
UNIT 1 INTRODUCING GANDHI

Structure

- 1.1 Introduction
Aims and Objectives
- 1.2 Gandhi's Methodology
- 1.3 Synthesis of the Material and the Spiritual
- 1.4 Nationalism and Internationalism
- 1.5 Summary
- 1.6 Terminal Questions

Suggested Readings

1.1 INTRODUCTION

“The greatest fact in the story of man on earth is not his material achievement, the empires he has built and broken but the growth of his soul from age to age in its search for truth and goodness. Those who take part in this adventure of the soul secure an enduring place in the history of human culture. Time has discredited heroes as easily as it has forgotten everyone else, but the saints remain. The greatness of Gandhi is more in his holy living than in his heroic struggles, in his insistence on the creative power of the soul and its life-giving quality at a time when the destructive forces seem to be in the ascendant.”

- **Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan**

How does one introduce Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi? As a frail man, striding across the globe like a colossus? As the indomitable champion of social justice and human rights? As a ‘half-naked’ saint seeking complete identification with the poor and the deprived, silently meditating at the spinning wheel, striving to find the path of salvation for the suffering humanity?

It was Winston Churchill who contemptuously described Gandhi as a ‘half-naked fakir’ and an ‘old humbug’, adding that it was “alarming and nauseating to see Mr. Gandhi, a seditious Middle Temple lawyer, striding half-naked up the steps to the Vice-Regal Palace, to parley on equal terms with the representative of the King Emperor”. However, the eminent historian, Will Durant, in his *Story of Civilization*, commenting on historic developments in China and India in the first half of the 20th century, wrote:

China followed Sun Yat Sen, took up the sword and fell into the arms of Japan. India, weaponless, accepted as her leader, one of the strangest figures in history and gave to the world the unprecedented phenomenon of a revolution led by a saint, and waged without a gun ... He did not mouth the name of Christ, but acted as if he accepted every word of the Sermon on the Mount. Not since St. Francis of Assisi has any life known to history been so marked by gentleness, disinterestedness, simplicity and forgiveness of enemies.

Of all the great figures of the 20th century, Gandhi has perhaps best stood the test of time. In the aftermath of a century of unprecedented mass violence, many see in him the prophet of the only possible future for mankind, a future without hatred, greed and lust for power. Interest in Gandhi's thought and actions, far from diminishing, are on the increase, and his message to the world appears uniquely relevant. He remains however, in many ways, an enigma.

One of the greatest paradoxes in relation to Gandhi is the contrast between the diversity of perceptions of him in his lifetime, and the very limited range of iconic representations retained of him by posterity.

In his lifetime, Gandhi had been perceived successively and simultaneously as a Bolshevik, a fanatic, a trouble-maker, a hypocrite, an eccentric, a reactionary, a revolutionary, a saint, a renouncer, a messiah, and an avatar. He was likened both to Lenin and to Jesus Christ, indicating the wide scope of representations. After his death, two views of him have become dominant. In India, he is celebrated as the 'Father of the Nation'; outside India, he is remembered as an apostle of non-violence. Such impoverishment in the range of representations is partly due to the selective way in which collective memory works, but it also owes a lot to deliberate attempts at appropriating him.

Aims and Objectives

After studying this Unit, you will be able to understand:

- The basic unity of purpose and aim in Gandhian thought.
- How Gandhi discussed social, economic and political problems from a higher moral and humanistic vantage point.
- The necessity to study Gandhian thought both in its entirety and in its setting and context.
- How Gandhi straddles the two worlds of nationalism and internationalism effortlessly.

1.2 GANDHI'S METHODOLOGY

Looking back from the vantage point of the first decade of the 21st century, it seems nothing short of a miracle as to how, in the first decade of the 20th century, Gandhi launched his crusades against racialism, colonialism, runaway industrialism, religious fundamentalism and violence. He heroically opposed the treatment of his fellow-countrymen in South Africa by courting for himself the humiliation of the humblest Indian so that he might, in his own person, face the punishment meted out for disobedience. When he called for non-cooperation with the British in India, he himself disobeyed the law and insisted that he must be among the first to go to prison. When he denounced the adoption by India of Western industrialism, he installed a spinning wheel in his own house and laboured at it daily with his own hands. When he set out to combat inter-communal violence, he faced death by starvation, in an act of penance, for the errors and sins of others.

Gandhi taught us the doctrine of *Satyagraha*, not as a passive submission to evil but as an active and positive instrument for the peaceful solution of all kinds of differences – personal, national or international. He showed us that the human spirit is more powerful than the mightiest of weapons. He applied moral values to political action and pointed

out that ends and means can never be separated, for the means ultimately govern the end. If the means are evil, then the end itself becomes distorted and at least partly evil. Any society based on injustice must necessarily harbour the seeds of conflict and decay within it, so long as it does not get rid of that evil.

In Gandhi, there was a confluence of different influences which guided him to mould a mighty instrument of Satyagraha and gave direction to his mission: A Gujarati hymn from India, a New Testament from Palestine, a book from Russia, a pamphlet from America, a book and the Suffragette influence from Britain, and many more. All these influences came together to lead Gandhi, as if by a hand of destiny, into the battlefield of the 20th century to wage one of the noblest battles that have been fought by a single human being for the liberation of an entire nation. They combined to make Gandhi the greatest non-violent revolutionary of the age.

Gandhi was not an intellectual in the academic sense of the term. He was not a scholar or a philosopher. He was not a theoretician. His thinking had the quality of a creative genius. He was pre-eminently a man of action. He has written a great deal but his writings are designed as a guide to action and not for the acquisition of knowledge. They are generally concerned with the solution of his actual problems, arising out of the many-sided and complex situations of his time. The discussion of theory is always brief and sketchy. As soon as Gandhi had an idea or a plan, he tried to put it into practice and induced others to do likewise. In the latter case, he had naturally to explain his ideas and plans. But the explanations were brief and suited to the person, place and occasion. The guidance given was practical. Generally the instructions and the explanations were conveyed through correspondence, newspaper articles or brought out in committee discussions and speeches. Gandhi has written a few books. But even these are concerned with particular problems. They are not written with the object of explaining his system of thought rationally and logically argued in all its implications. The writings are generally free from references to other thinkers and authors. For popularising his ideas and converting the people to his way of thinking and action, Gandhi, as a practical reformer, relied more on example than on precept or preaching.

Whatever their external form of presentation and expression, Gandhi's ideas are new and revolutionary. They arise out of the creative mind of an individual to whose reforming zeal the social situation and the difficulties of those times are a challenge. For him historical precedents and examples are no barrier to fresh thinking and discovery.

Gandhi did not acquire his ideas and knowledge merely from books. He did not pass his time in libraries and museums poring over musty volumes. Much of his knowledge was the result of direct contact with life and the practical experience it offered. He, therefore, placed his ideas before the public not in the language of the learned but in that of the average intelligent man and woman. He was a man of the masses and spoke to them in their own simple language, which they understood. He addressed them not about what he had read and studied in books but what he had seen, sensed, experienced and thought about. He described his own observations and his reactions to them. This is the method that has characterised great religious reformers and prophets.

Gandhi offers no such convenient theories, logically and mathematically worked out. There are, as we have said, many gaps in reasoning, and apparent contradictions. Gandhi thought so rapidly that he jumped over many connecting links in the chain of reasoning. These links the practical worker or the theoretical student has to provide from his own intelligence, observation and experience.

Gandhi discussed economic and political problems from a higher moral and humanistic point of view. If, therefore, a young man wants to study Gandhi's economics and politics, he will have to content himself with very meagre systematic literature on these subjects. He will have to wade through a mass of material which he must arrange and systematise for himself. It is the first major difficulty in understanding Gandhi's thought and schemes of reform. His ideas need to be systematised, co-ordinated and correlated. The trends in his thinking on the many subjects he discussed are scattered throughout his writings. They have to be arranged.

Gandhi views life as an organic whole. His concrete schemes are, therefore, intimately and organically connected with one another. Unity is achieved through some definite guiding and regulating ideas, values and principles.

1.3 SYNTHESIS OF THE MATERIAL AND THE SPIRITUAL

Gandhi seeks to synthesise the material and the spiritual, the individual and the collective life. He has, therefore, to deal with both the sets. As occasion demands, he emphasises the one or the other. For instance, he often said that he could "carry God to the poor in a bowl of rice". This being so, it is easy to misunderstand and misinterpret him by focussing attention and emphasis on one side and ignoring the rest of his thought and thus distorting and perverting his meaning and intention. Often he has been attacked both by the spiritualists and the materialists. The former have accused him of lowering the purity of spiritual life by mixing it with economics and politics. The socialists and the communists have often charged Gandhi with confusing economic and political issues with his ideas of truth and non-violence and his philosophy of means and ends. They asserted that they were out to achieve the political and economic emancipation of the people and should have nothing to do with moral and spiritual issues. People could not and, do not therefore, understand Gandhi's insistence on spiritual values. They think that the questions of political freedom and economic equality are the supreme issues and public attention must not be diverted from these to moral problems which are irrelevant. They argue that nobody has the right to sacrifice the economic and political interests of the masses to considerations of morality; the destiny of a nation or of the masses cannot be played with like that. Individuals may have the right, and under certain circumstances even the duty, to sacrifice their personal interests to achieve moral ends, but a nation has no right to sacrifice its material interests for moral ends. Such critics fail to see that Gandhi never sacrificed what he considered the true interests of the country or of the masses; only he did not view those interests narrowly. He saw no inherent conflict between a country's real political and material interests and the fundamentals of morality. He thought that neither individuals nor groups can dispense with moral considerations.

Gandhi was often accused of having accentuated the communal problem by his effort at spiritualising politics. Religion, the critics said, must be kept apart from politics. Gandhi's effort to make politics conform to the fundamentals of morality is confused by critics with a desire to establish a theocracy in India.

It is also complained that he is against all scientific knowledge and discovery because he advocates the pre-eminence of human values over mere physical conquest of nature and the multiplication of material wants and goods. Since he advocates education through purposeful activity, he is supposed to be against all intellectual knowledge. His critics fail to understand

that what he aims at is deeper and fuller intellectual knowledge, which can be acquired best through co-operative work and experience.

Gandhi sees no conflict between the national good and the international good. The narrow nationalists, however, have not hesitated to denounce his humanism as surrender of national interests. The intellectual internationalists, on the contrary, accused Gandhi of narrow and aggressive nationalism. Both sides support their respective arguments with what they consider appropriate quotations cut off from their context.

Gandhi's thought must be considered in its entirety and in its proper setting in Indian conditions of the time and the problems he had to solve. The local and temporal over-emphasis, wherever it exists, must be toned down to bring out the proper relation of the parts to the whole scheme of his thought and philosophy. Any point or points under-emphasised must be clearly brought out. Sometimes gaps must be filled to make the thought and the expression consistent with the whole scheme. Often, the local colour has to be toned down to bring out a universal principle. Above all, the whole thought has to be correlated to Gandhi's own conduct and life.

Gandhi's thoughts and ideas are new and revolutionary and yet he claims no originality for them. He often asserts that in his ideas he merely follows in the footsteps of the old prophets and reformers and tries to "fulfil the law and the commandments" and is offering nothing new to the world. This was not said merely out of modesty. Gandhi, in disclaiming originality, is only working in consonance with the genius of his people.

Truth and non-violence, to Gandhi, were "as old as the hills". His application of these principles to politics and to collective life generally, he would have us believe, is also old. He only claims to use these on an extended canvas to enable him to offer a solution to the new problem, created by ever-increasing and more destructive weapons of violence invented by modern science and technology. The cottage and village industry programme is, of course, old, in spite of its new application and implications in an age of centralised and mechanised big industry. Basic education is at the root of all education. All knowledge, to begin with, was acquired by humanity through observation, activity and experiment.

Gandhi's reputation for originality is accepted by the learned at its face value. They think that he tries to foist on the people some outworn and discarded thought or institution. In the words of the so-called radicals, he tries to put back the hands of the clock of progress. The contention is that what he advocates has been tried in the past often enough and found wanting. The criticism misses the revolutionary aim and spirit underlying Gandhi's thought. The form is old but the spirit, the intention and the application are, new. It is not so much the particular activity undertaken that is revolutionary, as the urge behind it, the spirit that inspires it and the purpose in pursuance of which it is undertaken. Removal of untouchability, advocacy of cottage industry, prohibition and even non-cooperation were advocated by previous reformers in India. Gandhi has, however, made them dynamic and fit them into a vast revolutionary movement, for creating a more just and equitable social order. They do not merely reproduce the old urges or the old mentality.

For instance, his advocacy of cottage and village industries did not mean that people should forever remain content with their present oppressive poverty. His advocacy of decentralised industry in preference to centralised, mechanical big industry had a special purpose under the circumstances prevailing in India. It was to provide work for the unemployed and under-employed starving masses. As in former days, people were not compelled to take to it for want of scientific and technical knowledge. Now it served a new national purpose, that

of providing the unemployed a better substitute than the unemployment dole in the West. It cannot, therefore, be considered as a backward or revivalist movement.

Closely connected with this tendency of Gandhi to repudiate all claim to originality is his habit of fusing old terms and phrases for his revolutionary ideas and activities. He avoids the use of foreign and technical terms. It is quite possible that if the *charkha* had been as fashionable in the modern times as knitting is, however superfluous it sometimes may be, it would have stood a better chance with the upper classes than it does today. After all, considering our tropical climate and the extent of unemployment and underemployment, the *charkha* is both more useful to the individual and the nation than knitting. If in his political writing Gandhi, instead of using the terms 'Non-Violence' and 'Truth' that have moral and spiritual associations and are readily understood by the mass mind, had used the words 'Disarmament' and 'Open Diplomacy', there was every chance of his being better understood and appreciated by the modern mind. He would, in that case, have been regarded as a practical politician. He would have given proof of working for international peace. He might have even won the Nobel Peace Prize.

If again, Gandhi, instead of using the terms 'village and cottage industries' which the masses understand, had used the term decentralisation of industry, he would have been perhaps better understood by the educated. If his new scheme of education had been called poly-technicalisation of education as it is styled in Russia, it would have been perhaps better received by the educated. If instead of using the term 'Ramaraj' he had talked of democracy he would have been better appreciated by the educated in India. The modern mind has to free itself from this "tyranny of words" before it can understand and appreciate Gandhi's thought.

Gandhi does not belong to the company of nature's great ones. He belongs rather to the ordinary run of humanity, from whose ranks exceptional individuals have sometimes arisen, through sheer force of their character and will power, by the painful process of growth and evolution. In his early life, Gandhi gave little promise of his future work and mission. His career as a student was not marked by any particular outstanding ability. He says he was "good". He went to England to qualify for the bar, as any ambitious young man belonging to a middle-class family in those days might have done. His going to South Africa was a professional accident, which might have happened to any young Gujarati barrister of those days. His prolonged stay there had no political urge behind it. It came about almost through a fortuitous circumstance in which design and choice played no part. All that distinguished him in his early age was his truthful nature, his utter sincerity and honesty.

The continuous growth and evolution of Gandhi's personality and his ideas through the years present another difficulty in systematising his thought. Often it is not easy to discover the guiding lines in their purity or to reconcile varying statements made at different times and under different circumstances. There are apparent inconsistencies. Answering the charge of inconsistency, he says: "At the time of writing I never think of what I have said before. My aim is not to be consistent with my previous statements of a given question, but to be consistent with truth as it may present itself to meet the given moment. The result has been that I have grown from truth to truth; I have saved my memory an un-due strain and, what is more, whenever I have been obliged to refer to my writings even of fifty years ago with the latest, I have discovered no inconsistency between the two".

Yet another great difficulty in systematising Gandhi's thought arises from his making no distinction between the theoretically possible and what was practically so. In 1920, he talked

of winning 'swaraj' in one year, provided the nation carried out the programmes he had placed before it. That a nation, with centuries of slavery behind it, would be able to fulfil the programmes was only a theoretical possibility. Practically it was not only not possible but also not even probable.

In his book *Hind Swaraj*, he has talked of machinery and the factories as if these could be altogether eliminated from the life of a nation. He also talks of doctors and drugs as if they could be entirely dispensed with. There are many institutions whose functioning can and should be modified for social health; but Gandhi would talk as if he wanted their entire elimination and held that this was possible.

Gandhi's habit of stating his propositions and plans as if they were practical, presents one more difficulty in interpreting his thought. He always said that the theoretically possible was also the practical. The difference between the possible and the ideal must be clearly brought out to understand Gandhi's thought. Gandhi's thought then must be judged and evaluated on its own merits and not always on Gandhi's arguments. The student must not content himself with Gandhi's reasoning and his style or the words and the expressions he used. Like every great reformer his thought is greater than his words and arguments. Often his conduct is more revealing and eloquent than the arguments he advances for a particular course of action. In studying him, therefore, note must be taken not only of the spoken or written word but also of his life, the way he faced and met critical situations, organised institutions and behaved towards friends and opponents. His public and private life was an open book. Therefore, his writings must be studied along with it. The writings alone may not bring out the full implications of his philosophy of life-individual and social. Further, the student must rely on his own intelligence, knowledge and experience for a proper understanding of Gandhi's ideas, policies and programmes.

1.4 NATIONALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

The popular image of Gandhi depicts him as an ardent nationalist who was engaged in selfless and dedicated service for the liberation of India from British colonial domination, through non-violent techniques of political action. This, indeed, is true. Gandhi was deeply involved in the struggle for political emancipation and social and economic reconstruction of India, to which he devoted his whole attention. However, what is often not understood is that Gandhi did so in a world context. His contributions to Indian political independence should not be viewed as concerning only one or two nations in an isolated manner. Gandhi himself had said: "*My mission is not merely the freedom of India, though today it undoubtedly engrosses practically the whole of my life and the whole of my time. But through the realisation of the freedom of India, I hope to realise and carry on the mission of brotherhood of man. My patriotism is not an exclusive thing. It is all-embracing and I should reject that patriotism which sought to mount upon the distress or exploitation of other nationalities.*"

Gandhi's movement for national independence was, in a way, aimed at the reordering of the world power structure, which was based on the imperial-colonial pattern of international relations. He wanted freedom for India, not to isolate her from the rest of the world, but to promote international cooperation. True international cooperation was possible only when the interacting nations were sovereign and equal before international law. In Gandhi's own words, "*My notion of Purna Swaraj is not isolated independence but healthy and dignified interdependence. My nationalism, fierce though it is, is not exclusive,*

not designed to harm any nation or individual. Legal maxims are not so legal as they are moral. I believe in the eternal truth of 'sic utere tuo ut alienum non laedas' - use thy own property so as not to injure thy neighbour's." By ending colonialism, he hoped to remove one of the root causes of exploitation and domination of weaker countries by stronger ones.

As Erik Erikson in his book, 'Gandhi's Truth' points out, Gandhi and the Indian nationalists maintained that British colonialism had resulted in the exploitation and draining of the Indian sub-continent in four areas of national life, the economic and political, cultural and spiritual. Therefore, Gandhi had declared, "We hold it to be a sin before man and God to submit any longer to a rule that has caused this four-fold disaster to our country."

Gandhi attacked the evil at its very root; he wanted to destroy the institution of colonialism, to begin with in India, and thereby put a stop to the 'four-fold exploitation' with a view to restore India's identity. Gandhi wanted to achieve this in a novel way through a non-violent revolution, through the *Satyagraha* movement. Unlike the Marxist-Leninist line which undermines the individual role in history and maintains that an unjust social and economic system can be attacked by bringing the state under the dictatorship of the proletariat through a revolution, Gandhi held that "the root of the problem does not lie in the authority of the state, but in the character of the individual which has made the existence of that state possible." Therefore, Gandhi set to bring about a radical transformation of the unjust social system not through coercion or through transference of power to a centralised state, but through individual reformation and non-violent social and political action. This he called the *Satyagraha* movement, a movement led by a moral force which is generated by a sincere desire to follow the path of Truth in individual behaviour and social action.

Satyagraha was not merely an instrument for realisation of political, economic and other material ends but also a state of spiritual and moral self-transformation in man. Through such a movement he strived to secure an India of his dreams, an independent India free from colonial domination, and where the individual would have the integrity to contribute to a high moral order which would create and maintain social justice and harmony.

After obtaining political independence, Gandhi wanted India to become an ideal democracy. A democracy established on the principle of non-violence was to be of a unique kind. Gandhi's ideal non-violent democracy was a federation of decentralised, self-sufficient, self-administered, interdependent and cooperative village republics. In such a democracy power was decentralised. In an ideal non-violent democracy of Gandhi's conception there was no need of a state. Gandhi had said, "Political power means capacity to regulate national life through representations. If national life becomes so perfect as to become self-regulated no representation becomes necessary. There is then a state of enlightened anarchy. In such a state everyone is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbour. In the ideal state, therefore, there is no political power, because there is no state." But Gandhi knew the limitations in realising such an ideal. So he added, "But the ideal is never fully realised in life."

Here Gandhi's 'anarchy' is not the one that leads to disorder but that which relates to a condition of statelessness as a result of the existence of an enlightened harmony that dispenses with the necessity of a state to enforce behaviour patterns. The power structure of a non-violent society would be distributed in such a way that each individual or each cooperative unit of individuals would constitute a power unit, and society would equilibrate itself on the basis

of the existence of this power structure. In his ideal stateless democracy or enlightened anarchy, there was no use of force in any form, whereas society acquired equilibrium by individual perfection. Such a non-violent society would consist of groups of settled villages and life would be regulated through cooperation, bread-labour and mutual love. Individuals in a non-violent society were to work for the establishment of a social order which ensured the greatest good of all.

A non-violent India was expected to strive for removal of injustice anywhere and crusade for the cause of suffering humanity in any part of the world. Gandhi's patriotism "was not exclusive; it was calculated not only not to hurt another nation but to benefit all in the true sense of the word." Gandhi had said that "we want freedom for our country, but not at the expense or exploitation of others, not so as to degrade other countries. I do not want the freedom of India if it means the extinction of England or the disappearance of Englishmen. I want freedom of my country, so that other countries may learn something from my free country, so that the resources of my country might be utilised for the benefit of mankind. My idea of nationalism is that my country may become free, that if need be, the whole country may die so that the human race may live. There is no room for race hatred there. Let that be our nationalism." His movements for self-government (*swaraj*) and for the use of home-made goods (*Swadeshi*) might have come into conflict with the interests of other countries, especially those of England. But then Gandhi's movements were directed primarily against the injustices done by England in keeping another nation in subjugation by force, thereby denying it opportunities for free development. He believed that by enabling India to be free he was not only helping India but also Britain in an indirect way, i.e. by removing the possibility for England to be unjust to another nation. Besides, the moral strength, which an independent India could give to other subject nations, was another factor which convinced Gandhi that true nationalism was a contribution to internationalism. Thus, Gandhi wanted national independence before international cooperation': "You want cooperation between nations for the salvation of civilization, I want it too, but cooperation presupposes free nations worthy of cooperation. If I am to help in creating or restoring peace and goodwill and resist disturbances thereof, I must have the ability to do so and I cannot do so unless my country has come to its own. At the present moment, the very movement for freedom in India is India's contribution to peace. For so long as India is a subject nation, not only is she a danger to peace, but also to England which exploits India. Other nations may tolerate today England's imperialist policy and her exploitation of other nations, but they certainly do not appreciate it; and they would gladly help in the prevention of England becoming a greater and greater menace every day. Of course, you will say that free India can become a menace herself. But let us assume that she will behave herself with her doctrine of non-violence, if she achieves her freedom through it and for all her bitter experiences of being a victim of exploitation". Gandhi's prediction, indeed, came true. India's achievement of freedom generated a wave of nationalistic movements in many subjected nations. The Afro-Asian resurgence and realisation by colonial powers of the necessity to end colonial rule and the subsequent gaining of freedom by several countries could be linked with Gandhi's freedom movement.

Thus a colonially oriented world social structure has given way to a more democratically oriented one. The world power structure underwent a transformation in a non-exploitative direction. Yet the world is not devoid of exploitation, the old imperial-colonial pattern of power structure has been replaced by new types of alignments and power blocs. The world society of today retains its feudal characteristics in spite of the fact that colonies have received their freedom. The economic domination of a few countries still indirectly influences the less affluent

developing countries. The time lag in economic development and technical progress is fully utilised to compensate for the loss of colonial power or realise neo-imperialistic ambitions. Though every national independent state is sovereign and such sovereignty is respected and all states are treated as equals before international law, in actuality the world scene today is a big power gamble in spite of the existence of the United Nations. "It (the United Nations) has already revealed its impotence to settle any serious conflict among the great powers. The great and small powers ignore it in connection with most important problems - the United Nations has degenerated into a mere screen for the power politics of the artificial and incidental majority of world state. Having neither the moral authority nor adequate physical power, it cannot perform the miracle of eliminating war and erecting a temple of eternal peace." (Pitirim Sorokin).

It is in this connection that the Gandhian view of a world social order merits consideration. Gandhi did not believe in the efficacy of a United Nations, because the United Nations, for all its virtues, is no help to creating, maintaining or enlarging the number of states. A modern state, with its military strength, always possesses potentialities for suppression of freedom internally and creation of wars or international conflicts externally. The establishment of a world state by merely extending the characteristics of a modern state, with or without surrendering national sovereignties, would suffer from the deficiencies of the latter, when viewed from a Gandhian angle. A world sovereign state above all national states may, after all, not be able to establish or maintain a peaceful world society, in spite of the military strength or power it may possess. Gandhi's opposition to the U.N. is to be understood in this perspective. He was opposed to the U.N. in so far as it possessed the attributes of a nation-state in regard to military potential and in regard to its opposition to decentralisation of power and freedom of human development. However, it may not be construed from this that Gandhi was totally opposed to any type of international organisation. If the U.N. functioned on the basis of the moral principles, Gandhi would not have difficulty in accepting the same.

The following quotations of Gandhi are of significance in the context of his understanding of Nationalism and Internationalism:

- "I would like to see India free and strong so that she may offer herself as a willing and pure sacrifice for the betterment of the world. The individual being pure sacrifices himself for the family, the latter for the village, the village for the district, the district for the province, the province for the nation, the nation for all."
- "My religion has no geographical limits. There is no limit to extending our services to our neighbours across state-made frontiers."
- "I believe that true democracy can only be an outcome of non-violence. The structure of a world federation can be raised only on a foundation of non-violence and violence will have to be totally given up in world affairs".
- "I do want to think in terms of the whole world. My patriotism includes the good of mankind in general. Therefore, my service to India includes the service of humanity. Isolated independence is not the goal of the world state. It is voluntary independence. I want to make no grand claim for our country. But I see nothing grand or impossible about our expressing our readiness for universal interdependence rather than independence. I desire the ability to be totally independent without asserting the independence". Such a federation of independent sovereign states will not circumscribe the national state but would permit it full freedom, will remove the causes of friction and conflict that may arise from time to time and promote harmony and social justice.

In the words of Jawaharlal Nehru, “Gandhi was an intense nationalist; he was also at the same time a man who felt he had a message not only for India but for the world, and he ardently desired world peace. His nationalism, therefore, had a certain world outlook and was entirely free from any aggressive intent. Desiring the independence of India he had come to believe that a world federation of interdependent states was the only right goal, however distant that might be”.

The Gandhian model of power distribution in a national or world context is enunciated in the following statement which Gandhi made in elucidating his concept of decentralised state power: “There will be ever-widening, never-ascending circles - at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units. Therefore, the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle, but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from the centre.”

The Gandhian view of a world social order is essentially one of a moral order. *Satyagraha* (soul force) symbolised for Gandhi the attainment of moral ends through moral means. *Satyagraha* as a philosophy of social action was not merely an instrument to attain political, economic and other material ends, but for the spiritual and moral transformation of man. It was a soul-force generated out of a motivation to follow the path of truth and non-violence and was based on self-help, self-sacrifice and faith in God.

Gandhi’s theory of non-violence is a positive philosophy and not a passive ethics. It is based on the assumption that men who wish to practise it must have certain moral and spiritual pre-requisites, a positive love for all beings and the pursuit of truth. The tradition of non-violence perhaps existed in all cultures but Gandhi converted it into a practical ethics which could be applied in day to day life. This offered tremendous possibilities for contemporary India as well as the whole world. Here was an alternative to physical force which had so far been acknowledged as the *sine qua non* of the social order in the soul force (*Satyagraha*) or the spiritual and moral power.

Acharya Kripalani supplements this point in the following passage: “The moral principles which guide the conduct of individuals in the social field must also guide their conduct in the political and the international fields. If we are to be saved from the cruel contradictions of a moral man living in an immoral (or at best amoral) political and international world order, we must find a unifying principle in life which will save us from this moral dichotomy. This unifying principle, Gandhi holds, is supplied as in social life so in political and international life and conduct by morality.”

Assessing the contributions of Gandhi, Albert Schweitzer wrote, “Gandhi continues what Buddha began. In the Buddha, the spirit of love set itself the task of creating different spiritual conditions in the world; in Gandhi, it undertakes to transform all worldly conditions. Would the world tend to order itself in the directions indicated by Buddha and Gandhi or dismiss them as other worldly, Utopian, and set to destroy itself by the creation of artificial power blocs, perpetuation of exploitation and promotion of international conflicts? Sanity would undoubtedly advocate for choosing the twin path of spirituality and morality in international relations and establishment of a self-sustaining harmonious world social order. But are we sane?”

1.5 SUMMARY

Gandhi’s life, lived in conformity with certain basic principles was, integrated and coordinated. It made a harmonious whole. His teachings and schemes of reform also

reflect the same integration and co-ordination, with a basic unity of purpose and aim. This unity is not always apparent to a superficial student of his life and his speeches and writings. The elements of the unity are there, but they have not been reduced to a system. Gandhi himself never attempted a systematisation of his thought. Like many of the old reformers and prophets, he was content to act in a given situation and solve life's problems, as they arose or presented themselves to him, in the light of his basic moral principles. Like them, he left the task of logical ordering and systematisation to others. The solutions he offered to the problems that confronted him, the country and even the world, were practical and often coloured by the times and circumstances in which they arose. It is no wonder that Gandhi created no new system of philosophy, creed or religion.

Gandhi's non-violence or *Satyagraha* was intended not only to solve national problems of injustice but also international conflicts and wars. He considered war as a morally degrading and brutalising phenomenon and hence, emphasised disarmament and creation of a non-violent civilisation. Pacifism, according to him, must be total and not partial, and must find its expression in a broad movement that seeks not merely abolition of war but of the entire non-pacifist civilisation. Gandhi maintained that the dread of atom bomb or nuclear weapons would not abolish wars or usher in a peaceful social order. A peaceful world social order was possible only through the positive philosophy of non-violence.

Gandhian principles of the moral order are not based on self-interest or individual enjoyment, but on the social objective of *sarvodaya*, or happiness for all. The logic of altruism cannot be deduced from egotism, the love of society from the love of oneself, the whole from the part. Gandhi's altruism was derived from the concept of mankind, even all creation. Gandhi's was a 'creative altruism', which was characterised by pure, continuous and unbounded love for all.

1.6 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Although Gandhi was not an intellectual or a scholar in the academic sense, his thinking had the quality of a creative genius. Substantiate.
2. Explain, with examples, how Gandhi synthesised the material and the spiritual.
3. What are the difficulties encountered by the student in systematising Gandhian thought?
4. What are Gandhi's views on nationalism and internationalism? How does he reconcile the two?

SUGGESTED READINGS

1. J.B. Kripalani., Gandhi – His Life and Thought, Publications Division, Government of India, New Delhi, 1971.
2. M.P. Mathai, M.S. John and Siby Joseph, ed., Meditations on Gandhi, Concept Publishing House, New Delhi, 2002.
3. Louis Fischer., The Life of Mahatma Gandhi, Harper Collins, London, 1982.
4. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan., Mahatma Gandhi – Essays and Reflections, Jaico Publishing House, Mumbai, 2005.
5. M.K. Gandhi., The Story of My Experiments with Truth, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 2007.