CHAPTER VIII

PRACTICABILITY OF GANDHIAN VALUES
CHAPTER VIII

PRACTICABILITY OF GANDHIAN VALUES

In continuation of collection of data on the subscription to Gandhian values, the respondents were asked to give their frank opinion on the suitability and practicability of these values in everyday life of common men and their relevance to present day national and international issues. For this purpose, questions were asked, clarifications were offered then and there and discussions were held, under seven headings, and their answers were recorded. The data available in this area are mostly qualitative in nature and an attempt has been made to describe them hereunder.

8.1 USE OF GANDHIAN VALUES IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Mahatma Gandhi was keen that everyone should follow his values and teachings in letter and spirit. He asserted that he has not given anything new and has taken all of them from various religious teachings and his values are very simple and even children can understand and follow them. To obtain the opinion of the respondents on the practicability of the values of Gandhi, the first question asked in this part was, whether they believed that the principles and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi can be practiced by common men in everyday life. For this straightforward question, an overwhelming majority of around 83.33% of the respondents replied
that the Gandhian values can be followed by common men in everyday life. In the group who answered in the affirmative, almost half (39.58%) stated that Gandhian values be followed easily and the rest said that the values can be followed by common men with certain difficulties. The other question asked under this heading of those who stated that ordinary men in everyday life can follow Gandhian values was on how they believed that these values are easily practicable. To this question most of them replied that to be simple in life itself meant being Gandhian. The minority (16.67%) who took the other view that Gandhian values cannot be practiced by common men believed that some of the values are outdated and very difficult to follow. So it is concluded that the majority are optimistic about the practicability of Gandhian values.

8.2 GANDHIAN VALUES AND INDIVIDUAL EMANCIPATION

The next question asked was whether they believed that the values of Mahatma Gandhi would guide an individual in his/her emancipation. To this question, the majority (67.50%) gave the positive response that an individual, if he follows the values of Mahathma Gandhi, would improve in his life. However, a section of them had the strong belief that, more than individual emancipation, it is society that would benefit form Gandhian values. Those who did not support the view argued that society
has now become very complex and modern and so the outdated values would overshadow the development of individuals. However, it can be concluded that the respondents had a good degree of understanding of the values of Mahatma Gandhi which assert that the good of the individual is contained in the good of all. And the respondents in general believe that the values would surely guide the individuals in their emancipation.

8.3 GANDHIAN VALUES AND EQUAL SOCIETY
The third question posed to the respondents was whether Gandhian values would be an answer to the present day social inequalities. It was further explained to them that this question includes the evils of the caste system and injustice against women and other weaker sections of the society. The majority of the respondents (84.17%) gave the overwhelming answer that Gandhian values are the only means for attaining social equality. The respondents had a high appreciation for Mahatma Gandhi’s efforts for the eradication of untouchability. In respect of women’s emancipation as well, the majority of the respondents stated that Mahatma Gandhi’s teachings would be very useful. Those who answered in the negative had the opinion that such deep rooted systems like caste will not go away without any force and that people are increasingly becoming selfish and would not give up their social status voluntarily. However, in
view of the foregoing, there is a general belief among the respondents that the values of Mahatma Gandhi are useful for attaining social equality.

8.4 GANDHIAN VALUES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Scholars world over have started acclaiming Gandhian economics as the most suitable for developing countries. Particularly for a country like India, where the masses live in rural areas, vast industrialization and market economy have caused more harm than good for the simple reason that the benefit of this system gets accumulated in the hands of a few and results in widening the gulf between the poor and the rich. Therefore Gandhian economics, which has a basic philosophy of decentralization and trusteeship, is believed to be the only alternative. In this connection, the question posed to the respondents on Gandhian economics was whether the respondents believed that Gandhian values would offer a solution to the present day economic problems. Interestingly, the majority of the respondents (77.50%) registered their unfailing faith in Gandhian values for meeting the present day challenges in economic development. Those respondents who did not support Gandhian economics only said that Gandhian economics is too primitive for the modern world. So it is concluded that the vast
majority of the respondents approved of Gandhian economics as a solution to the present day economic problems.

8.5 GANDHIAN VALUES AND INTERNAL PEACE

Terrorism is a formidable problem in India and in several parts of the world. Numerous valuable lives and a lot of property have been lost to this menace in recent times. Behind every terrorist outfit, there exists a doctrine of religious, social or ethnic fundamentalism. Terrorism, violence and reprisal need not be the means for seeking solutions and settlement of grievances. Mahatma Gandhi has suggested practical and useful methods for conflict resolution. In the light of these, a question was posed to the respondents whether they believed that internal peace can be achieved through Gandhian values. To this question an appreciable majority (78.75%) of the respondents gave an optimistic reply endorsing Gandhian values as useful guidelines for peaceful coexistence and meaningful ways for settling issues and differences. So it can be concluded that Gandhian values are viewed as useful and important means for settlement of issues between groups and arriving at general consensus and for maintaining internal peace and security in a country.
8.6 GANDHIAN VALUES AND POLITICS

The political philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi was highly value oriented and he wanted politicians to be selfless, truthful social workers with dedication. He advocated the Panchayat Raj system as the fundamental structure over which the governance of the whole country was to be built. The remarkable contribution that Mahatma Gandhi made to the evolution of modern India and the modern world was the result of his application of truth and non-violence in the field of politics. To document the opinion of the respondents on the question was asked whether Gandhian politics would be an alternative to the present day political system infested with corruption and inefficiency. The majority (68.75%) of the respondents affirmed their faith in Gandhian political values. A sizable section of the respondents who answered in the negative did so, for lack of clarity and not because of their disbelief in Gandhian values. So it is unambiguous that the respondents supported Gandhian political philosophy as a solution to the present day political problems.

8.7 GANDHIAN VALUES AND WORLD PEACE

World peace is a subject of high significance in the present era of nuclear proliferation which threatens the very existence of mankind
and the world itself. Alarmed by this scenario, Rev. Martin Luther King has cautioned, “The choice before mankind is not between non-violence and violence but between non-violence and non-existence.” Mahatma Gandhi, who devised suitable strategies and modalities, with a strong philosophical base in line with the teachings of various leading religions, for amicable settlement of issues between nations, is regarded as a messiah of peace by world citizens and scholars. With this in mind, a question was asked whether the respondents believed that Gandhian values would help and facilitate world peace. To this question, an overwhelming majority of 87.08% gave a positive response that they believed that Gandhian values would pave the way for world peace. These responses undoubtedly reveal the support of the respondents to Gandhian values.

8.8 GENERAL IDEAS

As a sequel to these questions, which examined the views of the respondents on seven significant areas, three general questions were asked and the responses are discussed here. The first question was whether the respondents would prefer to follow the values of Mahatma Gandhi in their life and if they so prefer, how they would follow them. The majority (83.79%) stated that they would certainly like to follow the values of Mahatma Gandhi in their life,
mostly through opting for a simple way of life. The next question in this series was whether, in their opinion, Mahatma Gandhi is the greatest leader. To this question, over 96.66% replied that Mahatma Gandhi was the greatest leader. Notably, certain respondents who were otherwise critical about the values of Mahatma Gandhi also joined the optimistic group to express their highest regard for his leadership. The last question was from whom they learned more about Gandhian values. To this question, 53.75% of the respondents said that they learned from school teachers, another 35.83% said that they learned through radio programmes, while 7.50% and 2.92% said that they learned about Gandhian values through their parents and books respectively.

The above discussion, by and large, reveals that the respondents have a positive opinion about the values of Mahatma Gandhi, that they have a keen interest to follow them in their life and that they have faith in these values. It is generally believed that these values can be viable alternatives for various burning issues at different levels.