he is first and last consumer now. His purchasing power is all that matters. Similarly, the purchasing power of a nation is all what the other nation now cares for. The talk in the world capitals are all centered on the biggest markets in the world and our newspapers devote more than a bulk of their space for market trends, stock markets and bullion rates while a bulk of the remaining space in the news papers deal with violence of various forms, political gossips, coup attempts, private life of celebrities and such other hot items which would ensure a steady interest among the readers. The readers, who are caught in the web of a violent culture and are force-fed by the sweetmeat provided by an enticing consumerist culture, are also satisfied by the ‘kick’ they get by reading these items. Why should they waste their time on news and features about culture, art or development? This attitude, unfortunately, seems to be gaining ground.
The relevance of Gandhi or for that matter anybody else has to be examined against these emerging trends. The galloping horses of humanity which is at the moment being whipped to run as fast as it could in order to win the coveted place of material achievements. But then, this will be possible only if we are prepared to ponder over the immense damage being caused to the edifice of humanity. It is not even slow poisoning; it is almost like ‘sudden death’, to borrow an expression from football.

It is over five decades since Gandhi was assassinated and there are all kinds of discussions both in India and abroad on what Gandhi left for humanity and whether many of his teaching would survive the test of time. What even the passionate critic of Gandhi cannot miss is the string of activities along Gandhian lines one can see in almost all countries of the world now. If not in very significant measure, there are very few countries in the world where something or other in the name of Gandhi is not being organised. In short, there is a global nonviolent awakening after Gandhi.

It is widely accepted now that the core of the legacy Gandhi left for humanity is that he taught us that truth is greater than all worldly possessions, and that slavery, violence, injustice and disparities are inconsistent with truth. What Gandhi left is not a set of theoretical formulations, on the contrary, a carefully evolved vision of an organically sound and mutually supportive and respecting independent world order. The
six decades of Gandhi’s public life in three continents, spearheading various movements for a new social and political milieu where all men and women will be treated as brothers and sisters, demonstrated with convincing sincerity a revolutionary zeal for change; change with consent; hitherto un-experimented in national or international politics. Tolerance, consent, reconciliation and a profound faith in the unity of all sentient and non-sentiment beings have been the core of the Gandhian vision of a world where harmony among the various segments of God’s creation would nurture the essential goodness in each one; both the visible and invisible threads; uniting the entire humanity into a single entity. Does this sound Utopian? Yes, quite a large number of people still believe that the new social order Gandhi envisioned is too idealistic and an unattainable utopia only fit enough for academic and semantic interpretations.

**Gandhi’s Critique of the Emerging Scenario**

Gandhi warned humanity of this dangerous situation as early as 1909 when he pointed out in the seminal work ‘Hind Swaraj’, that unprincipled growth will land humanity on the brink of disaster. Even his own close disciples raised their eye brows of disagreement when he said this. The evil that we are to fight is within us and that we are ignorant of it is the basic problem. Motifs such as give and take, live and let live, love and to be loved have become clichés in the new dictionary compiled by the champions of unlimited growth. This can be possible only if we adopt a holistic vision of life
and ensure equality and justice who presupposes the simple truth that each individual is unique and we should respect his individuality and let him maintain his uniqueness and what applies to an individual should apply to a nation or at a global level.  

Gandhi further warned against a series of social and political turmoil, ecological devastation and other human misery that might arise unless modern civilization takes care of nature and man tries to live in harmony with nature and tries to reduce his wants. Unlimited consumerist tendencies and callous indifferences to values will not help humanity to progress towards peace, he warned. Hatred of all forms, exploitation in whichever manner it exists, are negation of humanity's basic right to exist. The Gandhian legacy of simple living in conformity with the basic rhythm of life typifies the age-old wisdom of humanity. Gandhi tries to convince humanity that wars never solved any problem. On the contrary, reconciliation should help humanity sort out the various problems. Thus, in Gandhi, as has been pointed out by many thinkers in different parts of the world, we have a world leader who dreamt of a warless world and promoter of a social order where exploitation and injustice will not become the dominant tendencies.

**Gandhi’s experiment in South Africa and its contemporary relevance**

Two of the important factors that brought Gandhi closer to the millions are the genuine inspiration he was able to offer to the freedom-loving
citizens and the generation of a feeling among a considerable section of the masses that he was motivated only by the spirit of service and not by any personal or ulterior desires. His South African experiments won him respects from even those who opposed him and those who never met him or knew him.

Tolstoy comments that what Gandhi was doing in South Africa was the most important thing in the world at that time were a case in point. Gandhi demonstrated that the life of a leader should also be open, capable enough to influence the masses so that they will also emulate the leader unreservedly. Gandhi did both these with remarkable success, which in turn resulted in millions following him like charmed moths. The two settlements that Gandhi started in South Africa, the Phoenix Ashram Settlement and the Tolstoy Farm bear eloquent testimony to the leadership qualities and the visionary nature of Gandhi which in turn generated great understanding, sympathy and enthusiasm among almost all dumb Indians and others in South Africa at the beginning of the twentieth century. His life, both as an initiator of new experiments and as a private individual and lawyer of great promise, were all open. He was against anybody possessing anything more than what the other person had. The members of the settlement ate in the common kitchen, worked in the farm together, their children attended the general school and nobody entertained or desired to accumulate or acquire anything of his own. Not that Gandhi did not have problems in this but was
difficult for him to convince even his own wife and Gandhi was harsh when he detected that his wife had a few things of her own. Gandhi’s children were disappointed and even they nourished an ambition of attending better schools and pursuing their higher education outside South Africa. Gandhi resisted all these attempts and insisted on his children attending the same school where the children of other members of the settlement were studying. He kept account of every pie that was spent. He stopped even charging for his own services as a lawyer. All this, not only endeared him to his followers but inspired them also to follow him as far as possible. This naturally resulted in a kind of joy and willing participation in the cause he was espousing.

**Gandhi’s Scientific Humanism**

By equating Gandhi with any saint or philosopher who couched transcendental truth and spoke in riddles offering a plethora of aphorisms, we will be missing the essential Gandhi. He was a revolutionary in the sense that he aimed at changing certain social and political structures but the means he adopted were not the usual violent methods associated with revolutions. He offered a package of alternatives to humanity. His insistence of nonviolence to violence; persuasion and reconciliation to end hostilities; trusteeship to end economic injustice; improvement of the lot of the depressed sections by abolishing factors that perpetrate social iniquities;
ending man's tyranny on nature by respecting nature as the protector of human race; limiting one's wants.

Gandhi convincingly demonstrated through his ashram experiments, the use of alternative source of energy, appropriate technology etc. In short, an ardent practitioner of truth that he was, Gandhi showed to humanity that there are workable alternatives which will be creative and sustainable. The only thing in this is that we have to muster courage to accept it, for it demands self and collective discipline of various kinds. It is not the gratuitous and condescending offer of a bit of whatever we are willing to part with that is required, but a willing and spontaneous readiness to share with the less privileged fellowmen and women what one has in excess and to work for happily ushering a new order. The Gandhian humanism was not restrictive but transcendental and scientific. To describe it as revivalist reflects the closed minds of those who try to put all creative and revolutionary ideas and efforts in straight jackets'.

It is said in certain quarters that Gandhi was successful only to a limited extent that too his impact is felt only in certain cultural context. There is no denying of the fact that Gandhi was deep-rooted in his cultural and religious traditions. The phenomenal success Gandhi registered in the far-away South Africa, fighting for human rights and civil liberties in the first two decades of this century and later the adoption of the Gandhian techniques, if not fully, by Nelson Mandela and the subsequent revelations made by the
former South African President Mr. De Klerk that he was also influenced by Gandhi in adopting the path of reconciliation and forgiveness, certainly show that Gandhi had not spent twenty-one years in South Africa in vain.

In the American continent, Martin Luther King's heroic fight for civil liberties on the Gandhian lines and his own admission that it was from Gandhi that he learnt his operational tactics also is not an isolated instance of the relevance of the Gandhian tactics. The manner in which the Greens, particularly in Germany, adopted Gandhian techniques to arouse human consciousness and how they practice their strategy, and the bold assertions made by Petra Kelly about the way they were influenced by Gandhi, also indicate that it is not the cultural traditions of a country or continent that would make the efficacy of certain philosophy or attitude viable, but it is the willingness and readiness of people to react and respond that matters. One can give quite a few instances from almost all parts of the world to show how in different measures the Gandhian vision and approach is found to be an effective weapon in the hands of freedom fighters and social reformers.

Gandhi at no stage claimed that he was trying to teach anything new. In fact, he himself said more than once that he was not involved in any such mission. Truth and nonviolence, he said, are as old as the hills and he was only trying to appreciate and understand the marvel and majesty of both. He said in this connection, "we have to make truth and nonviolence, not matters
for mere individual practice, but for practice by groups and communities and national. That at any rate is my dream. I shall live and die in trying to realise it. My faith helps me to discover new truths every day. Ahimsa is the attribute to the soul, therefore life practiced by everybody in all affairs of life”.

Dismantling of apartheid is message for rest of the world to end social discrimination including practice of untouchability in India. ‘There is a surprising similarity between UNESCO’s statement in its preamble that since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed and Mahatma Gandhi’s assertion that the world either progresses with nonviolence or perishes with violence. Mahatma Gandhi’s heroic work in South Africa for full 21 years and over 32 years of work in India have given humanity a blue print of strategies for a peaceful transition of humanity where respect for all forms of life, human dignity, self-respect and tolerance would characterize humanity’s progress. The year 1994 bore witness to the efficacy of Gandhi’s strategies and philosophy as could be seen from the manner in which the fight Gandhi began a 100 years ago in South Africa i.e. in 1903 bearing fruits when the blacks and the whites in South Africa were able to work out a satisfactory solution to peaceful transfer of power which resulted in the holding of elections and Dr. Mandela taking over the reins of power.
Spiritualization of Politics

Gandhi’s contribution to the political awakening and freedom movement in different parts of the world and adoption of nonviolent strategies, which help both the opposing groups respect each other’s sentiments and accommodating the views of others, has much in common with UNESCO’s decision to propagate the message of tolerance for human survival. Asia and the African continent particularly have seen peaceful transition of power and social change, thanks to Mahatma Gandhi’s initiative which included different methods. One important thing that keeps apart Gandhi’s teachings and strategies is the utmost importance Gandhi attached to pure means to attain lasting ends. Gandhi’s attempts to make politics value based were part of a new world vision. He emphasized that politics bereft of spiritual and ethical consideration will not sustain humanity.

The unending savagery of ethnic cleansing in erstwhile Yugoslavia, rediscovery of war as a “realistic means” to resolve conflicts, proliferation of sources and targets of violence and the deepening socio-economic divide between and within nations despite the widening of the boundaries of democracy has triggered a new awakening. This is evident in the quest for a new paradigm rooted in Gandhian values and a negation of the virtues of development, discredited socialism and reformed capitalism.
Bosnia, the most obvious but not the only conflict, haunting post-Cold War-Europe, serves as an illustration of the search for solutions to the many guises of ‘barbarism’ which have caused the continent to move away from western intellectual tradition to a deeper study of Mahatma Gandhi, his philosophy and the contemporary relevance of his political ‘arts’ and ‘skills’.

With successive multi-nation peace missions coming a cropper, peace activists, political scientists, social critics and philosophers are at the force, canvassing that nonviolence and Gandhian form of intervention alone hold out hope of political peace.

The most celebrated quote among European peace activists and scholars is Gandhi’s retort on being asked his view of western civilisation, “it would be a good idea”.

Extensive research on Gandhi is on in several Western universities. There is a belief that Gandhi’s philosophy of nonviolence humbles the arrogance of modern civilization and values. Pioneering work to delineate nonviolent ways of intervention for peace and human rights is gaining acceptance. The question ‘what is the way to peace’ is sought to be answered in Gandhian terms; “There is no way to peace, peace is the way”. Getting this message across is not easy in a milieu where even peace-keeping is corrupted by narrow politics.
Gandhi and Global Nonviolent Awakening

Why is the world turning to Gandhi? The reasons are many. The ideological battle lines of the Cold War between competing social orders have disappeared with the demolition of the Berlin Wall and the demise of socialism. This has resulted in a vacuum, which discourages exploration of alternatives. That the model of development being imposed by elites is removed from popular aspirations is borne out by the success of the Green movement. The success of the Greens underscores the failure and rejection of the Western model of development against which Gandhi had warned humanity as early as the first decade of the 20th century.

The Green perspectives on development have radicalized politics by creating an awareness of ecological risks and forcing a genuine search for global solutions. Groups inspired by Gandhi are now seeking to widen the relevance of Mahatma’s teachings to encompass issues of peace, human rights, economic equality and democracy. They are convinced that it was the Gandhian critique of industrial economics, which earned the Greens a global constituency. It is a search to communicate and revive a sense of community among peoples.

The growing appeal of this search attests to Gandhism being seen as a wider societal prescription as a political approach that could overcome not only military and ethnic conflicts but also address the violence of the
confrontation between state and civil society, the economic imbalances created by “development” and the resultant social tensions rooted in cultural antagonisms.

The rationale is that nonviolent resistance has brought deeper changes from the build-up to the overthrow of the Shah of Iran and Marcos in the Philippines to the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia and the uprising in East Germany. A Hungarian speaking minority in Slovakia, deprived of education in their language and resorting to ‘Civil-disobedience’ is cited as an example of ongoing Gandhian struggles.

The market and its instruments such as the E.E.C are ill-equipped to deal with aspirations for peace, democracy and human rights because they have reduced these values to economic interests. Hence the overriding need to socially relocate these as values in a new political framework, namely Gandhism.

**Growing Violence and Dehumanizing Hunger**

What would Gandhi have done in the face of widespread violence, hunger, inequality are questions often asked. Communication is critical and yet it seems to be missing despite the technology at hand. This shifts the focus back to Gandhi. As a communicator he would gave gone to the people, is one answer. He effortlessly united people across barriers of literacy,
language, ethnic identity, class, caste and privilege. Somewhere in this answer could be clues to transgress the social divisions that are threatening the whole world or at least this are the hope inspired by Gandhism.

Such enquiries, however hesitant, bear testimony to the vigour and insight that informs the quest for a new vision being shaped by the mahatma. Today, Mahatma Gandhi’s philosophy is looked as a live experience with potential for transformation leading to a Global Awakening.

From the general attitude towards Gandhi as the chief architect of India’s nonviolent freedom movement and as someone who interprets nonviolence as a new idiom the international community has been showing signs of analysing Gandhian options very seriously, as the previous century came to close and many of the overriding political and philosophical positions were either proved to be defective or died their natural death. From Martin Luther King Jr. to Aung San Suuki, the list of freedom fighters, nationalists, Human Right activists, environmentalists, feminists and the whole with honour and dignity have shown a remarkable understanding of the growing relevance of means Gandhi adopted and the vision and legacy bequeathened to humanity.
Global Family

It is widely acknowledged now that Gandhi, who through his innovative approaches and daring initiatives, succeeded in initiating a new era in human history, an era which signifies man’s immense potentiality to rise above narrow considerations and to strive for ushering in a new level of achievement.

The new methods, strategies and ideas Gandhi successfully demonstrated influenced not only the freedom fighters and social reformers of most of the continents but also those who are involved in the serious search for alternatives in their efforts to sustain all what is dear to humanity.

The Gandhian vision of holistic development and respect for all forms of life; nonviolent conflict resolution embedded in the acceptance of nonviolence both as a creed and strategy;’ were an extension of the ancient Indian concept of Global family. The much talked about concept of global human family and humanity’s effort to dismantle manmade barriers among nation’s peoples and the Indian ideals of Vasudaika Kutumbam as enshrined in the Vedic and Upanishad wisdom, are almost the same?

It is true that Gandhi always began at the micro level, but then, his vision surpassed the exigencies of local or national barriers. Gandhi said, “It is impossible for one to be internationalist without being a nationalist... I do
want to think in terms of the whole world. My patriotism includes the good of mankind in general. Therefore, my service of India includes the service of humanity”.

The Gandhian vision of society does not recognize man-made barriers but at the same time as Gandhi often insisted while we should welcome all that is best in other traditions when we allow the winds of other cultures to blow in we should refuse to be swept off our feet. This indicates that one cannot be internationalist without being a nationalist. Gandhi once said “My mission is not merely the brotherhood of Indian humanity. My mission is not merely freedom of India though today it undoubtedly engrosses practically the whole of my life and the whole of my time.

The true realization of freedom of India I hope would realise and carryon the mission of the brotherhood of man. My patriotism is not an exclusive thing. It is all embracing and I should reject patriotism which sought to mount upon the distress or the exploitation of other nationalities. I want to realise brotherhood or identity not merely with the being called human but I want to realise identity with all lifer even with such thing as that crawl on earth”.

It is this vision of the Mahatma and the ceaseless strivings he undertook through the numerous experiments he conducted which endeared
him to millions of his countrymen and others who joyfully threw themselves into the vortex of one of the glorious movements in human history. The nonviolent national struggle for freedom waged under Mahatma Gandhi had the able support of a galaxy of such illustrious men and women of the century like Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Rajagopalachari Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Azad, Sardar Patel, Sarojini Naidu, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and several thousand others.

Gandhi knew no fear and he released his country from fear and inducted into his countrymen fearlessness and offered them brave initiatives for social transformation which saw India taking courageous steps in the dismantling of some of the age-old customs and practices such as untouchability. The manner in which a vast majority of Indians who were segregated in the name of this dehumanizing practice and how they came up in life in the post-independence era speaks volumes of the impact Gandhi created on the Indian psyche to initiate steps to ensure social justice.

Gandhi is not relativism determined by objective analysis of circumstances. Instead it is an unconditional indestructible faith in humanity, a fit born of justice, nonviolence and penetrating self-observation’.

As Gandhi proved through his successful campaigns in South Africa and India the goals of these revolutionary struggles could have been attained
non-violently without encouraging and strengthening the strains of violence inherent in the people waging them, “what the Soviets had done was no more than a parody, a caricature, a kind of revolution Gandhi initiated; of course, the Soviet system failed. History is sometimes harsh, but just judge”, agrees Galtung.

The second is his outright rejection of the vertical caste system. Shakyamuni’s fierce fight against the dehumanizing aspect of social segregation in the name of caste enabled the Indian society, to begin with, to exorcise this centuries-old inhuman practice. Following in the footsteps of the Buddha, Gandhi strongly opposed the verticality of the caste order. He envisioned a horizontal caste system in which all occupations are treated equally in a symbiotic union of diverse elements. Each profession should have dignity; and to the maximum extent possible, the dignity of all should be equal.

Third, in conformity with the Buddhist idea of the Sangha or small community of believers, Gandhi experimented with the developments of small autonomous communities, respecting everyone’s needs but not for everybody’s greed. Both misery at the bottom and excessive wealth at the top would be eliminated in his communities. It is a big question as to how deep the Gandhian vision made a dent in the otherwise stratified Indian society. These three and other departures from mainstream belief cost
Gandhi his life at the hands of an assassin who is described sometimes as a fanatic and orthodox Hindu. Whoever he was, it appears he was someone who did not agree with Gandhi’s opposition to verticality of caste system.

Dr. Ikeda takes these points further up and believes that perhaps Buddhism and Hinduism refined Gandhi’s rare personal traits. “Gandhi was a gradualist, not a radical. He thought good changes take time; they move at a snail’s pace. This too is part of his sense of practicality and order, in which I see a reflection of Buddhist idea of the middle way. Buddhist wisdom has clearly and accurately perceived the middle way between existence and non-existence; between pain and pleasure; and between the doctrine of eternity, according to which conditioned elements themselves are external and the doctrine of annihilation. His practical approach leads me to believe that Gandhi too perceived this middle way.

Gandhi’s views on machinery and large industries invited criticism from many quarters. He is branded anti-progressive on this score. Galtung makes a very interesting observation in this regard. To Gandhi, big cities and big industries were instruments of British imperialism for which Gandhi had no love. ‘Is it not possible, however, to humanize citizens and industry? Citizens can become confederations of relatively autonomous neighborhoods. Industries can reform in a similar fashion: technologies that degrade neither human users nor the natural environment can be evolved. Large factories
and office buildings may give way to more work at home. Gandhi proposed nonviolence as an alternative to the choice between violence and capitalism. Citizens and industries remodeled as I suggest would provide similar alternatives to the choice between industry and cottage industry and agriculture. "Gandhi certainly perceived the middle way but he did not develop it with regard to village's verses cities. It is the responsibility of the millions of people who were inspired by Gandhi to work out the middle way on the basis of his work and the message he left for posterity", concludes Galtung.

It is generally believed that Gandhi opened a new era by convincingly demonstrating that there is an alternative to the politics of confrontation, violence, manipulation and to the disregard of human sentiments—love and compassion in action.

He also showed that in the nonviolent form of protest and fight he was leading there was no room for hate, violence and one should able to stand up courageously and fight without hating those against the fight is directed. He said again and again that his fight was only against the British system which allows imperialism and exploitation and not against the British. The way India and Britain parted company in 1947 speaks volumes of Gandhi’s influence on both the rulers in Britain and the Indian nationalists fighting for freedom. It was the first-ever happy parting of ways in recent times between the masters
of a colony and-the nationalists who were fighting for freedom. Gandhi was the unquestioned leader of the Indian masses who but for Gandhi would have resorted to the extreme form of violence in realizing the goal of freedom. There is no parallel in human history of several hundred millions of freedom-loving people marching towards their cherished goal without shedding blood. It was the triumph of human will over forces of oppression and injustice. It was an indication that human revolution is possible through dynamic leadership and that a true revolution need not be violent.

**Humanism in Western History**

The history of Western humanism makes an interesting study in the light of the Vedantic humanism. Western humanism traces its ancestry to the ancient Greeks and Romans. Greek humanism was limited to its own citizens and excluded the non-Greeks and the slaves from its blessings. Roman humanism was broader, but did not also extend to the slaves. Both were secular and non-religious. Then arrival of Christianity, preaching its own humanism, based on its narrow theology, first to the peoples of the Roman Empire and, late, to peoples of Europe as a whole. But this Christian humanism also was exclusive; it was limited to the believers in its own narrow creed and dogma; it did not extend not only to non-Christians, but also to its own dissidents in creed and to all scientists and rationalistic.
Western humanism in general and Christian humanism in particular, received their most serious shock from the very violent thirty year war between the Protestants and Catholics in Germany. Man killed man in the name of a common God and religion, reducing the population of Germany, according to historians, from 25 to 5 million. This was a traumatic experience for all thinking Europeans who said to themselves and to each other; we believed in the Christian God and creed; and yet, how could we light such a devastating war with each other in the name of that one god sitting in his kingdom of heaven far way? We shall not believe in that God hereafter; we shall not need him either; we faith in man below instead of a God above as remarked by historian Arnold Toynbee.

In the eyes of Western Man in the later decades of the seventeenth century, to try to create an earthly Paradise looked like a more practicable objective than to try to bring a Kingdom of Heaven down to Earth. Recent Western experience had shown that the specifications for a Kingdom of Heaven on Earth were a subject of acrimonious and interminable dispute between rival schools of theologians. On the other hand, the differences of opinion between practical technicians or between experimental scientists would be likely to be cleared up, before loading, by the findings of observations, and of reasoning about the results of observations, on which there would be no disagreement.\(^3\)
This shift of faith from God to man was helped by the European’s discovery of Greek humanism, in the wake of its contact with the thought and culture and literature of classical Greece in the fifteen and sixteenth centuries; this modern western humanism, strengthened by physical sciences and technology, held out hopes of full human development in peace and plenty all over the world. It steadily gained strength and prestige for three hundred years, up to 1914. Then the devastating First World War, when western man hated and killed brother western man to an extent unprecedented in history. This was followed by the continuous tensions of the post-war years, to culminate in the more devastating Second World War, with its additional Nazi brutalities and gruesome murder of millions of Jews. These traumatic experiences shook to the very foundations Western man’s faith even in man, just as the Thirty Years’ War earlier had destroyed his faith in God. They shattered his faith even in humanism itself.

The Second World War left western man with no focus of faith and loyalty either to a god above or man below, breeding in him a cynical attitude with respect to all values - religious and other worldly, or human and this-worldly, or ethical and moral; and it has led him to opt for a plunge into a crude materialism and to bend his efficient technology for the satisfaction of his organic cravings during the short span of his physical existence. This has, in turn, resulted in generating in him inner tensions, privations, and psychic distortions to an alarming degree.
Into this Western human context came a new challenge, in the form of the Bolshevik Revolution and the hope of a new human civilization led by the erstwhile USSR, promising peace and plenty round the world. After impressive achievements in the field of mass human developments during its first four decades, this new experiment also is showing severe inner tensions within the individual man and woman in the erstwhile USSR, in the form of increase in crime, drunkenness, and other psychic distortions, and intense conflicts between one Marxist state and another. Marxist humanism goes far, but no far enough, to ensure human fulfillment. Vedanta helps Marxism to carry its study of man into the depth of the human spirit and to base its undoubtedly promising human experiment on the rock of the divine in man and not on the sands of his physical and organic system.

**Humanism in Indian History**

This is the uniqueness of the Indian outlook, and of the Indian approach to inter-human and international relations, as interpreted by Vivekananda. We may consider India’s history from two points of view: firstly, its successes; secondly, its failures. It has failed in certain fields, but it has registered success in certain other fields. It has so far failed to evolve a truly egalitarian social order, as pointed out by Vivekananda in his letter referred to earlier; and it is treating this as its supreme national objective in this modern period of her long history. But it has succeeded in developing and maintaining a uniformly peaceful attitude and policy in its international and
inter-religious relations. It is impressive that, during her long history of about five thousand years, India has never gone outside her boundaries to conquer and enslave and exploit other nations, even when she had the political and military power to do so. This is the sweet fruit of her philosophy of man in depth, of her vision of the oneself in all, which made her evaluate man as man, and not as conditioned by his external variable factors such as race, creed, or political nationality. Universal peace and toleration derives only from a universal vision. “Vivekananda’s humanism is based on this universal Vedantic vision of man as the Atman. This vision of India’s sages and philosophers did not remain as a vision but was given unique political expressions by several Indian political states at the all-India as well as provincial levels, among whom the most outstanding example was the policy and program of the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka of the third century before Christ. Experiencing remorse after his successful but bloody wars with his neighboring Kalinga state, Ashoka renounced all wars as the instrument of state policy and, as proclaimed through his numerous rock and pillar edicts, many of which still exist, he silenced all war drums, yuddha-bheri, and struck the kettle-drums of truth and justice, dharma-bheri and this not only in the political and international fields, but also in the fields of inter-religious relations. This wise policy of non-violence, active toleration, and international understanding was taken up by his successors also at the all-India and provincial levels, who extended welcome and hospitality to successive foreign racial and religious groups, and refugees fleeing from persecution
from their own countries, like the Jews and the early Christians from West Asia and the Zoroastrians from Iran.

In several of his speeches, Vivekananda has referred to this peaceful character of India's international relations. The following was said he in his First Public Lecture in the East, delivered in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in January 1897.4

The debt which the world owes to our motherland is immense... “The mild Hindu’ sometimes is used as an expression of reproach; but if ever a reproach concealed a wonderful truth, it is in the term, ‘The Mild Hindu’, who has always been the blessed child of God. Civilizations have arisen in other parts of the world. In ancient and in modern times, seeds of great truth and power have been cast abroad by the advancing tides of national life. But mark you, my friends; it has been always with the blast of war trumpets, and with the march of embattled cohorts. Each idea had to be soaked in a deluge of blood. Each word of power had to be followed by the groans of millions, by the wails of orphans, by the tears of widows. But India has for thousands of years peacefully existed. Here activity prevailed when even Greece did not exist, when Rome was not thought of... even from then until now, ideas after ideas have marched out from her, but every word has been spoken with a blessing behind it, and peace before it. We of all nations of the world have never been a conquering race, and that blessing is on our head, and therefore we life.
“Gifts of political knowledge can be made with the blast of trumpets and the march of converts. Gifts of secular knowledge and social knowledge can be made with fire and sword. But spiritual knowledge can be given only in silence, like the dew that falls unseen and unheard, yet bringing into bloom masses of roses. This has been the gift of India to the world again and again.

Vivekananda pointed this out as one of the sweetest fruits of India’s humanism. It is also illustrated by the spread of Buddhism throughout Asia in a uniformly peaceful manner. Humanism cannot coexist with any predatory attitude or behavior; it cannot coexist also with any intolerant attitude and behavior. India’s failure in upholding her humanism has been, as I said earlier, in her own national society. And Vivekananda’s contribution to correct this failure and evolve a human social order in India in this modern age is immense. And he took India out of her isolation of centuries into the main stream of modern international life, in order to achieve this very objective. He was deeply imbued with the humanistic and intellectual riches of modern western thought, with its theoretical and practical contributions in the fields of science and political and economic contribution in the all fields of society. He was fully aware of this international character of human relationships in the modern context. His was not to be the role of a reactionary narrow patriot who would take his country away from the contamination of other peoples, or ride his chariot of a jingoistic nationalism.
roughly over the freedom and dignity of other nations. He loved India deeply; but he loved humanity at large also with an equal passion.  

Objectives of Gandhian Humanism:

The destiny of man rests on himself. It is he, and he alone, who moulds or mars his destiny. It is he who advances or retards within himself in accordance with his accomplishments. If he fails to utilize the potentialities within himself, the consequences are inevitably miserable. If, on the other hand, he continually strives for enrichment of himself, he better proves his worth. The essence of Gandhian humanism incorporates the eternal will of mankind towards awakening of the inner potentialities, towards awakening of the inner man. It is the inner man that marks the victory of man.

How does Gandhi find out the essence of excellence that marks the victory of man? What are the objectives of the humanism he identifies? What strategies are to be adopted for exercise of humanistic ideas and ideals, and how? These are some of the questions that also call forth elucidation for better exposures of Gandhian mysticism.

As a matter of fact, the obscure ideas often nursed in sentimentalism and passivity encompassing the objectives and strategies of Gandhian humanism have more often damaged truth and endeared myth than explored the true vision of Gandhi as a humanist. Moreover the crushed picture of a
humanistic society under unforeseen and undesired circumstances for which the great visionary has nothing to do, makes more muddle in the concept of humanism. The truth lost is never the lost truth. Gandhian humanism is never a partner to sham humanism.

One of the fundamental objectives of Gandhian humanism is to be empowered with the weapon of self-restraint. This will enable an individual to guard himself against disrupting forces. It is an inner force that quickens his judgment to take action against all ills and evils however undesirable and unexpected.

Now, can an individual identify that the power of self-restraint is working within himself? The answer, according to Gandhi, is very clear, and the strategies to be followed are inherent and spontaneous. As he observes;

It is true that he who has attained perfect brahmacharya does not stand in need of protecting walls. But the aspirant undoubtedly needs them, even as a young mango plant has need of a strong fence round it. A child is with the pushcart – till he becomes a man who has learnt to walk without aid. To cling to the aid when it is needful is surely harmful.

It appears to me that even the true aspirant does not need the above-mentioned restraints. Brahmacharya is not a virtue that can be cultivated by
outward restraints. He who runs away from a necessary contact with a woman does not understand the full meaning of brahmacharya. However attractive a woman may be, her attraction will produce no effort on the man without the urge.  

The true brahmachari will shun false restraints. He must create his own fences according to his limitations, breaking them down when he feels that they are unnecessary. The first thing is to know what true brahmacharya is, then to realize its value, and lastly to try to cultivate this priceless virtue. I hold that true service of the country demands this observance.

The above strategy of self-restraint in the form of a brahmachari as one of the Gandhian strategies of human consciousness also encompasses another important objective of humanism. It is to practice in the control of sensualist, of temptation and sentimentalism. The important factors associated with this practice are to have a careful and cautious control over sense-organs. From the diary of Mahadev Desai, we come across a better exposure of this Gandhian strategy of humanism in the observance of brahmacharya.

Brahmacharya is such only if it persists under all conditions and in the face of every possible temptation. If a beautiful woman approaches the marble statue of a man it will not be affected in the least. A brahmachari is
one who reacts in a similar case in the same way as marble does. But just as the marble status refrains from using its eyes and ears, even so a man should avoid every occasion of sin.  

You argue that the sight and the company of woman have been found to be inimical to self-restraint and are therefore to be avoided. The argument is fallacious. Brahmacharya hardly deserves the name if it can be observed only by avoiding the company of women even when such company is kept with a view to serve. It amounts to physical renunciation unbaked by the essential mental detachment, and lets us down in critical times.

Admittedly, as an objective of humanism, Gandhi considers self-restraint as one of the guiding principles of life. The brahmachari endeavoring at brahmacharya observes this as a strategy for pure humanism. The dispassionate attitude towards all sensual objects or events of life that a brahmachari maintains with strictness of perfection divulges the truth that a man’s life should always be directed towards greater values of humanism. Even when sensualist produces an aroma of attachment, the real humanist laughs at easy expositions of life in senile sentimentalism. The real humanist is always an iconoclast.
Perhaps in delineating with the objectives and strategies of humanism, Gandhi comes nearer to Swami Vivekananda who also emphasizes on the role of detachment and self-restraint in human endeavour.
Notes & References


