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The Political Ideas of Mahatma Gandhi

Mohandas K. Gandhi was an influential figure in the history of India and modern Indian political theory who gained international fame for his effective ideologies. Gandhi acknowledged traditional concepts and symbols but without reluctance introduced interpretations and ideas from foreign to Indian culture that shows the importance of Western humanism in his approach. He contrasted Western technology on the basis that the machine civilization brought with it the mistreatment of men and the concentration of power. In this respect, he trailed Tolstoi, whose writings, with those of Thoreau and others, he studied while in South Africa. He tried out of different modes of political action and different types of political program. The influence of Gokhale on his thought is enthusiastically ostensible, as is the impact of the element of Indian nationalist political thought signified by Tilak. These influences are perceived in Gandhi's attempt to redirect religious individualism and his emphasis on native languages and the Swadeshi principle. Swadeshi puts first those duties nearest to us in space and time: it is "that spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote." Humanity is served through service to our neighbour; our understanding of the world is only the understanding we have of those with whom we live.

This disagreement has major economic implications: those things produced at home are to be preferred. Its extension, the use of the boycott, is another inheritance of Tilak. According to Gandhi, reconstruction begins at the local level, and the village is the base of social planning. Village activity and an individual's effort and initiative are stressed in his writings and speeches.

He consistently favoured small-scale organization and the use of simple tools and materials at hand. His campaign for the use of only hand-spun and hand-woven cloth (khadar) had great importance to the larger program, and it was the spinning wheel that Gandhi chose as the symbol of social autonomy. His ideas on land reform were deep-seated, but he did not call for the elimination of private property. He hoped that the business class could be persuaded to accept the ideal of economic equality: the idea of wealth held in trust for the poor would make expropriation by legislative enactment unnecessary.

Gandhi debated that the accumulation of riches beyond a man's legitimate requirements is similar to theft. This additional wealth must be used for the well-being of the community. Gandhi also asserted on the importance of physical labour for everyone. Constructive work, which he considered an essential part of civil disobedience and other political action, included also the removal of untouchability (which ranked with the spread of khadar as a goal of critical significance to the movement), communal unity and basic education through the knowledge of a craft. In learning a necessary craft the young person not only acquires a skill but also strengthens his bonds with the community and thus comes to an understanding of purposes.

While dealing with the political philosophy of Gandhi, it is well established that Gandhi was basically religious as well as the ethical personality. He upheld highest moral standards in politics. As the most crucial strategist in politics, he developed the political methods and campaigned the movements to capture the state's power through the prolonged mass movement. Gandhi avowed on politics that, "For me there is no politics without religion not the religion of the superstitious and the blind, religion that hates and fights, but the universal religion of toleration. Politics without morality is a thing to avoid."

He believed that the politics is the one of media to open the door of service to public and not for exploiting the power for one's selfish purpose. Additionally, he said, "For me politics bereft of religion are absolute dirt, ever to be shunned. Politics concern nations and that which concerns the welfare of nations must be one of the concerns of a man who is religiously inclined, in other words a seeker after God and truth. Therefore, in politics also we have to establish the Kingdom of Heaven."

Gandhi has defined about the nature of power, that is "Possession of power makes men blind and deaf; they cannot see things which are under their very nose and cannot hear things which invade

their ears. There is thus no knowing what power-intoxicated government may not do. So patriotic men ought to be prepared for death, imprisonment and similar eventualities." He supposed that the power can be gained through the service to the people and also through the majority of votes. He defined "Power is of two kinds. One is obtained by the fear of punishment and the other by arts of love. Power based on love is a thousand times more effective and permanent than the one derived from fear of punishment." Gandhi opposed the power concentration in a few or single hand. He believed that the concentration of political power leads to the exploitation, inequality and promote the hierarchal society. So equal power possession in the hands of public is necessary to make true democracy. He said that "When people come into possession of political power, the interference with the freedom of the people is reduced to a minimum. In other words, a nation that runs its matters smoothly and effectively without such State interference is truly democratic. Where such a condition is absent, the form of government is democratic in name."

Gandhi was considered as the combination of prophet and a politician by many political theorists as well as the activists all over the world in a highest calibre. Within himself, Gandhi combined the feature of the Philosopher and politician. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, one of the crucial follower and detractor of Gandhi, once he said that Gandhi had to play the roles of a world teacher as well as the Supreme leader of the Indian National Liberation Movement. He additionally believed, often his former role is the role of a world teacher became so prominent that he had to compromise with his other role. The points of Netaji's may or may not amenable but it appears that in the context of national liberation movement it is true. While studying the ideologies of Gandhi's Philosophy thoroughly, it is established that there is no contradiction in Gandhi's perception. It can be thought that Gandhi considered politics as a tool for strengthening human beings in social, economic, moral and spiritual fields. Gandhi himself confessed this to his South African friend that he was religious and not political. In his Sarvodaya political order, there is no space for politics of Power. Rather it is the base for politics of cooperation. Sarvodaya is the realization of the happiness and elevation of all. There are two techniques for stabilization of power of the people

- i. Constant propaganda, publicity
- ii. Decentralization of power.

The aim is to change the heart of the people. Sarvodaya opposes the ideas of egoism and wealth. There is no scope for class struggle in Sarvodaya. Social good, rationality and communal harmony are basic philosophies of Sarvodaya. Therefore, Sarvodaya accepts the universalization of self-government. Thus, the political philosophy of Sarvodaya is a powerful intellectual attempt to build the plan of political and social reconstruction on the basis of metaphysical perfectionism.

Gandhi's political thought originated from different traditions, Eastern and Western. Though he had inherited many traditions, he had not agreed in to with any one of them. He had selected many traditional concepts from his immediate precursors as well as from ancient texts. Gandhi did never claim to be an original thinker. But when apprising all his sayings, it can be said that his literature is a conceptual framework, common to a philosopher. Furthermore, when it is found that his theoretical formulations and practical pursuits are identical, there is a reason to accept him as a philosopher in the Indian sense.

Gandhi himself acknowledged to his South African friend that his bent of mind was religious and not political. Romain Rolland in his biography of Gandhi written in 1924, had remarked that if Tilak would not have died Gandhi might have chosen a religious life rather than a political. According to Gandhi, politics itself was his religion. He was opposed to politicizing religion. He was for spiritualizing religion but he was essentially a sophisticated man and never sought this own salvation secluded from the world. Gandhi stated politics had surrounded him like the coil of a snake. He could have thought of avoiding politics, if without politics food and work could be provided to the hungry jobless people of India. He strongly sensed that without involving himself in politics, it is not possible to remove socio-economic mistreatment and political suppression and thereby moral humiliation of the people of Indian unless he involved himself in politics.

In this standpoint, this can be successfully performed if we can alleviate the present state of politics to Dharmic politics. Gandhi described Dharmic politics as it should be removed from corrupting influences and sectarianism. This politics should be the privilege of all. Gandhi was not prepared to accept any fixed doctrine or mechanical way for either of politics or religion.

Gandhi had a dream of transforming the socially and morally deteriorated and separated individuals in a manner where individuals can enjoy their freedom in a spirit altruism. To

understand Gandhi's politics, it is also necessary to understand Gandhi's concern for the cleavage between state and civil society. The community life is weakening rapidly and civil society could not formulate any mechanism to control it.

Gandhi was concerned since his days of Hind Swaraj that the Western civilization had been hedonistic, in the sense of self-pleasure centred, pragmatic in the sense of immediate material benefit and individualistic in the sense of egocentric in the sense of sovereign individual oriented. He found British parliament had become a sterile women, where they display self-interest or party interest (or power only). He accused disease lying with the western civilization itself. Gandhi found that the whole business of politics had been running to a wrong path on a trick.

It is known to all that Gandhi was a God-oriented man. According to him, Truth is God and as in other spheres of life, politics should also be an exploration after truth and this search must be understood by Gandhi, is for raising general conscience of the people. Every individual must be free from spasms of hunger must prevent exploitation and subjugation. He would be in a position to work for his own development through the performances of duties. A universal morality would emerge which would create an atmosphere for healthy political life. People should accept self-transformation as a continuous process. Gandhi was ardent in saying that politics grieving of religion is a death trap which kills the soul. By spiritualization of politics, Gandhi intended something larger than our day to day life but not excluding world of day to day experiences. A community of persons on the process of self-realization be able to resist the corrupting influences of existing interests.

According to Gandhi, this is not just a philosophical dream far from realities of political life. Many great philosophers such as Plato could not reconcile the dichotomy between reality and ideal. From Gandhian viewpoint, we should not distrust the capability of commoner to rise above passion and self-interest and we can evolve a modus operandi by which a new kind of politics might emerge as Gandhi imagined.

It can be said that Gandhi considered politics as an instrument to strengthen human beings in social, economic, moral and spiritual fields. Gandhi himself self-proclaimed this to his South African friend that his bent of mind was religious and not political.

Gandhi had a dream of changing the socially, morally degenerate and alienated persons in a manner where individuals can enjoy their freedom in the spirit of unselfishness. To comprehend Gandhi's politics, it is also essential to know Gandhi's concern for the cleavage between state and civil society. Gandhi contrasting the Western Civilization because, it had been self-indulgent nature in practice, in the sense of self-centred pleasure, pragmatic in the sense of immediate material benefit and individualistic in the sense of egocentric in the respect of sovereign individual oriented. There by, the community life is fast waning and civil society could not prepare any method or system to control it.

The practice for adjusting and reconciling differences, a method on which Mahatma Gandhi's eminence must ultimately rest, assumes the moral potential of the wrongdoer, the possibility of reasonableness in the adversary. In his political theory Gandhi concentrated on the means of achieving political ends to a degree uncommon in the history of Western thought. If there is a single theme in his philosophy, it is that the character of the means determines that of the results. As one student of Gandhi has mentioned, "It is only when means themselves are understood to be and designed to be more than instrumental, to be, in fine, creative, that the next step will be taken in the evolvment of a constructive philosophy of conflict" (Bondurant 1958, p. 232).

Contribution to Indian Nationalism: Gandhiji had contributed to Indian national movement extraordinary. He made the Indian National Congress a people's congress and the national movement a mass movement. He made people fearless and bold and taught them the non-violent methods for rebellious against the troubles of caste system and unfairness. He had a strong desire for individual liberty which was thoroughly bound with his understanding of truth and self-realisation. That Gandhiji was evident from his erstwhile nationalist colleagues when he launched his satyagraha movements in distant areas of Champaran (Bihar), Kheda and Ahmadabad (Gujarat) instead of towns and cities that had so far remained the hub of the nationalist activities. His political policies brought about drastic change in the Congress that now extended its sphere of influence even in the villages. These three movements projected Gandhi as an emergent leader with different kinds of mobilising strategies. While explaining the growth of Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru thus contended, Gandhiji knew India for better than we did, and a man who could command such tremendous devotion and loyalty must have something in him that

corresponded to the needs and aspirations of the masses. Besides these local movements, Gandhi led three major pan Indian movements.

The 1919-21 Non-co-operation Movement was the first one that gained considerably with the merger of the Khilafat agitation of the Muslim against the dismantling of the Khalif in Turkey.

The Civil Disobedience movement in which Gandhi reigned supreme.

The 1942 quit India movement, also called the open rebellion, was the last of the three Pan-Indian campaigns that Gandhi spearheaded.

Satyagraha:

Satyagraha envisions the probability of conversion, the possibility that a sense of justice may be roused in the antagonist. Satyagraha moves from rational persuasion to the stage of suffering to the stage of nonviolent coercion. This last form, which includes non-cooperation and civil disobedience, is the final resort when the other forms have not succeeded. Civil disobedience, the most radical phase, was understood by Gandhi as a higher obedience, obedience to a transcendent moral law. It can be a perilous tool and readily misrepresented. Gandhi always counselled great caution, as in the instance of the fast, which too drastically limits the alternatives available to the opponent and therefore should be accepted only by those disciplined in the methods of satyagraha. He desired to distinguish nonviolent forms of resisting evil, which are usually forms of passive resistance from satyagraha, which disowns the courting of injury. Fasting, he thought, may certainly become a type of passive resistance. Yet in a choice between weakness and slavery on the one hand and the use of violence on the other, Gandhi was unmistakable in recommending violence.

Satya entails Truth; Aagraha means insistence. The accurate meaning of this word is insistence on truth. Initially Gandhi denoted to this method of fighting injustice as passive resistance. As he polished the technique over the years he realized that true Satyagrah is to be totally fearless and non-violently militant, and therefore he changed the definition to Truth Force. In the West, Satyagraha is called militant nonviolence. The objective of Satyagraha is to resolve the conflict

with a challenger without inflicting physical or emotional injury to him, and with preparedness to suffer physical or emotional injury to oneself. During the course of the conflict, the adversary's essence is not disrupted, and the two sides develop respect and goodwill towards each other after the conflict is resolved. Both sides must not harbour resentment, bitterness and vengefulness during or after the conflict is resolved. Since Truth is relative, the Satyagrahi must be willing to compromise his initial demands to some extent. However, he must recognize a certain irreducible minimum demand for which he should be willing to die. In other words, one must not take up Satyagraha lightly. At the same time, nonetheless, the opponent must not be humiliated and he must be given a chance to save his face.

Mahatma Gandhi established fundamental ideologies of Satyagraha in the course of his lifelong experiments with Truth and Nonviolence. Anyone wishing to practice Satyagraha must first systematically study various books on and by Gandhi; take steps to rid oneself of common human weaknesses such as greed, hatred, hubris, selfishness, dishonesty, jealousy, fear, passivity, hypocrisy, and the like; cultivate truthfulness, love of humanity, faith in the essential goodness of people, simplicity of lifestyle, detachment from sense objects, selfless service of humanity, generosity, infinite patience, willingness to admit one's mistakes, forgiveness, introspection, belief in equality of all human beings, respect for life, determination to fight injustice everywhere and at all times, reluctance to inflict emotional and physical injury on adversaries, and willingness to cheerfully suffer physical and emotional injury. In other words, a Satyagrahi must continually struggle to become an unusually good person.

Satyagraha has stimulated the huge number of people as few ideas have been able to do. In the movement led by Abdul Ghaffar Khan, satyagraha developed Muslim connotations, but its objective remained political independence and social reform. Gandhi was unwilling to speculate on the nature of a government based on nonviolence, but it is clear that the sense of community provoked in the people by satyagraha would be the basis of the new polity. Democracy, or self-government, intended independence of controls whether those exercised by a foreign power or those of a centralized national government. The principles of the rebel could never be fully realized, Gandhi acknowledged, but state intervention in the conduct of human affairs could be considerably reduced if the democratic state were in actual fact a federation of village communities in which voluntary associations succeeded, rights flowed from the fulfilment of

obligations, and a high degree of self-sufficiency made possible the relative independence of each town.

Gandhi claimed that satyagraha is a socio-economic and political armament which is based on truth and non-violence. This soul-force takes various forms depending upon the situations. Satyagraha is a means of resistance and conflict. It has different forms. They are:

1. - Civil Disobedience
2. - Non-Cooperation
3. - No Destruction
4. - Hunger strike (fasting)
5. - Hartal (striking work)
6. - Hijrat (immigration).

The principles, conditions and qualifications of Satyagraha are pertinent to all these forms.

Satyagraha when applied as a method for social transformation is a civilized method. Satyagraha continues from a spirit of love and not hatred, Gandhi ji thought of the idea of Satyagraha in South Africa as a practical way of defending the diminishing rights of his countrymen settled there. Though, he introduced and applied the concept of Satyagraha in South Africa but he never appealed that it was his own. He always branded him as a commentator. All his Satyagraha campaigns were followed by open letters to the authorities demanding redress of grievances and at the failure on the part of the authorities by the stipulated time, campaigns were launched. He utilised his 'Indian opinion' in South Africa and the 'Harijan' and 'Young India' in India to give publicity to his strategy against the Government, whether in South Africa fighting for vindication of the rights of the coloured people, or in India fighting for the freedom of the motherland, he applied this technique of Satyagraha or soul force or the technique of love and nonviolence (Bijoyini Mohanty, 1991).

Non violence:

Ahinsa is not the uppermost good. It is the essential condition of truth. Truth is supreme among values. Truth is demolished by violence, and inability to know the truth with absolute certainty requires us to be tolerant of those who disagree with us. Gandhi believed that satyagraha does not permit the use of violence because the absolute truth cannot be known by man, and for this reason he is not competent to punish others. Gandhi spoke as a relativist, arguing that loyalty to truth rules out fixed modes of thought and action. But it can be said that the most inspiring truth is the sacredness and unity of life.

Gandhi stated that non-violence is not just a personal virtue. It is also a social virtue to be cultivated like other virtues. In his opinion, non-violence was the basic precept in his political activities; he refined all the political techniques purely based on non-violence. He used non-violence to attain his political objectives. He said that the society is mostly directed by the expression of nonviolence in its reciprocated dealings. The state must be built on non-violence otherwise it will be unpredictable with the natural development of people. Gandhi has the belief that, the stateless society is the means to the non-violent state, it should have minimum interference in individual's autonomy and non-coercive. He clarified the practicability of Ahinsa the non-violence and placed it as an effective weapon for direct action, was unique in itself.

Gandhiji thought that self-suffering is a vital part of the struggle for the accomplishment of truth through non-violence. Self-suffering which he regarded as non-violence in its dynamic condition, had to be conscious. Conscious suffering means fighting of one's whole soul against the will of the oppressor. Ahinsa or non-violence means infinite love. Gandhiji wrote that "Non-violence is the first article of my faith. It is also the last article of my creed." It is the domineering duty of satyagrahi to make boundless activities for the realization of truth through non-violence. Gandhiji used this method of non-violent resistance not only in fighting the British occupation in India but also in dealing with India's internal problems. According to Gandhi, Ahinsa or Non-violence meant both passive and active love, refraining from causing harm and destruction to living beings as well as positively promoting their happiness. Gandhi defined Ahinsa in two conflicting ways: On the one hand, in its narrow sense, it simply meant avoidance of acts harming others, while in its positive sense, it signified promoting their wellbeing, based on infinite love. Jawaharlal Nehru characterized Gandhian belief of Ahinsa as "a positive and

dynamic method of action and it was not meant for those who meekly accept the status-quo". Ahinsa, in its positive implication, was based on highest moral values, typified in the selfless self. Ahinsa was harmonising to Gandhi's model of conflict resolution that was certainly the most original and creative model of social transformation and political action even under most opposing circumstances. This was a theory of politics that progressively became the dominant philosophy of a national political movement in which Gandhi governed supreme.

The belief of non-violence is a relative but not a complete or a continuous principle to Gandhi. He never tried to suggest the complete non-violence, since he understood the fact that either human life or human organizations cannot continue to exist on the basis of pure non-violence. Gandhi perceives: "Strictly speaking no activity and no industry is possible without a certain amount of violence, no matter how little. Even the very process of living is not possible without a certain level of violence. What we have to do is to minimize it to the greatest extent possible" (Gandhi, M. K, 1960). However, he had an opinion that people can decrease violence to the highest extent because obliteration is redundant and avoidable. He recommended that people should commit to least violence that is unavoidable for the survival of human life. Violence, when it is predictable, must be working in an ethical spirit, that is, for the sake of creating a more appropriate surroundings for the expansion of non-violence. Gandhi elucidated non-violence as abstaining from "causing pain to, or killing any life out of anger, or for a selfish purpose, or with the intention of injuring it."

According to Gandhi there are five simple maxims in his concept of non-violence. They are:

1. "Non-violence suggests as complete self-purification as is humanly possible.
2. Man for man the strength of non-violence is in exact proportion to the ability, not the will, of the non-violent person to inflict violence.
3. Non-violence is without exception superior to violence, i.e., the power at the disposal of a non-violent person is always greater than he could have if he was violent.
4. There is no such thing as defeat in non-violence. The end of violence is surest not a defeat.
5. The ultimate end of non-violence is surest victory if such a term may be used of nonviolence. In reality where there is no sense of defeat, there is no sense of victory."

(Gandhi, M. K, 1935).

Through in these sayings, Gandhi described the nature of non-violence and violence and its necessity to uphold one's life individually and socially. His practice of non-violence necessitates huge moral courage. It has no place for fearfulness or weakness. It is the highest asset of the courageous. According to Gandhiji, true non-violence assumes the tenure of pure bravery. Gandhi proclaims: "I do believe that, where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence"(Gandhi, M. K, 1920). He vindicated the use of violence by those who do not know how to defend themselves or honour their families in a non-violent way. He regarded that physical violence escorted by mental good-will, is better than physical non-violence go with by mental violence. Therefore, the theory of non-violence to Gandhi contains some elements of violence than susceptible submission to wickedness.

Presently, Vinoba Bhave advised that the coercive power of the state be replaced by direct, voluntary action on the part of the people. The Sarvodaya movement, under the leadership of Bhave, held that the good of one man is inseparable from the good of others; in his efforts to translate this idea into an economic reform program, Bhave appealed the Gandhian theory of the trusteeship of wealth. Millions of acres of land have been turned over to landless farmers, but the revolution has come "from above" and not as the consequence of direct efforts of the people to solve their own glitches.

Criticism of Western civilization:

Gandhiji had highly objected for both western civilisation and western democracies. He challenged the practicalities of modern western civilisation. The stylish, aggressive and dissolute aspects of modern western civilisation resisted him. According to him, the modern civilisation was equal to darkness and disease. He condemned severely western democratic politics because they were plague-ridden with threefold contradiction. They believed in limitless enlargement of capitalism and this resulted in exploitation of the subjugated sections of society. Some of them even took resource to fascist or totalitarian techniques. He honestly spoke that it was not through democratic methods that Great Britain had conquered India. He also condemned the policy of racialism followed in South Africa and the southern parts of the USA. Gandhi concentrated that non-violence could lead to exact democracy. Democracy and violence could not be reconciled.

As an idea and strategy, swaraj gained unusually in the context of the nationalist articulation of the freedom struggle and the growing democratisation of the political processes that already brought in hitherto socio- economic and cultural differences. Underlying its role in a highly divided society like India, swaraj was explicated in the following ways:

- A. National independence;
- B. Political freedom of the individual
- C. Economic freedom of the individual
- D. Spiritual freedom of the individual or self-rule.

Although these four explanations are about for different features of Swaraj, they are nevertheless complementary to each other. Of these, the first three are negative in character while the fourth one is positive one in its implication. While expounding on Swaraj, Gandhiji associated it with swadeshi in which his theory of Swaraj was expressed. If Swaraj was an initial theory of Gandhi's social and political thought, swadeshi was the empirical demonstration of those pertinent social, economic and political steps for a society different from what exists. Gandhi stated that swaraj was not just political liberation; it means human liberation as well. He stated that "mere withdrawal of the English is not independence. It means the consciousness in the average villages that he is the maker of his own destiny, that he is his own legislator through his own representatives". He believed that the real swaraj will not emerge by the gaining authority but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when abused. Swaraj is the power of the people to determine their lot by their own efforts and shape their destiny the way they like. Swaraj is to be achieved by teaching the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority.

Political freedom is another significant feature of swaraj. For moderates, political freedom meant independence within the overall control of the British administration. Even the most militant of the moderates like Surendranth Banerji always supported constitutional means to secure political rights for Indians within the constitutional framework of British India. Unlike the moderates, the extremists did not care much about the methods and insisted on complete independence, which meant complete removal of the British government from India. The third other dimension of swaraj is economic freedom of the individual. Economic swaraj stands for social justice, it

encourages the good of all equally including the weakest, and is vital for decent life. In the opinion of Gandhiji, "India's economic future lay in charkha (Spinning Wheel) and Kadhi (Homespun cotton textile). If India's villages are to live and flourish, the charkha must become universal". Gandhiji argued that for rural civilisation, it is impossible without the charkha and all it implies, i.e., revival of village crafts".

Another attribute of swaraj is self-rule. It is perhaps a unique dimension of Swaraj which indicate its qualitative difference with political freedom. As a concept, it signifies a process of eliminating the internal obstacles to freedom. Self-rule as an important element, clearly indicates the importance of moral values which are relative to society. Gandhian idea of Swaraj as self-rule appears to be based on the philosophical idea of advaita which is etymologically the kingdom or order or dispensation of self, myself or the truth. So Gandhian struggle for swaraj was entrenched in Indian metaphysics and spirituality. He opposed large scale industrialism and mechanization, and condemned western commercialism, imperialism and secularism.

Ideal state: Notion of ideal state or society explained by Gandhiji was a non-violent and stateless society. He disclaimed state on ethical, historical and economic grounds. A man is moral when he acts freely and voluntarily. According to Gandhi, the state characterises violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul but as the state is a soulless machine; it can never be dissuaded from violence to which it owes its very existence. Although he considered the state as imbedded in violence, he differed from anarchists. Unlike anarchists, Gandhi gave more emphasis on moral force and on the realisation of one's own self and his method of establishing a stateless society free from violence. Therefore, in political ideology of Gandhi, there was no place for violence in ideal society. Further, Gandhi also did not want to eliminate the state completely as did the anarchists.

Stateless democracy:

Gandhi's model is a stateless democracy, in which there is a federation of satyagrahi village communities, functioning on the basis of voluntary cooperation and dignified and peaceful co-existence. Non-existence of state as appreciated by Mahatma Gandhi is impossible instantly or in near future. Even then, it is obligatory on the people, who are living in state organizations, to

develop non-violence that is permanently present in their nature and to enhance it progressively up to satisfactory level. Along with that, democratic system should work in direction of development of non-violence at individual, community, social and national levels. The atmosphere of fear, the decrease of values in life and the problems having harvested intensely cannot be eliminated without developing it.

He acknowledged that his ideal state or society would have representative institutions and government. His ideal society would be a stateless society comprising of self-sufficing, self-regulating and self-governing village communities joined together in a voluntary federation, the maintenance of federation involved the necessity of government. Thus his ideal state is principally a non-violent state, and not a non-violent and stateless society as it is generally thought. He was only opposed to the oppressive authority and to the theory of absolute sovereignty of the state, but not to the ideal state itself. Gandhian idea of ideal state was a non-violent democratic state where social life would remain self-regulated. In a democratic state everyone is his own ruler. In the opinion of Gandhiji, democracy lies not in the number of persons who vote, but in the sense to what extent masses imbibe the spirit of non-violence, and society service.

In an ideal democratic state, the powers are to be decentralised and equality is to succeed in every sphere of life. Every individual is to be given complete freedom to devote himself to social service according to his capacity. The structure of the state that is to arise as a result of non-violent revolution is to be a compromise between the ideal non-violent society and the facts of human nature. He believed that democratic government was a distant dream so long as non-violence was not recognised as a living force, an unbreakable dogma, not a mere policy. According to Gandhi, State is necessary due to the anti-social propensities of certain individuals and groups. But the functions of the state are to be reduced to the minimum. Similar to Bertrand Russel, G.K. Chesterton, G.D.H.Cole and other guild socialists, Gandhiji acknowledged that most of the functions of the state were to be transferred to the voluntary associations in order to have a real self-government in the country. There are certain things which cannot be done without political power, but there are also numerous other things which do not at all depend upon political power, and hence they should be left to the voluntary associations. When people come

into ownership of political and economic power, the interference with the freedom of the people is reduced to a minimum.

He commented that, "A nation that runs its affairs smoothly and effectively without much state interference is truly democratic. When such condition is absent the form of government is democratic in name." Gandhiji deliberated the state as an organisation of violence and force. Being an apostle of non-violence he was repelled by the coercive character of the state. He assumed that in the ideal state there will be the independence of the moral authority of the people, and the state as a structure of violence would be extinct. But he was not for immediate ending of the state power. The increasing perfection of the state should be the immediate goal although the ultimate aim is philosophical and moral revolution.

Views on state: Gandhi stated that the state characterizes violence in a concentrated and organised form. Gandhi's critique of the modern state originated from its coercive aspect and its anti-human thrust. At an elementary level, the mode of operation of the modern state constituted an infringement with his concept of non-violence. In the beginning of 1931, Gandhi wrote in *Young India*, "To me political power is not an end but one of the means of enabling people to better their condition in every department of life. Political power means capacity to regulate national life through national representatives. If national life becomes perfect as to become self-regulated, no representation becomes necessary." There is then a state of progressive Anarchy. In such a state, everyone is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never an interference to his neighbour.

In the ideal state, there is no political power because there is no state. But the ideal is never fully realised in life. Therefore, the classical statement of Thoreau is that government is best which governs the least. One of the major elements in his critique was the concept of autonomy, which was composed of two different ideas. One was the idea that citizens should neither be dominated by others nor by the state. The other idea held that individuals should be self-governing, should bear moral standards for a self-evaluative assessment and accept responsibility for individual selection. He also condemned the impersonal character of the modern state. In his view, the modern state could be paralleled with a machine without any one being apparently in control of it. Another notable feature of Gandhi's critique related to the intrinsic homogenising tendency of the modern state. Gandhiji believes that the state would not accept individual differences and

diversity of opinions and attitudes. It would become "Hostile to strong and independent, minded citizens groups and community lest they should become centres of independent initiative and dissent.

In a write-up published in Modern Review in the year 1935, Gandhi has raised this issue persuasively; " I look upon an increase in the power of the state with the greatest fear, because although while apparently doing good by minimising exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of all progress". It can be appraised the modern state was not well-matched with the vital moral values associated with humanity.

Voter's qualification: In the Gandhian democracy, voters will play an important role. Their members are being directly elected. Voters are to have the qualification of manual work. Their importance was always emphasized by Gandhiji. Village democracy would be decentralized political order.

Trusteeship:

The theory of trusteeship is major and new contribution of Gandhiji's in the arena of political philosophy. The main drive is on treating resources as a public trust with man being the trustee, so that the riches of nature and society are fairly used. The theory was proposed to combine the advantages of both capitalism and communism, and to socialise property without nationalising it. Gandhiji pronounced a caution as early as 1942: "I see coming the day of the rule of the poor, whether that rule be through the force of arms or nonviolence," and counselled trusteeship management as an effective alternative to class Conflict. Gandhi stated that all material property was a social trust. The owner was not required to take more than what was needed for a moderately comfortable life. The other members of society who related with the property, were jointly responsible with the owner for its management and were to provide welfare schemes for all. The owner and the rest of the people were to regard themselves as trustees of the property. In his editorial in Harijan (3rd June, 1939,) the concept of trusteeship was stated as "Suppose I have come by a fair amount of wealth either by way of legacy, or by means of trade and industry I must know that all that wealth does not belong to me, what belongs to me is the right to an

honourable livelihood, no better than that enjoyed by millions of others, the rest of my wealth belongs to the community and must be used for the welfare of the community."

Decentralisation:

Gandhiji had proposed for independent India a policy that would be based on the belief of democratic self-government or self-rule. Democracy can function efficiently and according to the concept of swaraj only if it is decentralised. He opined that, "centralisation as a system is inconsistent with non-violent structure of society." He wanted the centre of power to move from cities to villages. The notion of decentralisation marks the culmination of Mahatma Gandhi's Experiment with Truth and Non-violence in the varied aspects of life. It has vital role to accomplish Gandhiji's dream of transformation India from bottom upwards so as to strengthen the villages as self-sufficient and self-ruling units of administration. Gandhiji's perception of decentralisation can be suitably understood and appreciated within the frame work of his central ideas, faith and convictions which culminated in his living and unshakable faith in Truth as God. Gandhiji considered Truth as the 'Sovereign Principle', the pole star of his life which includes numerous other principles. Truth, he considered as Absolute Reality which include the relative truths as well. Relative truths are nothing but the stepping stones to Absolute Truth which has to be observed in thought, word and deed. Truth is God and it is also the substance of all ethics.

While devising the decentralised system of rule, Gandhi modernized this theory of oceanic circle which he enlightened as: "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 circle of villages till at last the whole becomes a 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.

The building blocks of democracy have to be villages." Gandhiji had a desire that each village to have an annually elected Panchayat to manage the affairs of the village. Each village following the oceanic circle theory would be autonomous yet independent. As Gandhiji debated "My idea of village swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its own vital

wants and yet inter-dependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity. "Gandhiji intensely believed that decentralisation of power was a prime concept in his theory of democracy. However, he laid down certain conditions for the realisation of true democracy in India. He stated it wholly wrong and unfair for individuals to take the law into their hands.

In numerous reports, it is indicated that Gandhiji appealed for decentralisation of political and economic power through the organization of village panchayats. He held the opinion that by serving the villages, Swaraj (self-rule) could be established. He firmly stated that we have to make a choice between India of the villages and India of the cities which are a formation of foreign supremacy. He was positive when he stated that, the dream of Panchayat Raj come into true, the humble and the lowest Indian could be correspondingly the ruler of India with the highest in the country. The polity of the Panchayat Raj is different from the polity of the mass scale. This the reason that Gandhiji could not admit the parliamentary democracy which he called "the tyranny of the majority". Gandhiji was very particular of the inclusion of the topic of the village panchayat in the Constitution as they reflect the people's voice. Gandhi wrote, "I must confess that I have not been able to follow the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly, there is no mention or direction about village panchayats and decentralisation in the foreshadowed constitution. It is certainly an omission calling for immediate attention if our independence is to reflect the people's voice. The greater the power of the panchayats, the better for the people."

The village panchayat, the basic unit of administration offers possibility for direct popular participation. It gives relief to the weaker sections of the community. The village panchayat functions along democratic lines. Gandhiji imagined a three tier system of rural and local self-government namely-the village, the block, the district level panchayats so as to ensure the participation of the adult female and male members of the village. Gandhiji asserted that the democratic structure of the local institutions should be decentralized to the grass root level so that the lowest group is empowered by partaking in the decision making process.

Gandhi's dream of establishing an ideal non-violent Sarvodaya socio-political and economic order promises the participation of the masses in the dialogue of their own affairs through the three levels of Panchayat Raj system. He envisaged an ideal social order with a view to rebuild society along the democratic ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity. It is basically a democratic society which has its own political and economic order. The economic order envisioned by

Gandhiji stood for a moralized and humanized decentralized economic structure with the village as its centre. Although, he has not written any extravagant treatise on economics, his economic theory was fundamentally normative with a warm human touch. In this economic structure, he favoured production by the masses rather than mass production.

The idea of decentralisation has political implications as well. Gandhi had firm belief that human life being an undivided whole, no line can ever be drawn neither between its different compartments nor between ethics and politics. One's everyday life is never proficient of being detached from one's spiritual being. Both act and react up on one another. Politics as considered by Gandhiji is thoroughly connected with ethics and religion. Gandhiji's very entry in to politics is to spiritualise it. It was Gandhiji's firm religious faith and belief that drew him into the field of politics. Gandhi's mission in the political area consisted in avoiding violence and to eradicate violence through decentralisation of power from the state. But he had doubts regarding the realization of a fully non-violent state and government for obvious reasons. Firstly, it represents all the people. Therefore, Gandhiji thought about the prospect of a predominantly non-violent state which is essentially non-violent. Gandhiji upheld that such an end can be achieved only under decentralization. Centralization as a system is inconsistent with the non-violent structure of society. Gandhiji considered government, whatever its external form may be as merely an externalization of the moral level of the individual.

The attainment of political decentralisation depends on economic decentralisation. Decentralisation in the economic sphere infers the central principle of self-sufficiency. It is not absolute self-sufficiency but confined to the basic needs of the people such as food, clothing and shelter. He wanted that people should be independent as regards the satisfaction of the elementary needs. He visualised of a society free from mistreatment of the weaker sections of the society and also his support of charka and village industries demonstrate his living faith in decentralization of economic power. The promotion of Khadi movement and village industries meant decentralization of both production and distribution of the necessities of life for economic decentralization is principally designed to support the interest of the lowliest of the low and the helpless. Khadi represents the unity of Indian community which provides economic freedom and equality. Main topic of his philosophy of decentralization is oriented towards full employment of human resources of a society and also to provide ample opportunity for manual labour.

According to Gandhiji, decentralization does not mean devolution of power alone. But it is a system by which duties and responsibilities have been transferred from a centre authority to the institutions at the lower level. Gandhiji visualized Panchayat Raj as it will give power to the ineffective irrespective of caste, sex, creed and religion and in which, "the humblest and the lowest Indian could be equally the ruler of India with the tallest in the country". Villagism and village republicanism were important milestones in the onward march towards the realization of democratic decentralization.

It is well established in numerous studies that according to Gandhiji, flawless democracy is possible only by perfect nonviolence because no true democracy can succeed in an atmosphere of violence. Democracy and violence cannot go together. Gandhiji became highly critical of western democracy for it lacks the sincere spirit of democracy. Gandhiji said that If India has to evolve the true type of democracy, there should be no negotiation with violence or untruth. Non-violent democracy has its basis in self-sufficient village Republics. In the true democracy of India, the unit is the village. True democracy cannot be worked by few men sitting at the centre. On the contrary, it has to be worked from below by the people of every village.

To summarize, the political ideas of Gandhiji has remarkable consistency and continuity. He considered man as exemplifying the spiritual principle in him which is divine. He discussed that the divine nature of man makes religion to engage itself positively with the world. Gandhi was an activist. He worked for the enhancement of society. In the field of politics, he comprehended the issues with special consideration based on Indian nature of socio-economic and politics. He defined politics as the best means to regulate the national life and also he determined that its power should decentralize in unbiased manner. According to Gandhiji, the happiness of every individual is the end. He found different types of satyagraha and non-violence as the best way to attain the ends. He articulated the noteworthy theories in politics in order to attain his ultimate end of welfare of all. He thought that the state in concentrated form of power structure is more coercive than individual. So he recommended the political power decentralization in the democratic form of governance. Because decentralized democracy gives the possibility to the public contribution and representation. It guarantees the liberty and autonomy to the individual, village and nation in its extensive application of the welfare world will be attainable.

He was not convinced and opposed the notions that religion should be separated from politics. Politics empty of religion is meaningless. He thought that politics offers great opportunities to serve others and such service is an essential attribute of religion. He considered that ends and means are integral to each other. He applied this belief to the pursuit of truth as well, which he considered as God himself. Truth as end and non-violence as means are inseparable. Gandhiji was a moral revolutionary. He believed that violence disturbed the real revolution of the social structure. He believed that violence would spell the fate of mankind. He believed that a non-violent solution of problems of people was not only possible but was the only way to have a real solution. He considered the villages as the centre of Indian economic organisation. His economic radicalism is brought out in his contest of the concept of equality of wages for the lawyer, the doctor and the scavengers. His notion of Panchayat raj remained a distant dream, but his arguments for people's participation in governance motivated and also consolidated movements for extending of egalitarianism in India.

