

## **Gandhi's Perception of an Ideal Society**

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### **Introduction**

Professions are highly regarded by the society because they have been granted sanction to perform essential services that ensure survival and enhancement of the quality of life. They emerge from the society and take time to develop. They do not evolve in vacuum. For their survival as well as growth, they have to be in continuous interaction with the surroundings. A series of events affect their development and continue to shape them. The profession of Social Work is no exception to this rule. Being practiced all over the world, its process of indigenization is going on since its inception. It is due to this adaptation as per the socio-economic norms and culture of a particular society, that the Professional Social Work is surviving and flourishing. This is equally true in the Indian context.

India has one of the longest and richest histories of social welfare. There are a large number of schools of thought and approaches in the field of Social Welfare. Some of these are secular in nature while the remaining is based on particular religious or political ideologies. Among these, Gandhian approach to Social Work is having one of the largest networks consisting of Gandhain institutions and workers. A professional Social Worker in India cannot afford to ignore it since it

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is hundred percent indigenous, and is fully based on Indian philosophy, culture and traditions. There is tremendous scope of collaboration between these two approaches of Social Work in the country in terms of philosophy, experience in various fields, methods and techniques. The process has already begun and the enlightened and optimistic thinkers at the two sides are even sensing a remote possibility of fusion between these two approaches of Social Work in India. An understanding of Gandhian Social Work may enable a professional Social Worker to develop a deeper insight in the ethos and psyche of the Indian society resulting in better output of the services.

### **Gandhi: An Emerging Social Worker and Activist**

Although Gandhi asserted emphatically that there is nothing like Gandhism and similarly he would have discarded the term “Gandhian Social Work” as well, but his way and style of Social Work is now accepted as Gandhian Social Work. It can not be understood properly unless we know the Social Work facet of Gandhi’s personality. Known as the *Mahatma - The Great Soul, Father of The Nation* or simply *Bapu*, he was a charismatic leader, having led the freedom movement of India, a Journalist, Advocate, Naturopath, a Socio-Political philosopher, a Reformer, Social Engineer and Therapist – all rolled into one. He invented some methods of social work, which have survived the test of time and have been used by the international dignitaries like Dr. Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela. Acknowledging Gandhi’s debt, the Noble Laureate Dr. King wrote “the intellectual and moral satisfaction that I did not receive from the Utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill revolutionary methods of Marks and Lenin, the social contracts theory of Hobbes, ‘the Back to Nature’

optimism of Rousseau and the 'Superman' philosophy of Nietzsche, I found in non-violence resistance philosophy of Gandhi. I came to feel that this was the only morally and practically sound method open to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom. In this small treatise, it is not possible to shed light on different facets of his personality. We will keep ourselves limited only to Gandhi as a Social Thinker and Social Worker.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi born on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1869 in a middle class family of Porbander, Gujrat, got his schooling in India, went to England to study law and came back as a Barrister-at-Law in 1891. The Social Worker in him started emerging when he proceeded to South Africa in the year 1893 where he organized the Indian community and launched his crusade against apartheid. It was here that he became a journalist by launching the newspaper *Indian Opinion*. He started reading *Shrimadbhagavadgita* and Ruskin's book *Unto This Last* which laid the foundation of his life as a socio-political leader. In Ruskin's book, he found three fundamental principles:

- 1) The good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
- 2) A lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's in as much as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.
- 3) A life of labour i.e. the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is a life worth living.

These three principles are reflected in Gandhi's methodology and constructive program which he presented later before the Indian people. He also invented the word 'Satyagraha' in South Africa in 1906 and he started using this non-violent weapon from the very next year. He came back to India as a victorious leader in the year 1915, which is regarded as the

beginning of Gandhian era in India and which lasted for a full period of 33 years until his assassination in the year 1948 on January 30<sup>th</sup>. There was hardly any field in the country, like politics, social welfare, rural development, journalism, even literature and films which remained unaffected from Gandhian influence. He struggled, no doubt, against the British regime but his ultimate goal was not merely the political independence of India. His ultimate goal was “Purna Swaraj” – the “total independence” which consisted of political, social and economic independence. His idea was to build a new society and he was very clear in his thinking of the means and methods of its realization. In the following pages, we are presenting Gandhi’s perception of ‘Man’ and his views on an ideal society.

### **Gandhi’s Perception of “Man”**

“Man” is a complex, multi dimensional organism consisting of different elements of matter, life, consciousness, and intelligence. The search on man is being conducted since centuries and is still on, from the angles of natural and social sciences. It would be interesting to know Gandhi’s thought on man, and also on his relationship to other human beings, i.e. the human society. The reader will find that they are quite similar to a professional social worker’s perception of the man.

#### **Brutal Ancestry of Man**

Gandhi doesn’t discard man’s animal ancestry. In his own words, “I am prepared to believe that we have become men by a slow process of evolution from the brute.” At the same time he adds that it is more natural for man to be good than to be evil, though apparently descent might seem easier than ascent.

### **Faith in Human Nature**

He further said that man will ever remain imperfect and it will always be his endeavor to be perfect. There is definitely the theoretical possibility of his further development towards the goal of perfection. For this, he is bestowed with infinite divine powers within him. Man is not merely a bundle of bones and flesh, but essentially, he is the "Soul" – a part of the divine power or almighty God himself. He often used to say that man is not God but neither he is different from the light of God.

### **Man and his Environment**

Gandhi recognizes the impact of environment on human personality and behaviour. According to him, despite the greatest effort for being detached no man can altogether undo the effects of his environment..... but man is not merely a creature of circumstances. It is his privilege to overcome adverse circumstances.

### **Change in Human Behaviour and Personality**

There may be several ways to bring about change in human behaviour and personality. One of them, according to Gandhi, is self-restraint. It is a positive factor in man's life. The brute by nature knows no self-restraint. Man is man because he is capable of, and only is so for as he exercises self-restraint, which implies control of the basic tendencies such as hatred and selfishness and improving the quality of life with goodwill and love.

### **Man's Ultimate Goal**

According to Gandhi, although man was born with brute strength, but during this birth he was to realise the God who dwells within him and in everybody. That indeed is the privilege of man and it distinguishes him

from the brute creation. It should therefore be ultimate goal of every human being to know the God dwelling in him, which is synonymous to self realisation. His every thought and action should be directed towards the ultimate goal of self-realisation.

### **Dignity and Equality of Human Beings**

The fact that every man has the divine element within him is the sufficient proof of dignity of man. Hence the question of discrimination among human beings on the basis of caste, creed, colour etc. does not arise – all men are equally related to God and therefore are equal among themselves.

### **An Ideal Society: The Gandhian Model**

McIver has defined human society as a web of social relationships. From Plato to Che Guevara, philosophers, social scientists and activists have tried to give this web an ideal shape—the blue print of an ideal society. Among innumerable models of the ideal society, Gandhi's model stands apart at least in one respect- his model rests on the twin pillars of truth and non violence. No one else in the history has laid so much emphasis on these two values in the social context. He was aware that his critics would call it Utopia, but this label can be attached more or less to any other model available. In the absence of a clear-cut plan of an ideal society, in the literature of professional social work, the professional social worker may find Gandhi's model interesting.

Gandhi termed his ideal society as 'Ramrajya' i.e. the kingdom of god on earth. In his weekly '*Harijan*', he wrote: "There will be neither paupers, nor beggars, neither high, nor low, neither millionaire employers nor half starved employees, neither intoxicating drinks nor

drugs. There will be the same respect for women as for men, and the chastity and purity of men will be jealously guarded.... where there will be no untouchability and where there will be equal respect for all faiths. They will be all proudly, joyously and voluntarily bread-labourers.”

### **The City: Not an Ideal Community for Human Dwelling**

Although Gandhi's ideal society does have both cities as well as the villages, yet he was against the exploitation of villages by the town dwellers. He regarded cities as an evil, a snare, a useless encumbrance where people will not be happy to live — unfortunate for the mankind and the world. He felt that the English educated men and women from the cities have criminally neglected the villages of India, which are backbone of the country. In fact the blood of the villages is the cement with which the edifice of the cities is built.... the blood that is today inflating the arteries of the cities should run once again in the blood vessels of the villages. He hoped to see a reasonable wholesome balance, totally free of exploitation between industry and agriculture, city and the village.

### **The Rural Society: An Ideal Society**

It can therefore be inferred that Gandhi's ideal society is predominately a rural society. Gandhi believed and repeated innumerable times that “India is to be found not in few cities but in its villages. The real India lies in the villages. If Indian civilization is to make its full contribution to the building up of a stable world order, it is this vast mass of humanity that has to be made to live again. I would say that if the villages perish, India will perish too. India will be no more India. Her own mission in the world will get lost.”

Gandhi had full faith in the wisdom of the rural people. He opined that the age old Indian culture and wisdom

still continues. “The moment you talk to them (Indian Peasants) and they begin to speak, you will find wisdom drops from their lips. Behind the crude exterior, you will find a deep reservoir of spirituality. I call this culture — you will not find such a thing in the West. In case of the Indian villager, an age old culture is hidden under an encrustation of crudeness. Take away the encrustation, remove his chronic poverty and illiteracy and you will find the finest specimen of what a cultured, cultivated free citizen should be.”

### **Gram Swaraj: Self Rule by the Village**

Gandhi’s rural society is based on the concept of ‘Gram Swaraj’, i.e., self-rule of the village, by the village and for the village. In his words, “My idea of village Swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its own vital wants and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is necessary. Thus every village’s first concern will be to grow its own food crops, and cotton for its cloth According to Gandhi a village is conceived as the strongest social unit that can give a good account of it, if it is well organized on a basis of self-sufficiency.

### **Village Structure**

It will have cottages with sufficient light and ventilation, built of a material obtainable within a radius of five miles of it. The cottages will have courtyards enabling the householders to plant vegetables for domestic use and to house their cattle. The village lanes and streets will be free of all avoidable dust. It will have wells according to its needs and accessible to all. It will have houses of worship for all, also a common meeting place, a theatre, a village common for grazing its cattle, a co-operative dairy, primary and secondary schools in which industrial education will be the central factor, and it

will have village Panchayats for setting disputes. It will produce its own grains, vegetables and fruit, and its own Khadi.”

### **Panchayat**

Non-violence with its techniques of Satyagraha and non-co-operation will be the sanction of the village community. There will be a compulsory service of village guards who will be selected by rotation from the register maintained by the village. The government of the village will be conducted by a Panchayat of five persons annually elected by the adult villagers, male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications. These will have all the authority and jurisdiction required. Since there will be no system of punishments in the accepted sense, this Panchayat will be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its year of office.

### **Industry**

Machinery has its place, it has come to stay. But, says Gandhi, it should not be allowed to displace human labour every improvement in Cottage Machinery is welcome..... Gandhi is not against machines, but against their indiscriminate multiplication which snatches away employment and thereby bread from poor people. The ideal society will be free from all destructive machinery and shall focus on such simple tools and instruments that save individual labour and lighten the burden of the millions of artisans. Gandhi pleads for that machinery which is helpful in removing India's idleness and pauperism.

### **Defence**

Gandhi believes that “Any village can become such a republic today without much interference. I have not

examined here the question of the relations with the neighbouring village and the Centre if any. The purpose is to present an outline of village government. Here is perfect democracy based upon individual freedom. The individual is the architect of his own Government. The law of non-violence rules him and his Government. He and his village are able to defy the might of the world. For the law governing every villager is that he will suffer death in the defence of his and his village's honour.

The villagers should develop such a high degree of skill that articles prepared by them should command a ready market outside. When our villages are fully developed there will be no dearth of men with a high degree of skill and artistic talent. There will be village poets, village artists, village architects, linguists and research workers. In short, there will be nothing in life worth having which will not be there in the villages. Today the villages are dung heaps. Tomorrow they will be like tiny gardens of Eden where highly intelligent folk whom no one can deceive or exploit would dwell.

### **A Horizontal Society**

In this structure composed of innumerable villages there will be ever widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till 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 give strength to all within and derive its own from the centre. I may be

taunted with the retort that this is all Utopian and therefore not worth a single thought. If Euclid's point, though incapable of being drawn by human agency, has an imperishable value, my picture has its own for mankind to live. Let India live for this true picture, though never realizable in its completeness. We must have a proper picture of what we want before we can have something approaching it. If there ever is to be a republic of every village in India, then I claim variety for my picture in which the last is equal to the first, or in other words, none is to be the first and none the last.

### **Value Base of Gandhi's Ideal Society and Social Work Related Intervention**

Dictionary of Sociology by Fairchild defines 'Values' as the socially desirable goals. Every social endeavour, movement or programme strives towards the achievement of the values set jointly by the people involved in such activities. Obviously Professional Social Work (PSW) as well as Gandhian Social Work (GSW) have their own sets of values. Prof. Herbert Bisno, the Philosopher of PSW, mentions *dignity of man, equality and welfare of the weaker* as prime values, while the "International Code of ethics for Professional Social Workers" adopted by the International Federation of Social Workers general meeting held in 1976 at Puerto Rico has added *self fulfillment and service above the self* to this list. In the year 1996, SWEF (Social Work Educators Forum) in its conference on ethics for the Professional Social Workers held at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai extended this list by adding *overall well-being of people*, in the spirit of Sarvodaya, *social, economic, political and legal justice, people centred development* in the spirit of Swarajya, *democracy and Ahimsa*. This was a sincere step on the part of the PSW's

in India in the direction of bringing the two schools closer to each other, which is yet to be endorsed by the global fraternity of the PSW's.

Coming to the Gandhian framework of values, we find that these are 14 in number. Social philosopher Joseph H. Bunsel has classified values into two broad categories — internal or personal and external or social. But in the Gandhian set of values, there is no such clear cut demarcation. Out of these, 11 values have been beautifully condensed into a Sanskrit / Hindi verse by Acharya Vinoba Bhave. These values are as follows:

#### **Gandhi's 11 Vows**

<b>Ahimsa</b>	Non-violence
<b>Satya</b>	Truth
<b>Asteya</b>	Non-stealing
<b>Brahmacharya</b>	Self-discipline
<b>Aparigraha</b>	Non-possession
<b>Sharirshrama</b>	Bread-labour
<b>Aswada</b>	Control of the Palate
<b>Sarvatra Bhayavarjana</b>	Fearlessness
<b>Sarva Dharma Samantva</b>	Equality of All Religions
<b>Swadeshi</b>	Use Locally Made Goods
<b>Sparshbhavana</b>	Remove Untouchability

The other three are peace, equality and democracy.

#### **Non-violence (Ahimsa)**

Not to hurt any living thing is no doubt a part of *Ahimsa*. But it is its least expression. The principle of *Ahimsa* is much broader in its thought and expression. It is violated by every evil thought, by undue haste, by lying, by hatred, by wishing ill to anybody. It is also violated by our holding on to what the world needs.

Without *Ahimsa* it is not possible to seek and find Truth. *Ahimsa* and *truth* are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are like the two sides of a coin, or rather of a smooth unstamped metallic disc. Nevertheless *Ahimsa* is the means; *Truth* is the end. Means to be means must always be within our reach, and so *Ahimsa* is our supreme duty. If we take care of the means, we are bound to reach the end sooner or later. When once we have grasped this point, final victory is beyond question.

### **Truth (Satya)**

All our activities should be centred in Truth. Truth should be the very breath of our life. All other rules of correct living will come without effort, when this stage in the pilgrim's progress is reached and obedience to them will be instinctive. But without Truth, it is impossible to observe any principles or rules in life.

Truth is the right designation of God. Hence there is nothing wrong in every man following it. Indeed it is his duty to do so. Then if there is a mistake on the part of any one so following Truth, it will be automatically set right. The quest of Truth involves *tapas* -self-suffering, sometimes even unto death. There can be no place in it for even a trace of self-interest. In such selfless search for Truth nobody can lose his bearings for long. Directly he takes to the wrong path he stumbles, and is thus redirected to the right path.

### **Non-stealing (Asteya)**

It is impossible that a person should steal, and simultaneously claim to know Truth or cherish Love. Yet every one of us is consciously or unconsciously more or less guilty of theft. It is theft to take something in the belief that it is nobody's property. Things found on the roadside belong to the ruler or the local authority.

It is theft to take something from another even with his permission if we have no real need of it. We should not receive any single thing that we do not need. Theft of this description generally has food for its object. It is theft for me to take any fruit that I do not need, or to take it in a larger quantity than is necessary. We are not always aware of our real needs, and most of us improperly multiply our wants, and thus unconsciously make thieves of ourselves. If we devote some thought to the subject, we shall find that we can get rid of quite a number of our wants. One who follows the observance of non-stealing will bring about a progressive reduction of his wants. Much of the distressing poverty in this world have arisen out of breaches of the principle of non-stealing.

### **Chastity Brahamacharya (Self-discipline)**

#### **Brahmacharya (Self Discipline)**

Brahmacharya means control of all the organs of sense. He who attempts to control only one organ and allows all the others free play is bound to find his effort futile. To hear suggestive stories with the ears, to see suggestive sights with the eyes, to taste stimulating food with the tongue, to touch exciting things with the hands and at the same time to expect to control the only remaining organ, is like putting one's hands in the fire and expecting to escape being hurt

They are all interdependent. Mind on the lower plane is included in the senses. Without control over the mind mere physical control, even if it can be sustained for a time, is of little or of no use.

#### **Non-possession (Aparigraha)**

Non-possession means that we should not hoard anything that we do not need today. The less you

possess, the less you want, the better you are. And better for what? Not for your enjoyment of this life but for enjoyment of personal service to your fellow beings; service to which you dedicate yourself, body, soul and mind.

Possession implies provision for the future. A seeker after Truth, a follower of the law of Love cannot hold anything against tomorrow. God never stores for the tomorrow; He never creates more than what is strictly needed for the moment. If therefore we repose faith in His providence, we should rest assured that He will give us every day our daily bread, meaning everything that we require. Saints and devotees, who have lived in such faith, have always derived a justification for it from their experience. Our ignorance or negligence of the Divine Law, which gives to man from day to day his daily bread and no more, has given rise to inequalities with all the miseries attendant upon them. The rich have a superfluous store of things which they do not need, and which are therefore neglected and wasted; while millions are starved to death for want of sustenance. If each retained possession only of what he needed, no one would be in want, and all would live in contentment. As it is, the rich are discontented no less than the poor. The poor man would become a millionaire, and the millionaire a multimillionaire. The rich should take the initiative in dispossession with a view to a universal diffusion of the spirit of contentment. If only they keep their own property within moderate limits, the starving will be easily fed, and will learn the lesson of contentment along with the rich.

When you dispossess yourself of everything you have, you really possess all the treasures of the world. In other words, you really get all that is in reality necessary for you, everything.

**Bread Labour (Shareer Shrama)**

Earn thy bread by the sweat of the brow — says Bible. Bread labour means that everyone is expected to perform sufficient body-labour in order to entitle him to his living. It is not, therefore, necessary to earn one's living by bread labour, taking living' in its broader sense. But everyone must perform some useful body-labour. The economics of Bread labour are the living way of life. It means that every man has to labour with his body for his food and clothing. If I can convince the people of the value and necessity of bread-labour, there never will be any want of bread and cloth. The idea is that every healthy individual must labour enough for his food and his intellectual faculties must be exercised not in order to obtain a living or amass a fortune, but only in the service of mankind. If this principle is observed everywhere, all men would be equal, none would starve and the world would be saved from a sin.

In my view, the same principle has been set forth in the third chapter of the Gita, where we are told, that he who eats without offering sacrifice, eats stolen food. Sacrifice here can only be Bread labour.

**Palate Control (Aswad)**

According to Gandhi, a man who wants to control his animal passions easily does so if he controls his palate, but this is one of the most difficult vows/values to follow.

Unless we are satisfied with foods that are necessary for the proper maintenance of our physical health, and unless we are prepared to rid ourselves of stimulating heating and exciting condiments that we mixed with food, we will certainly not be able to control the over-abundant, unnecessary, and exciting stimulation that we may have. If we do not do that, the result naturally is that we abuse ourselves and become less than animals

and brutes. The diet should be healthy and well-balanced. The body is never meant to be treated as a refuse-bin. Food is meant to sustain the body.

**Sarvatra Bhayavarjana (Fearlessness)**

Fearlessness means freedom from all external fear that is absence of all kinds of fear — fear of death, fear of bodily injury, fear of hunger, fear of insults, fear of public disapprobation, fear of ghosts and evil spirits, fear of anyone's anger. Freedom from all these and other such fears constitutes fearlessness.

Fearlessness does not mean arrogance and aggressiveness. That in itself is a sign of fear. Fearlessness presupposes calmness and peace of mind. For that it is necessary to have a living faith in God. Fearlessness is the pre-conditional quality for the growth of non-violence and other noble qualities like truthfulness and love.

Gandhi shows the way to become fearless. According to him, all the fears revolve round the body as the centre and would therefore disappear as soon as one gets rid of the attachment of the body. To develop non-attachment one and all must conquer one's own passions and internal foes. It requires a balanced state of mind or mental equipoise by means of content of passions.

**Respect for All Religions (Sarvadharm Sambhav)**

Religions have been interwoven. One sees a special quality in every one of them. But no one religion is higher than another. All are complimentary to one another. Since this is my belief, the speciality of any one religion cannot run counter to another, cannot be at variance with universally accepted principles. For I believe in the fundamental truth of all great religions of

the world. I believe that they are all God-given, and I believe that they were necessary for the people to whom these religions were revealed. And I believe that, if only we could all of us read the scriptures of the different faiths from the standpoint of the followers of those faiths we should find that they were at bottom all one and were all helpful to one another.

Religions are different roads converging to the same point. What does it matter that we take different roads, so long as we reach the same goal? In reality, there are as many religions as there are individuals.

Even as a tree has a single trunk, but many branches and leaves, so there is one true and perfect Religion, but it become many, as it passes through the human medium. The one Religion is beyond all speech. Imperfect men put it into such language as they can command, and their words as interpretation, is to be held to be the right one. Everybody is right from his own standpoint, but it is not impossible that everybody is wrong. Hence the necessity of tolerance, which does not mean indifference to one's own faith, but a more intelligent and purer love for it. Tolerance gives us spiritual insight, which is as far from fanaticism as the North Pole from the south. True knowledge of religion breaks down the barriers between faith and faith.

### **Swadeshi (Belonging to One's Own Country)**

Swadeshi is that spirit in us which requires us to serve our immediate neighbours before others, and to use things produced in our neighbourhood in preference to those more remote. So doing, we cannot serve humanity to the best of our capacity; we cannot serve humanity by neglecting our neighbours.

It is sinful to buy and use articles made by sweated labour. It is sinful to eat American wheat and let my

neighbour, the grain dealer starve for want of custom. Similarly, it is sinful for to wear the latest finery of Regent Street when I know that if I had but worn the things woven by the neighbouring spinners and weavers, that would have clothed me, and fed and clothed them.

My definition of Swadeshi is well known . I must not serve my distant neighbour at the expense of the nearest. It is never vindictive or punitive. It is in no sense narrow, for I buy from every part of the world what is needed for my growth. I refuse to buy from anybody anything, however nice or beautiful, if it interferes with my growth or injures those whom Nature has made my first care.

Swadeshi is that spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote and I should use only things that are produced by my immediate neighbours and serve those industries by making them efficient and complete where they might be found wanting. It is suggested that such Swadeshi, if reduced to practice, will lead to the millennium.

#### **Anti-untouchability (Sparsh Bhawana)**

Untouchability means pollution by the touch of certain persons in reason of their birth in a particular state or family. It is an excrescence. In the guise of religion, it is always in the way, and erupts religion.

Removal of untouchability means breaking down of barriers between man and man, and between the various orders of being. We find such barriers erected everywhere in the whole world and thus merges into Ahimsa. Removal of untouchability spells the breaking down of barriers between man and man and between the various orders of Being.

Gandhi considered untouchability to be a heinous crime against humanity. It is not a sign of self-restraint, but an arrogant assumption of superiority.

## **Peace, Equality, Human Dignity and Democracy**

### **Peace (Shanti)**

Gandhi advocated peace, both at the global as well as at the local levels. At the global level, he expected to play India a role of maintaining peace with the rest of the world — neither exploiting nor being exploited by others, having smallest army imaginable. He also believed that India has to play a major role in promoting world peace.

At the local level, he suggested to deal with stressful social situations like riots etc. Through non-violence and presented a detailed plan of voluntary organization called “Peace Brigade (Shanti Sena)” to work at every village and town in the country.

### **Equality (Samanta)**

According to Gandhi, the forms of human beings are many, but the spirit is one. How can there be room for distinctions of high and low where there is this all-embracing fundamental unity underlined the outward diversity. They are not all of the same age, height, skin and intellect, but these inequalities are temporary and superficial, the soul that is hidden beneath this earthly crust is one and the same for all men and women belonging to all clients.... There is a real and substantial unity in all the variety. The word “inequality” has a bad odour about it and it has led to arrogance and inhumanities.

Gandhi believes in widening the circle of our love till it embraces the whole village, the village in its turn must take into its fold the district, the district the province, and so on till the scope of our love becomes co-terminus with the world.

### **Human Dignity and the Value of Non-condemnation**

Acharya Vinoba Bhave has added one more value to the list which he has called non-condemnation, having its roots in the value of human dignity. According to him, instead of looking for drawbacks and loopholes in others and then wasting time and energy in condemning them, we should have constructive outlook and should go for whatever virtues they have which is in the interest of the individual as well as the society at large.

### **Democracy (Prajatantra)**

Democracy must in essence mean the art and science of mobilizing the entire physical, economic and spiritual resources of all the sections of the people in the service of the common good of all.

“The very essence of democracy is that every person represents all the varied interests which compose the nation. It is true that it does not exclude and should not exclude special representation of special interest, but such representation is not its test. In this context Acharya Vinoba Bhave’s thinking seems to go one step ahead. According to him the present day democracy is eclipsed by party – politics which has become power-oriented and not people-oriented. Hence the democracy should be steered not by “Rajneeti” but by “Lokneeti” which is the policy of the people by the people and for the people, in which decisions are taken not by majority but are taken unanimously.

## Conclusion

In this Unit, we have mentioned the two great schools of social thought and action in India, namely Professional Social Work and Gandhian Social Work, the need of exchange between the two, Gandhiji's perception of man and the ideal human society and their mutual relationship and the 14 fundamental values like truth and non-violence which should become the base, not only of human life and society but also that of social work. Both Professional Social Workers and the Gandhian Social Workers can get benefitted by studying each other's theory, methods and techniques.

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## Gandhi's Charter of Social Reconstruction

*\*S.R. Billore*

### Introduction

After discussing the ideal society as envisaged by Gandhi and the fundamental values on which the ideal society is to be based, it would be appropriate to go through the 19-point Constructive Program presented by Gandhi to be implemented for the realization of the ideal society. In the foreword of his book "Constructive Program: Its Meaning and Place", Gandhi called it the program for construction of *Purna Swaraj* or Complete Independence by truthful and non-violent means... it is designed to build-up the nation from the very bottom, upwards. Complete independence through truth and non-violence means the independence of every unit, be it the humblest of the nation without distinction of race, colour of creed. This independence is never exclusive. It is therefore wholly compatible with inter-dependence within or without.

Gandhi was aware of the criticism of this program. He wrote, "when the critics laugh at the proposition, what they mean is there crores of people will never cooperate in the effort to fulfill the program. No doubt, there is considerable truth in the scoff. My answer is, it is still worth the attempt. Given an indomitable will on the part of the band of earnest workers, the program is as

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workable as any other and more so than most. Anyway, I have no substitute for it, if it is to be based on non violence.

## **Gandhian Constructive Programme**

### **Communal Unity**

All of us agree about the necessity of communal unity. But all of us do not know that unity does not mean political unity which may be imposed. The first thing essential for achieving unity is for every Indian, whatever his religion may be, to represent in his own person Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Zoroastrian, Jew, etc. Shortly, every Hindu and non-Hindu has to feel his identity with every one of the millions of the inhabitants of Hindustan. In order to realize this, every Indian will cultivate personal friendship with persons representing faiths other than his own. He should have the same regard for the other faiths as he has for his own.

### **Removal of Untouchability**

It is unnecessary to dilate upon the necessity of the removal of this blot and curse upon Hinduism. It is something indispensable, so far as Hindus are concerned, for the very existence of Hinduism. If Hindus take up the cause for its own sake, they will influence the so-called *Sanatanis* far more extensively than they have hitherto done. They should approach them not in a militant spirit but, as befits their non-violence, in a spirit of friendliness. And so far as the Harijans are concerned, every Hindu should make common cause with them and befriend them in their awful isolation—such isolation as perhaps the world has never seen in the monstrous immensity one witnesses in India. I know from experience how difficult the task is. But its part of

the task of building the edifice of Swaraj as the road to Swaraj is steep and narrow.

### **Prohibition**

Gandhi had once said that if he is made Dictator of India only for one hour, he would shut down all liquor shops without giving any compensation. He further said that if we are to reach our goal through non-violent effort, we may not leave to the government the fate of lakhs of men and women who are labouring under the curse of intoxicants and narcotics.

Medical men can make a most effective contribution towards the removal of this evil. They have to discover ways of weaning the drunkard and the opium-addict from the curse.

Women and students have a special opportunity in advancing this reform. By many acts of loving service they can acquire on addicts a hold which will compel them to listen to the appeal to give up the evil habit.

Lasting and healthy deliverance comes from within, i.e. from self-purification. Constructive workers make legal prohibition easy and successful even if they do not pave the way for it.

### **Khadi**

It connotes the beginning of economic freedom and equality of all in the country. "The proof of the pudding is in the eating." Let everyone try, and he or she will find out for himself or herself the truth of what I am saying. Khadi must be taken with all its implications. It means a wholesale Swadeshi mentality, a determination to find all the necessities of life in India and that too through the labour and intellect of the villagers. That means a reversal of the existing process.

That is to say that, instead of half a dozen cities of India living on the exploitation and the ruin of the villages of India, the latter will be largely self-contained, and will voluntarily serve the cities of India and even the outside world in so far as it benefits both the parties. This needs a revolutionary change in the mentality and taste of many.

Khadi to me is the symbol of unity of Indian humanity, of its economic freedom and equality and, therefore, ultimately, in the poetic expression of Jawaharlal Nehru, "the livery of India's freedom".

Moreover, Khadi mentality means decentralization of the production and distribution of the necessities of life. Therefore, the formula so far evolved is, every village to produce all its necessities and a certain percentage in addition for the requirements of the cities.

### **Village Industries**

These stand on a different footing from Khadi. There is not much scope for voluntary labour in them. Each industry will take the labour of only a certain number of hands. These industries come in as a handmaid to Khadi. They cannot exist without Khadi, and Khadi will be robbed of its dignity without them. Village economy cannot be complete without the essential village industries such as hand-grinding, hand-pounding, soap-making, paper-making, match-making, tanning, oil-pressing, etc.

All should make it a point of honour to use only village articles whenever and wherever available. Given the demand there is no doubt that most of our wants can be supplied from our villages. When we have become village-minded, we will not want imitations of the West or machine-made products, but we will develop a true national taste in keeping with the vision of a new India

in which pauperism, starvation and idleness will be unknown.

### **Village Sanitation**

Divorce between intelligence and labour has resulted in criminal negligence of the villages. And so, instead of having graceful hamlets dotting the land, we have dung-heaps. The approach to many village is not a refreshing experience. Often one would like to shut one's eyes and stuff one's nose: such is the surrounding dirt and offending smell. A sense of national or social sanitation is not a virtue among us. We may take a kind of a bath, but we do not mind dirtying the well or the tank or the river by whose side or in which we perform ablutions. Gandhi regarded this defect as a great vice which is responsible for the disgraceful state of our villages and the sacred banks of the sacred rivers and for the diseases that spring from insanitation.

### **Basic Education**

This education is meant to transform village children into model villagers. It is principally designed for them. The inspiration for it has come from the villages. Work as who want to build up the structure of Swaraj from its very foundation dare not neglect the children. Foreign rule has unconsciously, though none the less surely, begun with the children in the field of education. Primary education is a farce designed without regard to the wants of the India of the villages and for that matter even of the cities. Basic education links the children, whether of the cities or the villages, to all that is best and lasting in India. It develops both the body and the mind, and keeps the child rooted to the soil with a glorious vision of the future in the realization of which he or she begins to take his or her share from the very commencement of his or her career in school.

**Adult Education**

If I had charge of adult education, I should begin with opening the minds of the adult pupils to the greatness and vastness of their country. My adult education means, first, true political education of the adult by word of mouth. Seeing that this will be mapped out, it can be given without fear. I imagine that it is too late in the day for authority to interfere with this type of education; but if there is interference, there must be a fight for this elementary right without which there can be no Swaraj. Of course, in all I have written, openness has been assumed. Non-violence abhors feat and, therefore, secrecy. side by side with the education by the mouth will be the literary education.

**Women**

Woman has been suppressed under custom and law for which man was responsible and in the shaping of which she had no hand. In a plan of life based on non-violence, woman has as much right to shape her own destiny as man has to shape his. But as every right in a non-violent society proceeds from the previous performance of a duty, it follows that rules of social conduct must be framed by mutual co-operation and consultation. They can never be imposed from outside. Men have not realized this truth in its fullness in their behaviour towards women. They have considered themselves to be lords and masters of women instead of considering them as their friends and co-workers. It is the privilege of men to give the women of India a lifting hand. Women are in the position somewhat of the slave of old who did not know that he could or even had to be free. And when freedom came, for the moment he felt helpless. Women have been taught to regard themselves as slaves of men. It is up to men to see that they enable them to realize their full status and play their part as equals of men.

This revolution is easy, if the mind is made up. Let men begin with their own homes. Wives should not be dolls and objects of indulgence, but should be treated as honoured comrades in common service. To this end those who have not received a liberal education should receive such instruction as is possible from their husbands. The same observation applies, with the necessary changes, to mothers and daughters.

### **Education in Health and Hygiene**

The art of keeping one's health and the knowledge of hygiene is by itself a separate subject of study and corresponding practice. In a well-ordered society the citizens know and observe the laws of health and hygiene. It is established beyond doubt that ignorance and neglect of the laws of health and hygiene are responsible for the majority of diseases to which mankind is heir. The very high death rate among us is no doubt due to largely gnawing poverty, but it could be mitigated if the people were properly educated about health and hygiene.

"Mens sana in corpore sano" is perhaps the first law for humanity. A healthy mind in a healthy body is a self-evident truth. There is an inevitable connection between mind and body. If we were in possession of healthy minds, we would shed all violence and, naturally obeying the laws of health, we would have healthy bodies without an effort.

### **Provincial Languages**

According to Gandhi, our love of the English language in preference to our own mother tongue has caused a deep chasm between the educated and politically-minded classes and the masses. The languages of India have suffered impoverishment. We flounder when we make

the vain attempt to express abstruse thought in the mother tongue. There are no equivalents for scientific terms. The result has been disastrous. The masses remain cut off from the modern mind. We are too near our own times correctly to measure the disservice caused to India by this neglect of its great languages. It is easy enough to understand that, unless we undo the mischief, the mass mind must remain imprisoned. The masses can make no solid contribution to the construction of Swaraj. It is inherent in Swaraj based on non-violence that every individual makes his own direct contribution to the Independence movement. The masses cannot do this fully unless they understand every step with all its implications. This is impossible unless every step is explained in their own languages.

### **National Language**

And then for all-India intercourse we need, from among the Indian stock, a language which the largest number of people already know and understand and which the others can easily pick up. This language is indisputably Hindi. It is spoken and understood by both Hindus and Muslims of the North. It is called Urdu when it is written in the Urdu character. In 1925, the common man's language was called this all-India speech Hindustani. And since that time, in theory at least, Hindustani has been the *Rashtra Bhasha*. In 1920 a deliberate attempt was begun to recognize the importance of Indian languages for the political education of the masses, as also of an all-India common speech which politically-minded India could easily speak and which people from the different provinces could understand at all-India gatherings. Such National languages should enable one to understand and speak both forms of speech and write in both the scripts.

**Economic Equality**

This is the master key to non-violent Independence that is, working for economic equality means abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labour. It means the leveling down of the few rich in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of the nation's wealth on the one hand, and the levelling up of the semi-starved naked millions on the other. A non-violent system of government is clearly an impossibility so long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists. The contrast between the palaces of New Delhi and the miserable hovels of the poor labouring class nearby cannot last one day in a free India in which the poor will enjoy the same power as the richest in the land. A violent and bloody revolution is a certainty one day unless there is a voluntary abdication of riches and the power that riches give and sharing them for the common good.

**Peasants / Kisans**

The programme is not exhaustive, Swaraj is a mighty structure. Crores of hands have to work at building it. Of these *kisans*, i.e. the peasantry are the largest part. When they become conscious of their non-violent strength, no power on earth can resist them.

They must not be used for power politics. I consider it to be contrary to the non-violent method. Those who would know my method of organizing kisans may profitably study the movement in Champaran when satyagraha was tried for the first time in India with the result all India knows. It became a mass movement which remained wholly non-violent from start to finish.

**Labour**

Ahmedabad Labour Union is a model for all India to copy. Its basis is non-violence, pure and simple. It has never had a set-back in its career. It has gone on from strength to strength without fuss and without show. It has its hospital, its schools for the children of the mill-hands, its classes for adults, its own printing press and Khadi depot, and its own residential quarters. Almost all the hands are voters and decide the fate of elections. They were also put on the voters list. The organization has never taken part in party politics. It influences the municipal policy of the city. It has to its credit very successful strikes which were wholly non-violent. Mill-owners and labour have governed their relations largely through voluntary arbitration. If I had my way, I would regulate all the labour organizations of India after the Ahmedabad model.

**Tribes (Adivasis)**

Service of Tribes is also a part of the constructive programme. Though they are the sixteenth number in this programme, they are not the least in point of importance. Our country is so vast and the races so varied that the best of us cannot know all there is to know of men and their condition. As one discovers this for oneself, one realizes how difficult it is to make well our claim to be one nation, unless every unit has a living consciousness of being one with every other.

**Lepers**

Leper is a word of bad odour. India is perhaps a home of lepers next only to Central Africa. Yet they are as much a part of society as the tallest among us. But the tall absorb our attention though they are least in need of it. The lot of the lepers who are much in need of attention is studied neglectly. I am tempted to call it heartless,

which it certainly is, in terms of non-violence. It is largely the missionary who, be it said to his credit, bestows care on him.

### **Students**

Such as the students are, it is from these young men and women that the future leaders of the nation are to rise. Unfortunately they are acted upon by every variety of influences. Gandhi's Code of Conduct for the students is as under:

- 1) Students must not take part in party politics. They are students, searchers, not politicians.
- 2) They may not resort to political strikes. They must have their heroes, but their devotion to them is to be shown by copying the best in their heroes, not by going on strikes.
- 3) They must all do sacrificial spinning in a scientific manner. Their tools shall be always neat, clean, and in good order and condition. If possible, they will learn to make them themselves.
- 4) They will be Khadi-users all through and use village products to the exclusion of all analogous things, foreign or machine-made.
- 5) They can enforce the message of the tricolour flag in their own persons and harbour neither communalism nor untouchability in their hearts. They will cultivate real friendship with students of other faiths and with Harijans as if they were their own kith and kin.
- 6) They will make it a point to give first aid to their injured neighbours and do scavenging and cleaning in the neighbouring village and instruct village children and adults.

- 7) They will learn the national language, Hindustani, in its present double dress, two forms of speech and two scripts, that they may feel at home whether Hindi or Urdu is spoken and nagari or urdu script is written.
- 8) They will translate into their own mother tongue everything new they may learn, and transmit it in their weekly rounds to the surrounding villages.
- 9) They will do nothing in secret, they will be above board in all their dealings, they will lead a pure life of self-restraint, shed all fear and be always ready to protect their weak fellow-students, and be ready to quell riots by non-violent conduct at the risk of their lives.

They will be scrupulously correct and chivalrous in their behaviour towards their girl fellow-students.

### **Service to the Cow**

To Gandhi, the cow is a poem of pity. It is a purest type of sub-human life. Man, through the cow is enjoined to realize his identity with all that lives. Cow protection is one of the most wonderful phenomenon in human evolution.... It is gift of Hinduism to the world.

Apart from religious sentiments, the role of cow in human development is unparalleled. Agriculture is the backbone of Indian economy and cow happens to be the backbone of agriculture. All the cow products namely milk, cow-dung, urine, bullocks, even its bones, horns and skin have multifarious use for nutrition, health, hygiene, fuel along with making of footwear, manure and petty articles like buttons etc. it is a moving plant in itself which is sustainable through local resources. Cow slaughter and a sin, which should be banned totally and every measure should be undertaken to protect and develop the cow species.

## **Implementation of the Constructive Programme: Code of Conduct for the Agencies**

Like the agencies of Professional Social Work, there is a very large number of agencies and their federations, functioning to implement Gandhian Constructive Programme. Of course, there are many followers of Gandhi who are engaged in Social Work in their individual capacity, but their number is relatively small. The network of these agencies, which were founded both during Gandhian and post-Gandhian era, is country-wide, some of them having celebrated platinum jubilees long back.

Like Satyagrahis' Code of Conduct / Ethics, Gandhi also formulated a Code of Conduct for the agencies engaged in the execution of the 19-point constructive programme. The code has a universal value and is still relevant for all the voluntary agencies / NGO's in the country. It is reproduced below:

### **Success of Organisation**

- a) Success of any Institution depends on the following conditions:
  - Extreme authentic dedication and enthusiasm towards the realization of the objectives of the institution.
  - Not merely observance of the rules and regulations of institutions but also their spirit.
  - Feeling of brotherhood and unity among the management, members and subordinate staff.
- b) Despite having other favourable conditions the institutions would be lifeless even if a single condition is not followed out of the above mentioned three conditions.

**Director of the Organisation**

- 1) The Director of an institution can be termed as the pivot of an institution.
- 2) The success of the institution depends on the Director's dedication and devotion towards the objective of the institution, his observance of rules and regulations, his behaviour towards other members, his industriousness.
- 3) If the Director is conceited of his powers or indifferent or disinterested towards other members, it would be harmful for the institution.
- 4) The Director of the institution should behave in the same way as an efficient Commander-in-chief who is alert and strict about making others follow the rules and at the same time he cares to draw love and respect from his soldiers and feels proud of them.
- 5) Director should look into the smallest details of the institution. He should take care of the members and other fellow beings of the institute in the same manner as mother takes care of her child.
- 6) Director should exercise his rights according to the situation. He should consider his subordinates as an equal or his co-worker. He should consider junior most employee as his friend. He should believe that he got his post as a Director not because of his special capabilities but the respect shown to him by his co-workers.
- 7) He should listen to the suggestions of junior most employee with respect and should be ready to implement them if he agrees with them. If he does not think them proper he should try to make them see his viewpoint.

- 8) The Director should not be too credulous. He should not form adverse opinion about others in haste. He should take time to understand the person before forming any adverse opinion. In fact he should never form pejorative opinion about others in the absence of clever evidence.
- 9) He should not shower special favours on a particular person. He should not be partial to people. Also he should not praise one member to down the other.
- 10) It is not necessary to use the stern behaviour or harsh language to make others follow the rules systematically. The director who thinks the utility of these harsh measures to maintain the discipline displays his inabilities.

#### **Members of the Institution**

- 1) The institution cannot continue for a long if there is absence of the feeling of brotherhood and unity among the members. The differences and disputes are bound to occur and the members would indulge in fighting with each other forgetting the real objective of institute.
- 2) The institution cannot work for long whose members are not eager to follow their officer. Laziness and careless attitude would spread in the institute and the members would become victim to these vices.
- 3) There should not only be outward cooperation among Director and the members but also the mental cooperation. It means that it is not enough that the members should work according to the will and order of the Director. If they really agree to the will and order of the Director they should behave in a manner so as to show that they themselves want to do that work.

- 4) If the members do not believe in a particular rule or are not convinced about certain order they should discuss it with the Director until and unless they are convinced. They should not give wrong impression to their Director.
- 5) If the members come across any rule or order which, though, is not against truth and religion but only looks improper in the practical view, the members should follow it. But if it is against truth and religion the members should be ready to leave the organisation.
- 6) If a particular rule and order is not against truth and religion but it is difficult to be followed due to personal weakness it is better for the members to leave for the progress of the institute.
- 7) If there are mutual differences between the members; if there is doubt about the behaviour of any member; if a particular member is the cause for dissatisfaction or distress or doubt, the matter should be discussed with the concerned person in each and every case in the first place. If the issue is not resolved it should be brought to the notice of the immediate officer and the decision should be left to him.
- 8) The disputed matter should not be taken directly to the highest authority without having prior discussion with the concerned member, or intimating the immediate officer.
- 9) If you have any doubt about other member, it should be immediately cleared. If you keep it in your heart and do not discuss it with the officer it would lead to the accumulation of vices in the institute.
- 10) The institution cannot function properly if the weakness and faults of the member are talked about

in hushed tones but not disclosed to the officer or the matter is not discussed openly with the concerned member about whom the discussions are talking place. If the situation persists Institute would become lifeless because it would have become an abode of vice, conceit, untruth, vanity.

**Economic Condition of the Institute**

- 1) No real work could be delayed due to paucity of funds.
- 2) It is not appropriate to put the funds in the bank and spend on the interest of the capital. The Director of the institution should firmly believe that the institute is for the welfare of the people and they would get money for its sustenance.
- 3) The Director would have to work very hard till the people are convinced of the usefulness of the institute. But that hard work would be considered as part of penance and service.
- 4) After a period of time so much funds are accumulated but this accumulated money could also make the institute lifeless. Therefore, an ideal institution should not fall for the temptation of accumulation of money.
- 5) It is generally seen that the institute which get public funds to work, becomes careless in spending the money. This is one of the greatest problems before organisations. The voluntary organisations of a poor country like India should spend sparingly.
- 6) Proper care should be taken to maintain accounts of the institute. Even a single rupee spent should be accounted for and should be regularly audited by certified auditors.

## **Conclusion**

Gandhi called his 19-point constructive programme a programme for construction of total or complete independence (Poorna Swaraj) consisting of not only political, but social and economic independence as well, through truthful and non-violent means. Social scientists look at it as a programme of social reconstruction aiming at eradication / mitigation of social problems like untouchability alcoholism, unemployment (through khadi and village industries), backwardness of weaker sections such as small farmers, labour, tribes lepers etc (through specific programmes for them) and also aiming at bringing various sections of the society closer to one another (through programmes on communal unity, economic equality national language etc.) He also formulated a code of conduct for the agencies launched to execute these programmes, which is relevant in present day situations as well.

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## **Gandhian Social Work: Methods and Techniques**

*\*S.R. Billore*

### **Introduction**

Every movement and profession has its own methods and techniques of working towards the decided goals. So is the case with Gandhian Social Work. Gandhi's goal to create an ideal society and the basic values serving as the foundation of this society are very clear. It would be now appropriate to go through the methods and techniques propounded by Gandhi to achieve these goals. These methods are unique in the sense, that in the history of humanity they were never applied simultaneously in the fields of politics and social work in a specific time period and place.

### **Purity of Means and Goals**

A remarkable feature about them is Gandhi's insistence that the means should be as pure and pious as the goal itself. According to Gandhi "The clearest possible definition of the goal and its appreciation would fail to take us there, if we do not know and utilize the means of achieving it. I have therefore concerned myself principally with the conservation of the means and their progressive use. I know if we can take care of them, attainment of the goal is assured, I feel too that *our progress towards the goal will be in exact proportion to*

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*the purity of our means.* This method may appear to be long, perhaps too long, but I am convinced that it is the shortest”.

### **Universal Application**

An important fact about these methods is that they are time-tested and have been used successfully all over the world, in the area's of environment protection, eradication of apartheid, disarmament etc. by the world renowned leaders, social workers and activists like Dr. Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela. These methods are being taught at the Institutes of Gandhian Studies in several parts of the country and World and there are many Institutes in several countries conducting research in peace, based on Gandhian principals.

### **Application at Macro Level**

Before going through Gandhain methods in detail, it is to be noted that owing to the need of the time most of them were to be practiced at the macro/mass or the community level. Gandhi's peaceful crusade was not only against social evils like untouchability and alcoholism, it was also against the British rule. Therefore we find that Gandhi's vast canvas of social reform and social activism did not permit him to work at the individual or group levels, although in some cases he did offer counseling to the victims of social evils either in personal sittings or through his periodical "Harijan", but it can not be called Case-Work. Similarly it was not possible for him or his followers and colleagues to pay attention to scientific social research or social welfare administration. The methods of Professional Social Work which can be regarded closest to Gandhian methods are Social Action and Community Organization. As a matter of fact, the methods initiated and practiced by Gandhi can definitely add to the body of knowledge of

the two methods of Professional Social Work. Here is a brief analysis of the method of Satyagrah and the techniques associated with it.

### **Satayagrah: The Philosophical Base**

Satyagrah is a Sanskrit word coined by Gandhi in 1906, when he was in South Africa. It literally means "Insistence on truth" but in reality, it is the practice of "Law of Love". "Passive resistance" is also used to denote Satyagrah. According to Gandhi, "The doctrine of Satyagrah is not new, it is merely an extension of the rule of domestic life..... family disputes and differences are generally settled according to the law of love. The injured member has so much regard for the others that he suffers injury for the sake of principles, without retaliation and without being angry with those who differ from him. And as repression of anger and self-suffering are difficult processes, he does not dignify trifles into principles, but in all non-essentials readily agrees with the rest of the family and thus contrives to gain the maximum of peace for himself without disturbing that of others. Thus his action, whether he resists or resigns is always calculated to promote the common welfare of the family. It is this law of love which silently but surely governs the family for the most part throughout the world"..... It is a law of universal application beginning with the family, its use can be extended to every other circle". According to Gandhi, the feats of the great dignitaries like Gautam Buddha, Socrates, Daniel, Jesus Christ and Tolstoy are glaring examples of application of the spirit of this method to socio-political and religious fields..... He further says, "This law of love is nothing but a law of truth. Without truth, there is no love..... Satyagrah has therefore been described as a coin, on whose face you read love and on the reverse you read truth. It is a coin present everywhere and has indefinable

value". According to Gandhi, Satyagrah is not only insistence on truth, it is at the same time, a relentless search for truth and a determination to reach truth".

Like truth, Ahimsa or non-violence is another basic ingredient of Satyagrah. "It excludes every form of violence, direct or indirect, veiled or unveiled. It is breach of Satyagrah to wish ill-will to an opponent or to say a harsh word to him, or of him with the intention of harming him..... It is the direct opposite of compulsion. It was conceived as a complete substitute for violence".

Gandhi calls Satyagrah a "Dharmayuddha" also in which there are no secrets to be guarded, no scope for cunning and no place for untruth, comes unsought; and a man of religion is ever ready for it.

### **Characteristic Features of Satyagrah**

- 1) According to Gandhi, before being a Satyagrahi a person must be able to visualize the truth for which he proposes to offer Satyagrah.
- 2) Satyagrah should create an atmosphere of love, goodwill and enthusiasm – and not that of terror. Satyagrah should be conducted for change of heart and mind and not for any personal gain.
- 3) A Clear victory of Satyagrah is impossible so long as there is ill-will. But those who believe themselves to be weak are incapable of loving. Let, then, our first act every morning be to make the following resolve for the day: 'I shall not fear any one of earth. I shall fear God only; I shall not bear ill-will towards any one. I shall not submit to injustice from any one. I shall conquer untruth by truth and in resisting untruth I shall put up with all suffering.
- 4) A Satyagrahi bids good bye to fear. He is therefore never afraid of trusting the opponent. Even if the

opponent plays him false twenty times, the Satyagrahis ready to trust him the twenty first time, for an implicit trust in human nature is the very essence of his creed.

- 5) As a Satyagrahi I must always allow my cards to be examined and re-examined at all times and make reparation if an error is discovered.
- 6) A struggle which has to be previously planned is not a righteous struggle. In a righteous struggle, God Himself plans campaigns and conducts battles.
- 7) There is no time-limit for a Satyagrahi nor is there a limit to his capacity for suffering. Hence there is no such thing as defeat in Satyagrah.
- 8) In every great cause it is not the number of fighters that counts but it is the quality of which they are made that behave always stood alone. If a single Satyagrahi holds out to the end, victory is certain.
- 9) In the code of the Satyagrahi there is no such thing as surrender to brute force. Or the surrender then is the surrender of suffering and not to the wielder of the bayonet.
- 10) Satyagrah is a relentless search for truth and a determination to reach truth.
- 11) Satyagrah is utter self-effacement, greatest humiliation, greatest patience and brightest faith. It is its own reward.
- 12) It is a force that works silently and apparently slowly. In reality, there is no force in the world that is so direct or so swift in working.
- 13) Satyagrah is gentle, it never wounds. It must not be the result of anger or malice. It is never fussy, never impatient, never vociferous. It is the direct opposite of compulsion. It is conceived as a complete substitute for violence.

- 14) The Satyagrahi, whilst he is ever ready for fight, must be equally eager for peace. He must welcome any honourable opportunity for peace.
- 15) As a Satyagrah struggle progress onward, many another elements help to swell its current and there is a constant growth in the results to which it leads.
- 16) Once it (Satyagrah) is set in motion, its effect, if it is intensive enough, can overtake the whole universe. It is the greatest force because it is the highest expression of the soul.
- 17) To me it is one of the most active forces in the world. It is like the sun that rises upon us unfailingly from day to day. Only if we would but understand it, it is infinitely greater than a million suns put together. It radiates life and light and peace and happiness.
- 18) Since Satyagrah is one of the most powerful methods of direct action, a Satyagrah exhausts all other means before he resorts to Satyagrah. He will therefore constantly and continually approach the constituted authority, he will appeal to public opinion, educate public opinion, state his case calmly and coolly before everybody, who wants to listen to him, and only after he has exhausted all these avenues will he resort to Satyagrah. But when he has found the impelling call of the inner voice within him and launches out upon Satyagrah he has burnt boats and there is no receding.
- 19) My advice is Satyagrah first and Satyagrah last. There is no other or better road to freedom.
- 20) The conditions necessary for the success of Satyagrah are: (a) the Satyagrah should not have any hatred in his heart against the opponent. (b) The issue must be true and substantial (c) The Satyagrahi must be prepared to suffer till the end for his cause.

## **Who Can Offer Satyagrah?**

It is the essence of Satyagraha that those who are suffering should alone offer it. Cases can be conceived when what may be termed sympathetic Satyagraha may be legitimately applied. The idea underlying Satyagraha is to convert the wrongdoer, to awaken the sense of justice in him, to show him also that without the co-operation direct, or indirect, of the wronged and wrongdoer cannot do the wrong intended by him. If the people in either case are not ready to suffer for their causes, no outside help in the shape of Satyagraha can possibly bring true deliverance.

### **Code of Conduct for Satyagrahis**

Gandhi has laid down very clearly the following code of conduct for the Satyagrahis:

- 1) A Satyagrahi must have a living faith in God, for he is his only Rock.
- 2) He must believe in truth and non-violence as his creed and, therefore, have faith in the inherent goodness of human nature which he expects to evoke by his truth and love expressed through his suffering.
- 3) He must be leading a chaste life and be ready and willing, for the sake of his cause, to give up his life and his possessions.
- 4) He must be a habitual Khadi-wearer and spinner. This is essential for India.
- 5) He must be a teetotaler and be free from the use of other intoxicants in order that his reason may be always unclouded and his mind constant.
- 6) He must carry out with a willing heart all the rules of discipline as may be laid down from time to time.

## **Techniques of Satyagrah**

Techniques are particular or special ways of doing something. Under the umbrella of Satyagrah, we find eight techniques, many of them are age-old, adopted and given a new meaning, direction and shape by Gandhi and his followers. They are as follows:

### **Persuasion**

This is the mildest technique of Satyagrah in which appeal is made straight to the heart of wrong doer. "It is never the intention of a Satyagrahi to embarrass the wrong doer. The appeal is never to his fear; it is, must be, always to his heart. The Satyagrahi's object is to convert, not to coerce, the wrongdoer. He should avoid artificiality in all his doings. He acts naturally and from inward conviction.

Immediately we begin to think of things as our opponent's think of them we shall be able to do them full justice. I know that this requires a detached state of mind, and it is a state very difficult to reach. Nevertheless for a Satyagrahi it is absolutely essential. Three-fourths of the miseries and misunderstanding of the world will disappear, if we step into the shoes of our adversaries and understand their standpoint. We will then agree with our adversaries quickly or think of them charitably.

Our motto must ever be conversion by gentle persuasion and a constant appeal to the head and the heart. We must therefore be over courteous and patient with those who do not see eye to eye with us.

### **Auto-suffering**

In Satyagraha there is not the remotest idea of injuring the opponent. Satyagraha postulates the conquest of the adversary by suffering in one's own person.

The hardest heart and the grossest ignorance must disappear before the rising sun of suffering without anger and without malice. Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer, but it means the pitting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under this law of our being, it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire to save his honour, his religion, his soul and lay the foundation for that empire's fall or its regeneration.

The Satyagrahi's course is plain. He must stand unmoved in the midst of all cross currents. He may not be impatient with blind orthodoxy, nor be irritated over the unbelief of the suppressed people. He must know that his suffering will melt the stoniest heart of the stoniest fanatic. He must know that relief will come when there is least hope for it. For such is the way of the cruelly-kind Deity who insists upon testing His devotee through a fiery furnace and delights in humbling him to the dust.

### **Fasting**

This was one of the most frequently used techniques by Gandhi. The records show that he used it 17 times: 3 against the injustice done by British government, 4 against untouchability, 3 against communal riots, 4 against violence, 3 for self-purification, penitence (prayashchit) and in the support of mill-workers, Three of them were observed for indefinite periods (fast unto death). The range of all his fasts was from one day to 31 days.

According to Gandhi... "Fasting is a potent weapon in the Satyagraha armoury. It cannot be taken by every one. Mere physical capacity to take it is no qualification for it. It is of no use without a living faith in God. It

should never be a mechanical effort or a mere imitation. It must come from the depth of one's soul. It is, therefore, always rare."

"There can be no room for selfishness, anger, lack of faith, or impatience in a pure fast... Infinite patience, firm resolve, single-mindedness of purpose, perfect calm, and no anger must of necessity be there. But since it is impossible for a person to develop all these qualities all at once, no one who has not devoted himself to following the laws of *ahimsa* should undertake a Satyagrahi fast."

"[Fasting] is... fierce and not altogether free from danger. I myself have before condemned fasting when it seemed to me to be wrong or morally unjustified. But to shirk a fast where there is a clear moral indication is a dereliction of duty. Such a fast has to be based on unadulterated truth and *ahimsa*".

### **Fasts : Legitimate and Illegitimate**

Of course, it is not to be denied that fasts can be really coercive. Such are fasts to attain a selfish object. A fast undertaken to wring money from a person or for fulfilling some such personal end would amount to the exercise of coercion or undue influence. I would unhesitatingly advocate resistance of such undue influence. I have myself successfully resisted it in the fasts that have been undertaken or threatened against me.

And it is argued that the dividing line between a selfish and unselfish end is often very thin, I would urge that a person who regards the end of a fast to be selfish or otherwise he should resolutely refuse to yield to it, even though the refusal may result in the death of the fasting person.

If people will cultivate the habit of disregarding fasts which, in their opinion, are taken for unworthy ends,

such fasts will be robbed of the taint of coercion and undue influence. Like all human institutions, fasting can be both legitimately and illegitimately used.

### **Fasts : Addressed To Almighty**

Ridiculous fasts spread like plague and are harmful. But, when fasting becomes a duty, it cannot be given up. Therefore, I do fast when I consider it to be necessary and cannot abstain from it on any score. What I do myself, I cannot prevent others from doing under similar circumstances. It is common knowledge that the best of good things are often abused. We see this happening every day.

...When human ingenuity fails, the votary fasts. This fasting quickens the spirit of prayer, that is to say, the fasting is a spiritual act, and therefore, addressed to God. The effect of such action on the life of the people is that, where the person fasting is at all known to them, their sleeping conscience is awakened.

### **Last Resort**

One general principle, however, I would like to enunciate. A Satyagrahi should fast only as a last resort when all other avenues of redress have been explored and have failed. There is no room for imitation in fasts. He who has no inner strength should not dream of it, and never with attachment to success.

But if a Satyagrahi once undertakes a fast from conviction, he must stick to his resolve whether there is a chance of his action bearing fruit or not. This does not mean that fasting cannot or can bear fruit. He who fasts in the expectation of fruit generally fails. And even if he does not seemingly fail, he loses all the inner joy which a true fast holds....

### **Fasting Unto Death**

Fasting unto death is the last and the most potent weapon in the armoury of Satyagraha. It is a sacred thing. But it must be accepted with all its implication. It is not the fast itself, but what it implies that matters.

Fasting cannot be undertaken mechanically. It is a powerful thing but a dangerous thing, if handled amateurishly. It requires complete self-purification, much more than what is required in facing death with retaliation even in mind. One such act of perfect sacrifice would suffice for the whole world. Such is held to be Jesus' example.

### **Non-cooperation**

Gandhi considered non-co-operation to be such a powerful and pure instrument that, if it is enforced in an earnest spirit, it will be like seeking first the Kingdom of God and every-thing else following as a matter of course. People will then have realized their true power. They would have learnt the value of discipline, self-control, joint-action, non-violence, organization and everything else that goes to make a nation great and good, and not merely great. He further states, "There is no instrument so clean, so harmless and yet so effective as non-co-operation. Judiciously handled, it need not produce any evil consequences, and its intensity will depend purely on the capacity of the people for sacrifice".

He regards non-co-operation as much a duty as co-operation. No one is bound to co-operate in one's own undoing or slavery. Freedom received through the effort of others, however benevolent, cannot be retained when such effort is withdrawn. In other words, such freedom is not real freedom. But the lowliest can feel its glow as soon as they learn the art of attaining it through non-violent no-co-operation.....

Gandhi was quite sure that non-violent non-co-operation can secure what violence never can, and this by ultimate conversion of the wrong-doers. We in India have never given non-violence the trial it has deserved. The marvel is that we have attained so much even with our mixed non-violence.

Although non-co-operation is one of the main weapons in the armoury of Satyagraha, it should not be forgotten that it is after all only a means to secure the co-operation of the opponent consistently with truth and justice. The essence of non-violent technique is that it seeks to liquidate antagonisms but not the antagonists themselves. In non-violent fight you have, to a certain measure, to conform to the tradition and conventions of the system you are pitted against. Avoidance of all relationship with the opposing power, therefore, can never be a Satyagrahi's object, but transformation or purification of that relationship.

### **Boycott**

Boycott, combining of people in breaking relations with a person, or group is not new to the Indian society. Boycott by the caste or village panchayat of a person on family has been one of the severest and most dreaded forms of punishment for thousands of years. The terms and conditions of cancellation of boycott were also very taxing. Gandhi used this age-old weapon against the British ruled and also for socio-economic of Indian society.

Gandhi invoked people to boycott the three major agencies which were instrumental in the increasing strength of British rule in India, namely the assembly, courts of law and educational institutions, run by the government. As an alternative he gave the slogan of Swadeshi by saying "...Swadeshi is the use of all home-made things to the exclusion of foreign things, in so far

as such use is necessary for the protection of home-industry, more especially those industries without which India will become pauperized. In my opinion, therefore, Swadeshi which excludes the use of everything foreign no matter how beneficent it may be, and irrespective of the fact that it impoverishes nobody, is narrow interpretation of Swadeshi”.

Consequently assembly elections were boycotted by congressmen, innumerable students and teachers left schools and colleges to join freedom movement. Lacs of people stopped purchasing articles imported from England and there were collective burnings of foreign goods, particularly the clothes. The boycott proved to be a very powerful weapon in attaining not only political but also the socio-economic freedom for India.

### **Civil Disobedience**

Gandhi regarded civil disobedience as the purest form of constitutional agitation. In his own words, “I hold the opinion firmly that civil disobedience is the purest type of constitutional agitation. Of course, it becomes degrading and despicable, if its civil, i.e., non violent character is a mere camouflage. If the honesty of non-violence be admitted, there is no warrant for condemnation even of the fiercest disobedience, because of the likelihood of its leading to violence.

No big or swift movement can be carried on without bold risks, and life will not be worth living if it is not attended with large risks. Does not the history of the world show that there would have been no romance in life if there had been no risks?

Civil disobedience is the inherent right of a citizen. He dare not give it up without ceasing to be a man. Civil disobedience is never followed by anarchy. Criminal disobedience can lead to it. Every state puts down

criminal disobedience by force. It perishes if it does not.

A Satyagrahi obeys the laws of society intelligently and of his own free will, because he considers it to be his sacred duty to do so. It is only when a person has thus obeyed the laws of society scrupulously that he is in a position to judge as to which particular laws are good and just and which unjust and iniquitous. Only then does the right accrue to him of civil disobedience of certain laws in well-defined circumstances”.

### **Condition Precedent**

The first indispensable condition precedent to any civil resistance is that there should be surety against any outbreak of violence, whether on the part of those who are identified with civil resistance or on the part of the general public. It would be no answer in the case of an outbreak of violence that it was instigated by the State or other agencies hostile to civil resisters.

It should be obvious that civil resistance cannot flourish in an atmosphere of violence. This does not mean that the resources of a satyagrahi have come to an end. Ways other than civil disobedience should be found out.

### **No Dharna, but Picketing**

Dharna is a Hindi-Urdu word which means, forcibly sitting at somebody's premises has been clearly discarded by Gandhi as a barbarian method. “I call it barbarity for it is a crude way of using coercion. It is also cowardly because one who sits Dharna knows that he is not going to be trampled over. It is difficult to call the practice violent, but it is certainly worse.... If we fight our opponent, we at least enable him to return the blow. But when we challenge him to walk over us, knowing that he won't, we place him in a most awkward and humiliating position... there must be no impatience,

no barbarity, no insolence, no undue pressure. If he wants to cultivate a true spirit of democracy, we cannot afford to be intolerant. Intolerance betrays want of faith in one's cause.

But instead of Dharna, Gandhi has supported picketing as a non-violent method. This consisted of groups of volunteers, particularly women standing outside the shops of foreign goods and liquor, requesting the potential customers not to enter the shops. They boldly faced the wrath and violent attacks by the shopkeepers and the bullies hired by them, but did not budge from their non violent stand.

### **Strikes**

Like all other techniques of Satyagrah, Gandhi emphasized that the strikes too – both general and Industrial should be based on the twin values of Truth and Non-Violence. His views on the nature and goals of strikes, arbitration, adjudication, and other issues related to general public, political parties and strikers are very clear.

### **Nature of Strikes**

- 1) In no case can I be party, irrespective on non-violence, to a universal strike and capture of power.
- 2) There should be no strike which is not justifiable on merits. No unjust strike should succeed. All public sympathy must be withheld from such strikes.
- 3) Strikes for economic betterment should never have a political and as an ulterior motive. Such a mixture never advances the political end and generally brings trouble upon strikers, even when they do not dislocate public life, as in the case of public utility services, such as the postal strike.

**Strikes and Public**

- 1) The public has no means of judging the merits of a strike unless it is backed by impartial person enjoying public confidence. Interested men cannot judge the merits of their own case. Hence, there must be an arbitration accepted by the parties or a judicial adjudication.
- 2) As a rule, the matter does not come before the public when there is accepted arbitration or adjudication. Cases have, however, happened when haughty employers have ignored awards, or misguided employees, conscious of their power to assert themselves, have done likewise and have decided upon forcible extortion.
- 3) Sympathetic strikes must be taboo until it is conclusively proved that the affected men have exhausted all the legitimate means at their disposal.

**Role of Labour**

- 1) I know that strikes are an inherent right of the working men for the purpose of securing justice, but they must be considered a crime immediately the capitalists accept the principles of arbitration.
- 2) The labour world in India, as elsewhere, is at the mercy of those who set up as advisers and guides. The latter are not always scrupulous, and not always wise even when they are scrupulous. The labourers are dissatisfied with their lot. They have every reason for dissatisfaction. They are being taught, and justly, to regard themselves as being chiefly instrumental in enriching their employers. And so it requires little effort to make them lay down their tools. The political situation, too, is beginning to affect the labourers of India. And there

are not wanting labour leaders who consider that strikes may be engineered for political purposes.

- 3) It does not require much effort of the intellect to perceive that it is a most dangerous thing to make political use of labour until labourers understand the political condition of the country and are prepared to work for the common good.
- 4) Strikes, therefore, for the present should only take place for the direct betterment of the labourers' lot, and, when they have acquired the spirit of patriotism, for the regulation of prices of their manufacturers.
- 5) A strike should be spontaneous and not manipulated. If it is organized without any compulsion, there would be no chance for goondaism and looting. Such a strike would be characterized by perfect co-operation amongst the strikers. It should be peaceful and there should be no show of force.
- 6) Workers do not hesitate to injure the property of the employers, dislocate machinery, harass old men and women who would not join the strike, and forcibly keep out blacklegs.
- 7) The strikers should take up some work either singly or in co-operation with each other, in order to earn their bread. The nature of such work should have been thought out beforehand. It goes without saying that in a peaceful, effective and firm strike of this character, there will be no room for rowdyism or looting. I have known of such strikes. I have not presented a Utopian picture.
- 8) What about the blacklegs, you may ask. Blacklegs unfortunately there will be. But I would urge you not to fight them, but to plead with them, to tell them that theirs is a narrow policy and that yours has the interest of the whole labour at heart. It is

likely that they may not listen to you. In that case you will tolerate them, but not fight them.

### **Role of Employer**

How should capital behave when labour strikes? This question is in the air and has great importance at the present moment. One way is that of suppression, named or nicknamed "American". It consists in suppression of labour through organized goondaism. Everybody would consider this as wrong and destructive. The other way, right and honourable, consists in considering every strike on its merits and giving labour its due – not what capital considers as due, but what labour itself would so consider and enlightened public opinion acclaim as just.

### **Conditions for Success**

The conditions of a successful strike are simple. And when they are fulfilled, a strike need never fail :

- 1) The cause of the strike must be just.
- 2) There should be practical unanimity among the strikers.
- 3) There should be no violence used against non strikers.
- 4) Strikers should be able to maintain themselves during the strike period without falling back upon union funds and should, therefore, occupy themselves in some useful and productive temporary occupation.
- 5) A strike is no remedy when there is enough other labour to replace strikers. In that case, in the event of unjust treatment or inadequate wages or the like, resignation is the remedy.

- 6) Successful strikes have taken place even when all the above conditions have not been fulfilled, but that merely proves that the employers were weak and had a guilty conscience. We often make terrible mistakes by copying bad examples. The safest thing is not to copy examples of which we have rarely complete knowledge, but to follow the conditions which we know and recognize to be essential for success.

## **Conclusion**

'Satyagrah' may be regarded as the collective name of all the methods and techniques of Gandhian Social Work, namely persuasion, auto suffering, fasting, non-co-operation, boycott, civil disobedience, picketing, strikes etc. All these methods are based on Gandhian values and principles of truth and non-violence. Every *Satyagrahi* has to abide by the code of conduct for Satyagrahis. Gandhian Social Work makes use of strikes in a different way, and detailed discussions are available in relevant literature regarding roles of the employers, workers and the general public.

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## **Gandhian Social Work: The Historical Perspective**

*\*S.R. Billore*

### **Introduction**

After going through the Gandhian model of an ideal society, the values on which it is to be based, the constructive programme to be executed for its achievement and the methods and techniques to be used, it would be interesting to know the origin and gradual development of Gandhian Social Work vis-à-vis the environment in which it was developed.

Before we go through the historical development of Gandhian Social Work, it is to be noted that all Gandhian activities can be put into three categories –some of them were purely political in nature, such as attending round table conferences with the British Government and “Quit India” movement – it was the need of the era. Some of his other activities were purely social in nature, such as service to the Leprosy patients, rural health and sanitation etc. But the remaining activities, like promotion of Khadi or eradication of untouchability and alcoholism did have social as well as political connotations, where it is difficult to separate the two. In the following pages, we are leaving aside the political aspect of Gandhian endeavour, concentrating only on the latter two categories, in order to have deeper understanding of Gandhi, the social actionist and social worker.

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If one reads Gandhiji's autobiography "My Experiments With Truth" with a social work angle, he will find that, it includes his experimentation with social philosophy and method as well; which continued throughout his life-time. It is also to be noted that Gandhi had repeatedly said that he had nothing new to teach the world, and "truth and non-violence are as old the hills, there is nothing like 'Gandhism;". He would have also said that there was nothing like 'Gandhian Social Work'. But it is a fact that during his life time, Gandhi and 'Gandhian Social Work' had become synonymous. What he did for the social cause was followed and practiced by lacs of people. It gradually emerged as a unique School of thought and action in the field of social welfare and is now recognized by social scientists as 'Gandhian Social Work'.

### **Gandhi: A Social Activist**

Gandhi's evolution as a social activist began in South Africa in the year 1893 when 'Barrister Gandhi' was thrown out of the first class compartment by 'white' railway staff despite his having a valid ticket. Throughout his tenure in South Africa, he faced omissions and insults because of his coloured skin, but unlike other Indians in South Africa, he did not swallow them and developed a philosophical base and methodology to fight against apartheid ('Dignity of man' is the value insisted both by Gandhian and professional social workers). Pretty soon, Gandhi's discontent with the existing conditions spread among the Indian Community in that country, which ultimately resulted in the foundation of Natal Indian Congress on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1893. It functioned to ventilate Indian's needs and grievances to stimulate their thoughts and to motivate them for community's service. It also worked towards acquainting the English in South Africa and England

and people in India with the real state of things in Natal and South Africa. Needless to say, this approach is quite similar to that in the methods of professional social work namely social action and community Organisation in which discontent with the existing conditions is spread among people and they are motivated to form their own association to improve upon them. Gandhi also published tracts on the condition of immigrant Indian's in South Africa in July 1896 he returned to India and continued educating the public about South Africa situation. He returned to South Africa after three months and continued his crusade against apartheid by writing to Indian and British public men, representing to Indian National Congress, colonial and imperial authorities, moving a resolution for the congress session held in the year 1900 in India. The struggling against apartheid lead by Gandhi in South Africa continued for a long period of about 21 years, till the year 1914 which included holding mass meetings, opposing the 'Black Act', which was based on social discrimination, organising passive resistance, (which was later known as 'Satyagrah) imprisonment of thousands of Indian men and women, appealing the media to support the struggle, lobbying at the British parliament, publication of the newspaper (Indian opinion from June 1903) in support of the movement, negotiations with the authorities, strike in the mines by Indian labour and the 'Great foot march' by thousands of Indians from New Castle to Dundee, which took about 4 months. This is one of the classic examples of what the professional social workers call 'Social Action'. Each and every technique of social action was used in that movement.

### **Development and Use of Social Techniques**

The scholars of Gandhian Social Work regard South Africa as Gandhi's Socio-political laboratory, where he

tested various techniques, which were later used on a very large scale to overturn British rule in India. It was here that Gandhi coined the word "Satyagraha", became a journalist, a public orator and founded the 'Ashram: the agency, which for Gandhian Social Work, serves as a place for group living and thinking, social education, training of human resources, publishing house and naturopathy clinic. Such Ashrams founded either by Gandhi or his followers are still active in large numbers all over the country.

### **Measures of Social Welfare**

Apart from his social action, movement in South Africa Gandhi alongwith colleagues and followers was indulged in welfare activities as well. In 1899, he raised 'Indian Ambulance Corps' to serve the victims of Boer war and was awarded war medal. Similarly in the years 1904 and 1906, he offered para medical services during the outbreak of plague and Zulu rebel respectively, and was awarded Kaiser-e-Hind gold medal by the British government in recognition of his social services.

### **Sarvodaya: Rise of all**

The year 1904 brought a revolutionary change in Gandhi's life and thinking. During a train journey in South Africa he went through a book entitled "Unto This Last" written by the great western thinker Ruskin. The postulates of Ruskin's theory as laid down in this book are :

- 1) The good of the individuals is contained in the good of all
- 2) A lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's, in as much as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.

- 3) The life of labour, i.e. the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman, is the life worth living.

Gandhi translated the book in Gujarati under the title 'Sarvodaya' which, besides Geeta, Tulsī Ramayan and works by great western philosophers like Tolstoy and Henry David Thoreau proved to be the base of Gandhian philosophy and actions.

### **Invention of 'Satyagrah'**

And it was in South Africa that one of the greatest discoveries in the history of Gandhian Social Work took place in the year 1908, when Gandhi replaced the word 'passive resistance' with another, more powerful and new word coined by him – a contribution to the dictionaries of social sciences. The word was 'Satyagrah' – recourse to truth – force or soul force. We have already discussed 'Satyagrah' in preceding pages of this book.

### **Giving Social Work a Secular Cum Spiritual Base**

When Gandhi left South Africa for good and finally came to India on 9<sup>th</sup> January 1915, he was already bearing the title 'Karmaveer' conferred on him by Indian people. With his arrival, began a new era in India, which lasted for about 33 years, affecting almost all walks of life including social work. No doubt, India has a very long and rich history of social welfare, but in British India, it was put in a religious garb, social work was being undertaken mostly by the followers of Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Zarathustrians, Jains, Sikhs etc. Gandhi gave it a secular cum spiritual base.

### **Welfare of Farmers, Labour and Students**

In the initial phase of his social work practice in India, we continue to see Gandhi as a social actionist. After

founding Sabarmati Ashram on the banks of river Sabarmati in Ahmedabad on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1915, Gandhi proceeded to Champaran (Bihar) to protest against the tyranny and exploitation of the indigo farmers by the British planters. In 1918, he took the cause of textile labours of Ahmedabad and used fast as a non-violent weapon for the first time in India, to secure amicable settlement of the dispute. In the same year he initiated Satyagrah in Kaira in Gujrat in support of the farmers. The hidden journalist in him again came up and the publication of 'Navjeevan' in Hindi and Gujarati, and the English weekly 'Young India' was started in Sept. - Oct. 1919 to promote not only political, but social and welfare causes as well. Founding of Gujrat Vidyapeeth at Ahmedabad in Nov. 1920 was not only an attempt to replace Lord Macaulay's slave - manufacturing educational system with a totally 'Swadeshi' system of higher education, but also to make it community - oriented. Similar institutes were founded later in other parts of the country.

### **Khadi for Socio Economic Independence**

As mentioned earlier, Gandhis concept of total freedom consisted of not only political, but social and economic freedom as well. For economic freedom he regarded 'Charkha' (the spinning wheel) as the most powerful instrument which could provide means of livelihood to crores of poor people living in villages and towns of India. With this purpose a target of setting up 20 lakh charkhas in the country was fixed and a country - wide campaign was initiated in 1921 to boycott foreign cloth and goods which deprived the poor artisans of their employment. The campaign was carried on by thousands of Gandhian social workers despite Gandhi's imprisonment for about 4 years (1922-1924). This ultimately resulted in the founding of "All India Spinners Association " in 1925.

**Breaking Unjust Law and Reducing Social Distances**

The British policy of 'Divide and rule' is a historical fact which was executed to weaken the social fabric, by increasing the already existing social distances between the people, owing to religion, caste, language etc. Gandhi was aware of it and he took first step in this direction by observing fast for 21 days for Hindu-Muslim unity in Sept. October 1924. The year 1930 is another milestone in the history of Gandhian social work, when Gandhi decided to use the weapon of civil-disobedience to break the unjust 'Salt Law' through which the British Govt. wanted to impose tax on kitchen salt, making the lives of millions of poor Indians more miserable. In order to execute it, he undertook a march alongwith his followers from Sabarmati Ashram to the Coastal village Dandi, covering about 100 miles on foot in 25 days (12<sup>th</sup> March to 5<sup>th</sup> April 1930) and broke the law by picking natural salt from sea- shore. This journey is known as Gandhi's 'Dandi march' and after his arrest at Dandi, a movement of civil disobedience, famous as ' Salt Satyagrah' sprung up throughout the country. Nation wide strike was observed and over 1 lakh people were put in Jails. Ultimately the British Govt. was compelled to repeal the Salt law.

**Social Action (Satyagrah) for Social Integration**

The power of Satyagrah was once again established when Gandhi, on 20<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1932 commenced fast unto death in Jail to secure abolition of separate electorates for Harijans. The separate electorates for Harijans were one more example of the British Government. British government adopted a policy to widen the gap between different communities - this time 'Harijans' and 'Savaranas'. The fast was broken on 26<sup>th</sup> September on Government acceptance of his demands regarding Harijans. Within a week after his release from the jail,

a huge public meeting was organized in Bombay under the chairmanship of Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya, on 30<sup>th</sup> Sept. It decided to launch an All India Association against practice of untouchability. This organisation was later known as 'Harijan Sewak Sangh' and is still active in the country. The publication of periodicals 'Harijan' in February 1933 was a by-product of this Satyagrah which expressed Gandhi's intentions to concentrate on the plight of Harijans and the social evil of untouchability. In July 1930 he even disbanded the Sabarmati Ashram and gave it for the cause of the untouchables. This Ashram is now managed by 'Harijan Sevak Sangh'. The same year in August he went on fast on being denied to carry on anti-untouchability propaganda. He was arrested and then released unconditionally after about 28 days. Within a fortnight, he went on a country - wide Harijan upliftment tour, during which he held mass meeting in every State of India, attacking the social evil of untouchability and drawing the attention of caste - Hindus towards the plight of untouchables. During the tour, about 8 lakh rupees were collected for Harijan fund. The tour was discontinued only when a massive earthquake occurred in Bihar on 16<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1933. Gandhi rushed to the State and stayed there for about a month to help and guide the relief work.

### **The Turning Point: Away from Active Politics**

Hitherto many of the Gandhian social work activities had some political tinge, which was the need of the hour. But on 17<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1937, he took a historic decision, which proved to be a turning point in the history of Gandhi as a social worker. The decision was to retire from active politics and to devote all his time and energy to social work with the following priorities: (1) Untouchability eradication (2) total prohibition (3) Hindu-

Muslim Unity. (4) Khadi Gramodyog and Swadeshi and (5) Organization of 7 lakh villages in India.

Although the situations in the country and people's pressure compelled him later to review his decision, yet about 5 years that he devoted totally to social work, proved to be a boon to million of poor people, particularly the Harijans. On 26<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1934, he inaugurated. "All India Village Industries Association" which is still active as "Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)" aiming at giving employment to a very large number of people at their own places of living mostly in villages. On 30<sup>th</sup> April 1936 he shifted to the village Sevagram near Wardha (Maharashtra) which became the capital of Gandhian Social Work and still remains a source of inspiration for the Gandhian Social workers in the country and abroad. He also paid attention to the new theme of basic education which was in reality, a field and community oriented education. On 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1937, he presided over an All India Conference at Wardha to give a formal shape to this new system of education. Founding of 'Go-Sewa Sangh', an organization to protect and serve the cow in the year 1941 was another notable feature.

### **The Charter of Social Reconstruction**

Hitherto, Gandhi and his fellow social workers in large numbers had been working in various fields of welfare and development, like eradication of untouchability, prohibition, Khadi and rural industries, tribal welfare, cow protection etc. It was in the year 1941 that all such activities were codified by him and published in a consolidated form under the title "Constructive programme : Its meaning and place". Gandhi called it the programme of construction of "Poorna - Swaraj" or complete independence by truthful and non-violent

means. This 19-point programme of which the details are available in preceding pages, is popularly known as Gandhi's 19-Point constructive programme and is still regarded as the Bible of socio-economic development by the Gandhian Social Workers in the country.

### **Women and Child Welfare**

The year 1942 was the year of 'Quit India' Movement and the circumstances again compelled Gandhi to be in the centre of the political stage. His wife Kasturba, his companion not only in worldly affairs, but in political and welfare activities as well for more than 50 yrs. expired on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1944 in Jail. In order to pay homage to her, the nation raised more than 1 crore rupees towards Kasturba Memorial Trust and an all India Institute was founded at Kasturbagram, near Indore (M.P.), which is still active in the fields of development of rural women and children and rural sanitation.

In the year 1945, Gandhi laid the foundation of C.F. Andrews Hospital at Shantiniketan (West Bengal) to promote the cause of rural health and sanitation and in 1946 he toured South India to support and bless campaign against untouchability and promotion of Hindustani as a national language.

### **War Against Alcoholism**

By this time, the dawn of independence was clearly visible on Indian horizon. Popular ministries were working in various States. Gandhi raised the issue of prohibition and asked the governments to do away with the revenue extracted from the sales of alcohol and other intoxicants. His expectations from the provincial Govts. were as under:

- 1) Enact laws for prohibition
- 2) Educate people on evils of intoxication
- 3) The liquor shops besides alcohol should be asked to sell books, news papers, sports goods. etc. to divert attention from drinking.
- 4) The revenue received out of the sale of intoxicants should be spent only to educate people on evils of intoxication and for other welfare activities such as child welfare.

### **Gandhi: The One Man Army for Peace and Social Reorganization**

But this dawn (of Independence) unlike natural dawn brought more fire and heat than light. The seed of communal hatred sown by the British was now producing bitter fruits of violence. It was the year 1946 which brought acid test to Gandhi's conviction of non-violence and social fraternity. Riots between Hindus and Muslims erupted in Calcutta, Noakhali (Bengal), Bihar, Delhi and several other places in the country like chain reactions. Leaving aside the jubilation of forthcoming freedom, he rushed to the riot stricken places many times, sometimes on foot, within a time span of about 1 year, beginning in Oct. 1946. In order to bring the two largest sections of the Indian society; Hindus and Muslims together, he put his life at stake, observed fasts, staying in the hearts of riot affected areas, and facing the wrath of the mobs. Ultimately, his Satyagrah was successful in stopping communal violence at many places in India. What happened in Calcutta was described as a miracle by the correspondent of London time". Gandhi could not go to Punjab and there the military with a strength of more than 1 lakh Jawans using arms and ammunition was not able to control communal riots. Commenting on this, Lord Mountbatten,

the last Viceroy of India, said that what could not have been achieved by even four divisions of army, was achieved by the inner power of Mahatma Gandhi. It can be cited as a classic example of social action.

As it is said, to every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. The success of Gandhian Principles and methods added fuel to fire among the antisocial and pro-communal elements. He survived two attempts on his life one before independence, on 28<sup>th</sup> June 1946 when the conspirators tried to derail the train, in which he was traveling, and the second after independence, when on 20<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1948, a bomb-blast took place in his prayer assembly in Delhi. And ultimately, the curtains were drawn on Gandhian era, encompassing almost all the aspects of public life in India, including social work, when he was assassinated on his way to prayer assembly in Delhi, by a Hindu fanatic on 30<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1948.

As said earlier, we have tried to analyze the life and works of Mahatma Gandhi from the view point of social work, leaving apart his role as a national figure, sitting at the helm of public affairs for more than three decades in the Indian sub continent.

### **Characteristics of Gandhian Social Work**

After analyzing Gandhi's Social work activities for more than 5 decades, the following characteristics can be attributed to Gandhian Social Work.

#### **1) A New Indigenous Model of Indian Society**

Gandhi is regarded as the first social thinker in India who presented a complete picture of an ideal Indian society, giving thought to every aspect, such as nature of the State and its administration, defence, health, sanitation housing, education, employment, development of weaker sections and eradication of various social

problems such as untouchability, alcoholism, poverty etc.

## **2) New Philosophy of Social Work**

Although Gandhi said that his values and principles are as old as the hills, yet the way in which he codified and presented them and made them the base of his social and political activities was unique. The code of conduct formulated for Gandhian social workers is also noteworthy.

## **3) A Practical Philosophy**

Gandhi was not an arm-chair thinker. He practiced what he proclaimed. One can see consistency in his thinking and deeds. His 19-point constructive programme is an excellent example of a system converting theory, into practice.

## **4) Invention and Discovery of Methods and Techniques of Social Work**

Fasting, foot march, boycott etc. had been age-old practices in Indian Society, but mostly they were practiced at religious and caste levels. Gandhi gave them a new meaning and utility by applying them at mass – level to achieve socio – political goals. The concept of civil disobedience was borrowed from the great western philosopher Henry David Thoreau but Satyagrah can be regarded as an invention hitherto unknown in social sciences. The Satyagrah practiced by him and his followers offers so many classic case studies for the students of Social Action.

## **5) From Social Reform to Social Development**

No doubt, Gandhi did start as a social actionist and social reformer — it was an era of social reforms in the

country. But unlike many other social reformers, he did not stop at that stage, and proceeded further for the welfare and development of the victims of social problems. As a matter of fact, he did not believe in doing patch-work on severely torn and mutilated social fabric but aimed at constructing a new society.

#### **6) National Net-work of Workers and Institutions**

In the last phase of his life, Gandhi had suggested dissolution of Congress party, creating instead “Lok Sevak Sangh” an organisation free from politics, and devoted fully to social work. Although the idea did not materialize yet he left a legacy of a nationwide net work consisting of large number of social workers, who are now known as Gandhian or Sarvodaya workers and the institutions which are still working on Gandhian Lines.

#### **7) Secular Social Work**

Before Gandhi’s arrival, majority of social organizations in India were working under religions banners. Gandhi gave a secular, rather spiritual base to social work. Unlike modern concept of secularism, his social work did not keep away from the religions, but it picked up soothing and motivating elements from all the religions.

#### **8) Research Training and Publications**

Like Professional Social Workers, there is provision of training for the Gandhian Social Workers as well. Ashrams, all over the country offering short term and long term courses as well as refresher courses for the workers. Institutes like Gandhi Vidyapeeth, Ahmedabad and Kashi Vidyapeeth, Varanasi, which have now been awarded the status of deemed Universities in free India, are also active alongwith several other univiersities which have special chairs and offer dipoma/degree courses through formal and distance education mode,

on Gandhian studies. There are specific institutes like Institute of Gandhian Studies, Varanasi, which are devoted to research and organising seminars and conferences on Gandhian affairs. There is a network of Gandhi Bhavans all over the country engaged in similar activities. Journals and newsletters are coming out regularly and a good number of books are being published every year on Gandhian thoughts and deeds in India and abroad.

### **Conclusion**

In this Unit, we have seen the emergence of Gandhi as a social activist a reformer and a social worker which is synonym to the origin and development of Gandhian social work, first in South Africa and then in India. His impact would be seen in almost all the sectors of social work, such as welfare of farmers,. labour, students, spinners, weavers, women, children, leprosy patients, the untouchables and tribals etc. At the time of partition of India, he personally went to the riot-sticker villages and cities and was successful in establishing communal harmony, acting as a one-man army. The Gandhian Social Work in pre-independence period is characterised by its own model of an ideal society, a new philosophy of social work, shift from social reform to social development, a nationwide network of social workers and agencies, secularism and provision for its own kind of training research and publications.

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## **Social Work in Post-gandhian Era**

*\*S.R. Billore*

### **Introduction**

Gandhi's assassination on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1948 had sent shock waves throughout the world. Paying homage to him, Albert Einstein, the greatest scientist of our times said, "Generations to come will scarcely believe that such a man as this, ever in flesh and blood, walked upon this earth". The distinguished playwright, philosopher and Nobel laureate George Bernard Shaw described him as a phenomenon and the leading psychoanalyst Dr. Eric H. Erickson said, "Gandhi turned into the father of his nation and he extended the paternal feelings to mankind obviously he acted for the species".

### **Gandhi's Relevance in Today's World**

Was Gandhi's demise an end of the Gandhian philosophy and action? Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of free India answered this question in a different way by saying, "The light has gone out of our lives but I am wrong, for the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light and a thousand years later that light will be seen in the country and the world will see it. For the light represented the living truth." Nehru had expressed these feelings immediately after Gandhi's martyrdom, and today, after more than five decades, one can see that Gandhi is still alive as a thought and deed. People are still searching solutions in Gandhi for today's

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problems. Innumerable articles, research papers, books, debates, lectures, plays and films on Gandhi, analyzing, criticizing or praising him show that the Gandhian thought is still there and time has not been able to wipe out Gandhi from the memory of mankind.

### **Gandhi's Impact on Statutory Efforts for Social Welfare and Development**

Now in free India, Gandhi's impact could be seen at the statutory level as well. During the last phase of his life he had given a "Mantra" to Nehru to formulate and test the policies for the nation. He said to Nehru "I give you a *Talisman* (an object believed to be lucky for its bearer), try it whenever in doubt or when your ego overwhelms you. Recollect the face of the poorest and the weakest person that you have ever seen, and ask yourself, how far the step that you are thinking to undertake would help him. Will he get any benefit out of it? Will he be able to have some control over his life and destiny? In other words, will it enable crores of people with empty stomachs and discontented souls to have Swaraj? Then you will see that your doubt is vanishing and ego melting".

Today, according to many Gandhian thinkers and workers, India has deviated largely from Gandhian path, but in the initial phases of our freedom, impact of that Gandhian talisman can be seen on many statutory endeavours. The constitution of India has many articles particularly in the chapters on Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy, which are quite close to Gandhian thought. The constitutional provisions regarding untouchability, prohibition, equality, secularism, freedom of expression, weaker sections, cottage industries, village panchayats decentralization of power and wealth etc. need special mention in this context. Part of social legislation enacted after 1947 on

social problems and protection of the rights of weaker sections also bear Gandhian imprint to a great extent. The reflection of his ideology can be seen in the drafts of first few five year plans.

### **Continuation of the Constructive Programme in post-Gandhian Period**

The agencies established during Gandhian and post-Gandhian eras are still active for the implementation of 19-point constructive programme. Their relationship with the State has also undergone a sea-change, after independence. The British government looked at them with a sense of suspicion and hostility, but in free India. Barring a few exceptions, many agencies have co-ordination with and support, including financial support, from the central and State Governments. Central Government's initiative in launching "*All India Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)*" is an example of statutory intention to support and develop Khadi and village industries throughout the country. The commission gives financial and technical aid to the Gramodyog Boards founded by State Governments, registered NGO's and co-operative societies. The KVIC also provides margin money to *poor beneficiaries* to get loan from the Banks under its *rural employment scheme*. Similarly Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Commission was appointed by Central Government to suggest measures for the development of these *two large weaker sections* of the Indian Society which can be regarded as an extension of Gandhis mission started in 1930's. Another important step taken was abolition of Zamindari and Jagirdari Systems which had hitherto been instrumental in exploitation of weaker sections particularly *marginal farmers* and *landless agricultural labour*. Similar steps were taken by various State Governments on the instruction of Central Government.

Acts were enacted for *Land Reform and Sealing* in order to reduce inequality of income and property Commission for prevention of monopoly was appointed. Panchayati Raj Act was enacted for decentralisation of power. All these and other similar post independence statutory measures can be seen in resonance with Gandhian constructive programme. Parallel to Governmental programmes. Gandhian agencies and workers have also continued their work in the voluntary sector. Some of the prominent agencies are mentioned below.

### **Gandhian Social Work in voluntary sector**

#### **Adim Jati Sevak Sangh - for Scheduled Tribes**

Working as a federation, to which are affiliated all the Gandhian agencies in India, working for the betterment of *tribals*, the 'Sangh' provides guidance on policy matters and support, including financial support to all such agencies in the country. There is a countrywide network of 'Ashram Schools' for tribal students.

#### **Harijan Sevak Sangh for Scheduled Castes**

The main activities conducted through its state units are organising foot marches and to use other means to create public opinion against *untouchability*, and in favour of "Bhangi (Sweepers) Mukti" 'Ashram Schools' are also run for *scheduled caste students* throughout the country.

#### **Sevagram : A Complex of Gandhian Social Work**

Gandhi, on the request of Shri Jamnalal Bajaj, one of his close associates and disciples, sent Vinoba Bhave in 1921 to Wardha to start a branch of Satyagrah Ashram. There at a nearby village called "*Segaon*", Meera Bahan, another disciple of Gandhi was already working. In the year 1936 the ashram was founded at the village

*Segaon* which was renamed as *Sewagram* and the Sewagram Ashram remained Gandhi's headquarters for a pretty long time. Today Wardha has become a complex of a variety of constructive activities conducted on Gandhian lines. Mahila ashram and Brahma Vidya Mandir, *Pavnar* are working towards *women's liberation and empowerment*. Institute of *Gandhian Thoughts* conducts research training and a Diploma Course on Gandhian principles. The institute at Dattapur works towards treatment and rehabilitation of *leprosy patients*. There are institutes working towards *application of science and technology in the rural areas* as per Gandhian principles.

**Gandhi Memorial Trust and Gandhi Peace foundation  
- for Peace and Social Reconstruction**

After Gandhi's assassination it was decided to found Gandhi Memorial Trust (Gandhi Smarak Nidhi) by his followers and admirers and Rs. 12 Crores were collected for this purpose. The trust promotes and supports *research training and field work related to Gandhian Social Work*. As the name is suggestive, The Gandhi Peace Foundation's focus is on Gandhian concept of *peace* the related methodology and its application, ranging from local to global levels.

**Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust - for Rural Women and Children**

As mentioned earlier, after the demise of Kasturba Gandhi in jail in 1944 Rs. 1 Crore was raised to create this Trust with its headquarters in Indore (Madhya Pradesh) The Trust, through its projects, being run all over the country is active in the fields of *welfare of family, women and children* and also *health and sanitation in the rural areas*. It specifically conducts training programmes for rural women. Thousands of such trained women are

presently working in the rural areas to implement Gandhian Constructive Programme.

### **Other Prominent Fields of Gandhian Social Work**

Gandhi had established 'Majdoor Mahajan Sangh' to work among *organized labour* of Ahmedabad, Gujarat which is still functioning. Similarly "All India Charkha Sangh", was founded for the welfare of Khadi *spinners and weavers*, "All India Gramodyog Sangh" to protect and develop cottage and village industries in Villages and the artisans. "The Committee on Prohibition" was constituted to organize campaigns for *prohibition*, which was helpful to some State Govts. to enact laws on prohibition. "Goseva Sangh" "Rashtrabhasha Prachar Samiti" and "All India Leprosy Foundation" have given valuable contribution in the fields of *cow- protection*, propagation of *national language* particularly in the southern states and welfare of *leprosy patients* respectively. Apart from these prominent agencies, a very large number of lesser known agencies / ashrams and individuals are engaged in various sectors of Gandhi's 19-Point constructive Programme.

### **Sarva Seva Sangh: Co-ordination among Agencies**

It was Gandhi's desire to bring all the Gandhian agencies under one umbrella and make some sort of federation to obtain the benefits of co-ordination. This could not be done in his life time. Later due to the inspiration of Acharya Vinoba Bhave, it was resolved in a meeting of the heads of various agencies to constitute such an organization under the title. "*All India Sarva Seva Sangh*". Several agencies were merged into it. The Sangh is playing a major role in bringing co-ordination among remaining Gandhian agencies for social work in the country.

It can be thus said that Gandhian social work did not stop after Gandhi's martyrdom and today, despite its limitations and shortcoming the work is in progress in all the 19 sectors of Gandhian Social Work.

### **Sarvodaya Through Bhoodan and Gramdan**

After Gandhi's martyrdom an all India conference of Gandhian Social Workers was convened in March 1948 at Sevagram, Wardha, which was attended by a large number of followers of Gandhi, including stalwarts like Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Jawaharlal Nehru, Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Prof. J.B. Kripalani, Jaiprakash Narayan etc. It was resolved to form "*Sarvoday Samaj*" an association based on Gandhian ideology. As mentioned earlier, the word "Sarvodaya" coined by Gandhi, literally means rise or welfare of all. The word connotes the greatest good of all and not that of greatest number alone. Anybody, above the age of 18 years could become the member of "*Sarvodaya Samaj*". It was decided to maintain a register of the members and to hold its convention every year. Acharya Vinoba Bhave was entrusted with the responsibility to work as its informal convener, which again attracted the attention of the people even outside Gandhian Circles. Peoples curiosity again emerged, as it had come up earlier in the year 1940, when Vinoba was declared the first individual Satyagrahi by Gandhi, prior to the launch of 'Quit India' movement of 1942. This had become the headline of the newspapers and people had started asking- who is Vinoba ?

#### **Vinoba : Towards Total Revolution**

Vinayak Narhari Bhave, who was later known as Acharya Vinoba Bhave, or simply by his popular name 'Vinoba', was born in a small hamlet of Maharashtra State in the year 1895. Passing his matriculation in 1913, he

left home in 1916 in search of God and ultimately reached Gandhi's ashram at Kochharab. His association with Gandhi lasted for more than 30 years, until Gandhi's assassination. Under Gandhi's guidance, he participated in freedom struggle and social work activities, and went to jail several times. A voracious reader, a scholar of Sanskrit, alongwith proficiency in several Indian and foreign languages, he authored books like 'Geeta Prawachan'- talks on Geeta, which is still one of the best selling books in the country. Impressed by his qualities, once Gandhi wrote to him "Your love and faith fill my eyes with tears of joy. I may or may not deserve them. But they are sure to do you infinite good. You will be an instrument of great service". During Gandhi's life time, Vinoba was regarded as his heir in the fields of spirituality and social work.

### **Rehabilitation of Refugees**

It was because of the faith and regard of leaders like Dr. Rajindra Prasad and Jawaharlal Nehru in Vinoba, that he was persuaded to come to Delhi in 1948 to work among the refugees from Pakistan. For their rehabilitation he went not only to Delhi, but also to several other places in India. However his work among refugees was only an external manifestation of his inner quest for a key to provide a strong and non-violent foundation to the Indian society.

### **The Genesis of Bhoodan**

And Vinoba got the clue three years later, when he travelled on foot from Wardha to Shivrampalli, a village in erstwhile Hyderabad State (now Andhra Pradesh) to attend All India Sarvodaya Conference. After the conference he continued his foot-march in rural Telangana, including a village called Pochampalli, where he closely observed the problems of landless Harijans. They didn't have any regular means of livelihood and

asked Vinoba if he could arrange for only two acres of land per family to keep their soul and body together. Vinoba was perturbed. It was difficult and time-consuming to persuade the Government for this purpose. Suddenly, in the evening prayer-meeting of the villagers of Pochampalli, he asked publically, if anybody could donate only 80 acres of land to 40 Harijan families. He couldn't believe his eyes, when one Ramchandra Reddy got up with folded hands, from the audience and requested Vinoba to accept 100 acres of land to be distributed among Harijans. The day was 18<sup>th</sup> April 1951, now known for the beginning of the movements of Bhoodan and later Gramdan, a big step in the direction of reconstruction of Indian society based on Gandhian ideology.

#### **The Foot March for 14 Years**

Vinoba took it as a divine indication and resolved to start the foot march going from village to village, with the message, that like air and water, land is also God's gift to all and therefore should be shared by all the human beings. His foot-march continued for 14 years, covering the length and breadth of the country, all the states and union territories and even Bangla Desh, which was then a part of Pakistan. In order to give a new impetus to Gramdan movement, Vinoba did not mind the use of vehicle. From the year 1965 to 1969 he launched the new, revitalized movement in Bihar which he called "Gramdan-Storm".

He travelled thousands of kilometers on foot and received more than 40 lakh acres of land in donation of which about 25 lakh acres were distributed among 5 lakh landless *agricultural labourers*. Vinoba's next step was "*Gramdan*"— the donation of the entire village to the villagers by the villagers themselves and upto July 1971, about 1,68,000 *villages* were declared as '*Gramdani Villages*'.

In order to regularize the re-distribution of land, State Govts passed Bhoodan Yagya Acts. The State Boards were created to look after redistribution. The allottees receiving Bhoodan lands were expected to start cultivation within three years otherwise, the land would be allotted to another eligible person. The person receiving land through Board had all the rights of cultivation, inheritance etc. but he can not sell, mortgage and lease it out.

### **Surrender of Dacoits and their Rehabilitation**

Perhaps, as a by-product of Vinoba's Bhoodan movement, another important event took place, which was regarded as a miracle, even by his critics. The valley of river Chambal in Madhya Pradesh had been cursed with the problem of dacoity since centuries and could not be eradicated through violent efforts of the State. On the request of the then President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Vinoba entered Chambal- Valley in the year 1960 and invoked the dacoits to become normal citizens. Nobody knows, what caused the change of hearts of the dacoits of Mansingh gang-the biggest and most fearsome gang of the time. Looking perhaps their saviour and mentor in Vinoba, the gang surrendered before him, alongwith its arms and amunitions. The dacoits, whom Vinoba gave a new name 'Bagis' or rebels, admitted their offences in the court of Law. Most of them got life-time imprisonment, were released in due course of time and were rehabilitated on the lands received in Bhoodan. Similar incident occurred there in the year 1972-73 when about 500 dacoits surrendered before Jaiprakash Narayan, a close associate of Vinoba. The Sarvodaya workers are still active in the valley with the mission initiated by Vinoba.

Around the year 1965 Vinoba settled in his Pavnar ashram, concentrating mostly on the spiritual activities

and breathed his last in 1982, but by then he had already added a new chapter in the socio-economic history of India through initiating Bhoodan, Gramdan and other related activities.

### **Philosophical Base of Bhoodan and Gramdan**

According to Acharya Vinoba Bhave and the Scholars on Bhoodan and Gramdan movements, the word 'Dan' should not be mistaken as charity, but here it means equal distribution. The Almighty or nature has bestowed mankind with air and water, which is free to everybody, without any monopoly or holding, so should be the case with land, which is equally a divine or natural gift to us and should be shared by all of us like air and water. This is the first step in Bhoodan movement through which the landowners are asked to donate voluntarily, part of their land to the landless.

But the movement should not be regarded only as some programme of acquisition and redistribution of land. It is much beyond that. Following are its aims and objectives:

#### **1) Abolition of Concept of Private Ownership**

Like natural gifts such as air, water and land, there are social assets or gifts like money, property, including intellectual property (such as knowledge, wisdom, skills experience, art etc.) which the individual acquires because of being a member of the society. Therefore he should not be regarded as the owner of these assets but only their care-taker or trustee. He should surrender his private ownership of all these assets. Their real owner is the society and they should be utilized for the welfare and development of the entire society.

**2) To Promote Eternal Social Values**

The movement aims at eliminating the gap between 'Haves' and 'Have nots', thus promoting equality and social justice. Its purpose is to bring about change in attitudes of the people towards each other and the society at large, and to promote a sense of brotherhood among people at all the levels, namely rural, national and global.

**3) To Replace 'Baton' Power with Peoples Power**

Like Gandhi, Vinoba also rejects violence in every form. According to him, the ultimate, power of the State lies in the military and police—the sources associated with violence. But in a democratic state, they receive the sanction of the people, hence power originating from these two sources should preferably be called 'Baton Power' instead of violent power. Bhoodan movement aims to replace this power with the power generated from the self-discipline of the people, making the outer discipline imposed through military and police redundant. This would be a great step in the direction of making a State less society.

**4) To Replace 'Rajneeti' with 'Lokneeti'**

According to Vinoba, today State is being run and dominated by party - politics which is power - oriented and not people - oriented. The Bhoodan based society will be free from demerits of party - driven politics which is today synonym to "Rajniti" and will be conducted and run by people themselves as per "Lokniti", i.e. the policy of the people made by the people, for people themselves.

**5) Initiating Total Revolution**

By undertaking above mentioned steps, the society will definitely move in the direction of a socio-economic and political revolution through peaceful and non-violent

means or in the words of Vinoba, towards “*Bhoodan based, village industries oriented non-violent revolution.*”

### **Mechanism of Bhoodan and Gramdan**

In the initial phase of the Bhoodan movement, the landowners were asked to donate at least one sixth part of their land, to be distributed among the landless people of the village. Pretty soon, Bhoodan developed into *Gramdan* and there emerged a complete picture of the new “Gramdan” village. Following are the terms and conditions for any village to become a “Gramdani” village.

- 1) A “*Gramsabha*” or village assembly shall be constituted with all the adults as its members. It will always work according to the decisions taken unanimously.
- 2) Ownership rights of at least 50% of the total land in the village shall be transferred by private land owners to the Gramsabha.
- 3) The farmer shall have the rights to cultivate, possess and inheritance of the land, but no right to sell it to an outsider. The ownership right shall vest with the Gramsabha.
- 4) All the landed persons shall donate 20th part or 5% of their land to the landless labours in the village. Thus nobody shall remain landless in the village.
- 5) A ‘*Gramkosh*’ or village chest shall be constituted, to which every farmer shall contribute 40th part of his yield, the labourer 30th part of his wages, and the money-lender and the employed people, 30th part of their income/salary. The amount thus collected shall be used for the welfare and development of the village.

A Gramdan Village is supposed to be free from four evils – police and court, vices, interest and the bazaar.

**Criticism of Bhoodan and Gramdan Movements**

No human endeavor, individual or collective is totally perfect, so is the case with the Bhoodan and Gramdan movements. Critics have enumerated their following weaknesses:

- 1) Initially a target to collect 50 million acres of land was fixed, of which less than 1/10<sup>th</sup> or only 8.4% could be collected.
- 2) The redistribution of land is equally defective. Only 30% of the land received in donation has been distributed so far.
- 3) It leads to the division and fragmentation of already small and scattered fields, thus leading to uneconomic holdings, unsuitable for mechanized farming.
- 4) A major part of the land received in donation is barren, rocky, undulating, eroded, swampy or otherwise unsuitable for cultivation.
- 5) During the high tide of the movement, a large number of donors had agreed to donate part of their holdings, but later, either they themselves withdrew or their partners or heirs opposed it and the prospective receivers could not get their possession.
- 6) The Bhoodan boards, set up in various States to regularize land redistribution, are not working properly due to several factors, such as legal intricacies, lack of financial and human resources and public's enthusiasm and participation.
- 7) The structure of the Gramdani villages is still far away from the model of an ideal rural society envisaged by Gandhi, Vinoba or the Sarvodaya movement in general.

### **Achievements of Bhoodan and Gramdan Movements**

There is a popular saying that every conflict, ranging from an individual dispute to the great wars is caused by one or more of the three factors, namely land, money and woman. Human history is full of the incidents wherein innumerable people have been killed in all parts of the world in all the times due to these factors. But the Bhoodan and Gramdan movements, opine several social scientist and social workers, present a different facet of the human nature. No doubt, the original target to collect the land in donation could not be achieved. Only about 5 million acres were collected and so far only its one third has been redistributed. But there is no parallel example in world history, when only through persuasion; millions of people have voluntarily donated the land to millions of their poor fellowmen, without any bloodshed or force of law. This achievement becomes more impressive, when compared to the statutory efforts undertaken for the same purpose. Despite relevant legislation and the gigantic and powerful machinery to execute it, the Government, has been able to acquire only 2.2 million acres of land – about half of that collected through Bhoodan.

Vinoba has mentioned clearly that merely redistribution of land or increasing agricultural production is not the ultimate goal of the movement. That would be only incidental. Its main objective is to widen *man's loyalty to entire society* to bring about *change in values and attitudes* of the people. This has taken place to a considerable extent. The concept of abolition of private ownership in favour of the community by millions of people in Gramdan has never been realized in human history prior to this movement. The renowned American thinker and journalist Louis Fischer has described it as "*the most creative thought coming out of the East*" According to Jaiprakash Narain, "In the beautiful

revolution of gramdan, ownership was not abolished by force of any kind, but freely surrendered to the community” To quote G. Ramchandran, the well known exponent of Gandhian Social Work “Gramdan means a *large fund of unity of mind* in the village, to make a *sacrifice in favour of community.....* a mental and economic revolution the re-assertion of modern world. Gramdan is a complete *breakaway from the tradition of private ownership* of land, which has been the rock upon which the life of the village in India has rested during uncounted centuries”. According to the noted educationist and ex-member of Planning Commission Prof. Shriman Narayan, Bhoodan and Gramdan movements are “revolutionizing the basic values of life and the method for achieving the objective through non-violence, democracy and conversion of hearts in place of class-war, hatred and violence.... moreover, the movements are able to touch the most backward and poorest sections of the population”.

Like Gramdan, Community Organization, one of the core methods of Professional Social Work, also aims at working with people at the community level. It would be interesting for Professional Workers to examine Gramdan from the view point of Community organization. Prof. M.G. Ross, the renowned Professional Social Work Educationist and author of the book “Community Organization: Theory and Principles”, was perhaps not aware of Bhoodan and Gramdan, but going through his definition of Community Organization, one can find that the ultimate goal of community organization is “to extend and develop co-operative and collaborative attitudes and practices in the community”. The definition of Community Organization given by Sanderson and Polson in their book “Rural Community Organization” seems very close to the concept of Gramdan - “The aim of community organizations is to develop relationship

between groups and individuals that will enable them to act together in creating and maintaining facilities and agencies through which they may realize their highest values in the common welfare of all members of the community.” It can thus be said that both Gramdan and Community Organization ultimately aim at attitudinal change, spreading we-feeling and a sense of belonging and fraternity in the community – there is no basic difference between the two.

### **Epilogue**

The tradition of Gandhian Social Work which emerged in South Africa in nineteenth century and flourished in India has touched several aspects of the life of Indian people directly or indirectly, is now more than 100 years old. As regards its contribution to the field of social welfare, we find that it has given a new, different and compact set of values, principles and code of conduct for the social workers. The methods like Satyagraha are unique and range of fields of service is very wide, covering almost all types of weaker sections. Bhoodan and Gramdan movements have no parallel in the world history of social work and the time – testing methods and techniques of Gandhian Social work are being applied to meet new challenges all over the world. This school of thought and action is completely indigenous and can give a lot to the rest of the world.

### **Conclusion**

Gandhian Social Work did not stop after Gandhi’s martyrdom and the work is continuing not only in all the 19 sectors of the constructive programme but new avenues have been opened as per need of the time, such as rehabilitation of dacoits, Satyagraha against public display of *obscenity* through posters and media,

improvement of quality of *education* through 'Acharya Kul', Protection of *environment* through 'Chipko movement' and strengthening the 'Shanti Sena', the *peace* brigade to fight against *terrorism* and *disruptive forces* in the country. Impact of Gandhian thought can be seen on statutory efforts as well, such as the Constitution of India, social legislation and five year plans.

The most noteworthy landmarks in the history of Sarvodaya / Gandhian social work in the post-Gandhian period are the Bhoodan and Gramdan movements, launched by Gandhi's disciple and his socio-spiritual heir, Acharya Vinoba Bhave. While Bhoodan movement invokes the landed people to donate at least 1/6<sup>th</sup> part of their land to the landless, the Gramdan is a movement for the restructuring of the village wherein the land owners in the village surrender their ownership rights in favour of 'Gramsabha' – the village assembly constituted by them. Land is redistributed in such a way that nobody remains landless in the village. The 'Gramsabha' with all the adults in the village as its members functions as the supreme authority to conduct and govern all the activities in the village. Despite its short comings, Vinoba and his followers wrote a new chapter in human history by collecting more than 5 million acres of land and receiving more than 1.5 million villages in Gramdan through non-violent methods. Basically there is no difference between Gramdan and Community Organisation.

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