

CHAPTER III

GANDHIAN CONCEPT OF NON-VIOLENCE

3.1 MAHATMA GANDHI'S CONCEPT OF NONVIOLENCE-

“My life is my message”; these words describe one of the greatest freedom fighter, a leader, philosopher, philanthropist and a guide who led India to its independence. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi endowed with the title of ‘Mahatma’ conferred by Rabindranath Tagore truly justifies his title. Once he was asked by a Christian minister that, what was the most transformative experience in his life? He narrated the story of his first week in South Africa. He said, “He was traveling overnight by train to conduct a case in Pretoria. He was quietly reading in a first class compartment when a white conductor appeared at the door and ordered him to move immediately to a third class compartment, or be thrown off the train. Gandhi found himself face to face with institutionalized racism. He refused to budge, so they beat him up and threw him off the train. He sat all night in the freezing cold on the train platform in the middle of nowhere weighing his options. He could return to India, or he could join the handful of violent revolutionaries who seek change through bloodshed, or he could pursue a third path: peaceful, prayerful, public confrontation with legalized racism until everyone’s civil rights were honoured. “The train steamed away leaving me shivering in the cold,” Gandhi recalled. “The creative experience comes there. I was afraid for my very life. I entered the dark waiting room. There was a white man in the room. I was afraid of him. What was my duty, I asked myself. Should I go back to India, or should I go forward, with God as my helper, and face whatever was in store for me? I decided to stay and suffer. My active nonviolence began from that date. And God put me through the test during that very journey. That was one of the richest experiences of my life” (Dear J., 2002). He was truly a ‘Mahatma’ mainly because throughout his life he tried to establish a just and equal society based on nonviolence and peace. He discarded violence not only because an unarmed people had very little chance of winning in an armed rebellion but because he considered violence as an evil weapon which leads to destruction and creates more

problems instead of solving it, the outcome of which was always hatred and malice. For Mahatma Gandhi there was no other God on earth than truth, and the only means for realisation of truth was ahimsa. Mahatma Gandhi was a versatile genius who was considered as the father of nonviolence as according to Mark Shepard he raised non-violent action to level never before achieved. (Shepard M., 2002) He himself told while talking about nonviolence that it is as old as hill and he has nothing new to teach about it. Krishna Kriplani asserted that “Gandhi was the first in human history to extend the principle of nonviolence from the individual to social and political plane. (Kriplani K., 1990) He adopted it as his way of life and made people understand that it can be applied by anyone but the only condition was that the person practising ahimsa had to be strong because according to Mahatma Gandhi nonviolence was not the weapon of the weak. He warned that for achieving that strength there was no easy way, it required great discipline, like that of a soldier, as it takes a very arduous course of training to acquire a mental state of nonviolence. Unless there was a cooperation of mind and heart the outward ahimsa was a mere hypocrisy which was harmful not only for the man himself but also for the other people. So to reach the perfect state of ahimsa it was very necessary that the mind, body and speech were in proper coordination. He did not make any glib division of human beings into ‘good’ and ‘bad’ rather he was convinced that every human being, even the enemy had a kernel of decency; there were only evil acts no holy evil men. Although his thoughts were criticised by many who believed in violent methods but he firmly affirmed that nothing enduring can be built upon violence; no matter if the results through nonviolent methods were slow but surely they were durable and long-lasting. (Nanda B.R., 1994) According to Bhikhu Parekh, Mahatma Gandhi believed that people had inbuilt nonviolent way of feeling, thinking and judging but modernity gave rise to inner war with oneself, so the main goal should be to achieve inner peace and harmony. For this purpose nonviolent thinking should not be dogmatic and regimented rather equivocal and varied. Besides this the feeling of nonviolence meant loving without possessiveness or the desire to mould the other person because nonviolence often teaches to compromise with the opponent. It was love coupled with detachment. A nonviolent way of judging implied being open to the difference between people, and not taking more than one’s fair share of resources.(Parekh Bikhu, 1999) Mahatma Gandhi’s thoughts and views about nonviolence had been very well explained by himself in his autobiography entitled “The Story of

My Experiment With Truth” published in 1927. The title of his autobiography was inimitable; he named it as his experiment with truth mainly because according to him there were two kinds of truth; Relative truth and Absolute truth and therefore he explains that “This truth is not only truthfulness in words, but truthfulness in thought also, and not only Relative truth in our conception, but the Absolute truth the External principle, that is God. There are innumerable definitions of God, because his manifestations are innumerable. They overwhelm me with wonder and awe and for a moment stun me. But I worship God as truth only, I have not found him, but I am seeking after him...But as long as I have not realised this Absolute truth, so long must I hold by the Relative truth as I have conceived it. That Relative truth must, meanwhile, be my beacon, my shield and buckler.” (Gandhi M.K., 1927, p 15) For Mahatma Gandhi truth and God were interchangeable and they cannot be realised by just reading spiritual books and meditating rather by experimenting and practising ahimsa in thoughts, words and deeds. Through his book he tried to encourage others in actualisation of their self and showed that the percept of ahimsa was not only for the extraordinary but for everyone. (Baneja Balwant, 2001) Mahatma Gandhi further explains about his concept of ahimsa in his autobiography and writes: “Ahimsa is a comprehensive principle. We are helpless mortals caught in the flagration of himsa. The saying that life lives on life has a deep meaning in it. Man cannot for a moment live without consciously or unconsciously committing outward himsa. The very fact of his living, drinking, eating and moving about necessarily involves some himsa, destruction of life, be it over so minute. A votary of ahimsa therefore remains true to his faith if the spring of all his actions is compassion, if he shuns to the best of his ability the destruction of the tiniest creature, tries to save it, and thus incessantly tries to be free from the deadly coil of himsa.” (Gandhi M.K., 1927, p. 319) The key ingredients of ahimsa according to Mahatma Gandhi were: a belief in unity of life and brotherhood of man; non-injury in thought, word and deed; sense of sacrifice based on the values of equability and detachment; trusteeship in public service; love of one’s opponent; compassion and forgiveness, voluntary respect for State laws; and proclivity for openness and dialogue. Ahimsa for him was a work in progress which was capable for bringing change both at individual and societal levels. (Baneja Balwant, 2001) It was not only an idea but a force, a physical reality or a metaphysical substrate that underlined and defined all reality, the deeper truth behind the dross and instability of the world, the truth underneath and beyond the seeming

ruthlessness that apparently confined both human life and the world of nature to endless cycle of gratis violence. It was a force that individual could accumulate and concentrate (Dixie Q. & Eisenstaedt P., 2011). But besides his positive view about nonviolence Mahatma Gandhi did allow to use violence in certain cases if it was the only way to secure justice, because according to him if nonviolence was superior than violence than violence was superior to passivity in the force of injustice. Mahatma Gandhi once even quoted that “I do believe that, where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence...I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honour than that she should in a cowardly manner become or remain a helpless witness to her own dishonour. But I believe that nonviolence is infinitely superior to violence...” (Gandhi M.K., 1920). He objected violence because it disseminates hatred and can bring good which was only temporary and not for the long run. According to Mahatma Gandhi, violence was not a natural tendency of human beings rather it was a learned experience which could be overcome only by nonviolence.

MAHATMA GANDHI’S CONCEPT OF ENDS AND MEANS

Mahatma Gandhi’s advocacy of nonviolence is closely connected to his attitude towards means and ends. According to him nonviolence is the means and truth is the end. Both are so intertwined with each other that it is practically impossible to separate or detach them. They are like two sides of the same coin. The practice of ahimsa inevitably leads to truth and practice of himsa can never lead to Truth. This convertibility of means and ends brings us to the thought that our religious and ethical ideals not only inform the ends we aim at but also the means we employ to reach them. So “means and ends alike come under moral scrutiny.” (Oxana Akulova). Mahatma Gandhi always had to face the problem of means and ends. He discussed about it in his book ‘Hind Swaraj’ which faced severe criticism. He wrote that even great religious men have committed crimes by believing that there is no moral connection between the means and the ends. According to various schools of thought there is a sharp dichotomy between means and ends. Scholars in their discussion about means have always related the moral implications or theoretical and contingent compatibility of means with the desired ends. In the western tradition there is a tendency among many of claiming that the end justifies the means-moral considerations cannot apply to the means except in relation to the ends. Mahatma Gandhi

however rejects the dichotomy between means and ends and goes to the other extreme and state that it is means, rather than ends that provide the standard of morality. (Kumari Rinki, 2014). According to D.G. Tendulkar he did not believe in the maxim that the end justifies the means. The man who uses force does not care about the means and yet foolishly imagines that this will make no difference to the end he seeks (Tendulkar D.G., 1969). But it is important to recognize that “impure” means must result in an impure end (Harijan, 1947). One cannot attain truth through untruthful means or secure justice through unjust means. If we are sure of the “purity” of means we employ, we shall be led on by faith before which all fear and trembling melt away (Harijan, 1937). He emphasised the purity of means in every sphere of life. During his struggle for India’s independence he once even remarked ‘I am prepared to sacrifice everything for the liberation of my country, but not truth and nonviolence’; which clearly showed that he was certain about the non-violent means to attain the end which was freedom of India. According to him life was one and all other divisions were meaningless. There might be misconception among some people that violence is the law of life which is not the reality, because if it would have been the reality, then the life of all human being would have extincted thousands of years ago. The very existence of human beings on earth in the midst of terrible atomic weapon shows that the law of life is love. (Bharti K.S., 1991). According to Pattabhi Sitaramaya Mahatma Gandhi insisted that the means should be pure for man has control over means not on the results (Sitaramiya P., 1947) He pointed that “the means may be linked to a seed, the seed to a tree; and there is just the same inviolable connections between the means and the ends as there is between the seed and the tree” (Hind Swaraj, 1938). By giving this statement he tried to explain that like the seeds and the tree, means and ends were interrelated. It shows his belief in the moral law of Karma i.e. we reap exactly what we sow. One cannot get a flower by planting cactus. Further he says that the extreme means is itself the end, i.e. the end progressively realizes itself through the means. The end can never result all of a sudden out of the means. Infact when means slowly progresses it turns itself into the end. The means apart from leading to an end shapes the end. In his philosophy self-realisation or spiritual freedom is the end of all human actions (Mishra A.D., 1999). According to J.K. Mehta, Mahatma Gandhi paid much attention to the means over the end mainly because he made a distinction between the objective of life and the objectives of living. With some justification we might call simplicity of life and nonviolence to be the

objective of living and the realisation of self is the objective of life. Living is the process through which life manifests itself. Our thoughts, words and actions are the different ways in which our span of life on this earth manifests itself. When we compare the objective of living and the object of life, the former appears as the means to the attainment of latter. It is through the various objective of living that we can attempt to reach final end or the objective of life. Mahatma Gandhi kept the objective of life in his mind and was mostly talking about the objectives of living, which ultimately lead us to the objective of life. As is your living so is your life. Life is subtle, fundamental and more permanent force. Living is more concrete, more superficial and transient. Life is infra-sensorial while living is super-sensorial. The same is the condition with the means and the ends. To quote Mahatma Gandhi “we have always control over means but not over the end”, because means are more concrete and the end is more subtle. Moreover this statement asserts a contingent truth about the extent and the limit of our free will, that the individual’s capacity to determine what he can do in any specific situation at any given time is much greater than his power of anticipation, prediction and control over the consequences of his actions. Living arises when life comes in contact with the material world. Living is the manifestation of life in terms of words and deeds. The same way we can say about means and ends, means are manifestation of ends in terms of words and deeds. Objective of living are meant to sub-serve the objective of life. (Oxana Akulova) Besides this Mahatma Gandhi was the first to apply nonviolence in the field of politics as an action and establish its worth. For him politics was just the means to acquire nonviolence and truth.

PASSIVE RESISTANCE VS SATYAGRAH: MYTHS AND REALITY

Most of the people believe that a struggle based on pacifism forced the British rule to move out of India. The success of nonviolent method and strategy applied by Mahatma Gandhi was nothing but a myth. They even considered Mahatma Gandhi as the embodiment of politically effective pacifism. But the reality was that there was nothing passive in his nonviolent action. Rather it was active and dynamic. His nonviolent technique known as Satyagrah was often confused with passive resistance. To some extent this confusion was created by Mahatma Gandhi himself because at the beginning he himself referred his nonviolent technique as passive resistance. But soon he realised his mistake and rejected the term ‘Passive’. He once stated

that, “When in a meeting of Europeans I found that the term ‘passive resistance’ was too narrowly construed that it was supposed to be a weapon of the weak, that it could be characterized by hatred, and that it could finally manifest itself as violence, I had to demur to all these statements and explain the real nature of the Indian movement. It was clear that a new word must be coined by the Indians to designate their struggle” (Gandhi M.K., 1956, p. 318). He therefore, renamed it as Satyagrah (truth-force). His nonviolent strategy was not a defensive one rather he always was on the offensive side. Later he explained that although the aims and method of passive resistance do resemble with Satyagrah but the two differed from each other as “the North pole from the South”. Advocates of passive resistance adopted nonviolence as a policy not as a principle to avoid retribution from the overwhelming force of the British (Chandra P., 1997). Satyagrah was much more than passive resistance or a means to avoid suffering. It was rather a means of self-suffering and demonstration of people’s patience and resistance power against injustice. It was truth force – an outgrowth of nonviolence. Mahatma Gandhi always pointed out that there were three possible ways to fight injustice or respond to oppression. First was the coward’s way to accept the injustice and run away from the situation without facing it. Second was to stand and fight by force of arms, instead of running away. This way according to Mahatma Gandhi was better than the coward’s way. The third way which was the best way according to him was to fight bravely through nonviolent means. Passive resistance was an act of nonviolent protest but if the suffragists found the right opportunity they did turn violent by putting buildings on fire and assaulting men. They did not intend to kill anyone but they do thrash people whenever they get the chance in order to make things hot for them. But in the case of Satyagrah there was no place for brute force. The Satyagrahis never used physical force or harm anybody even when they had ample of opportunity to do so. In passive resistance there was no scope for love while in Satyagrah there was no scope for hatred. Passive resistance was often looked upon as a preparation for the use of violence while Satyagrah can never be utilised as such (Gandhi M.K., 1924). In this context Bharatan Kummarappa stated that, “It is a far cry....from pacifism to Gandhiji's idea of nonviolence. While pacifism hopes to get rid of war chiefly by refusing to fight and by carrying on propaganda against war, Gandhiji goes much deeper and sees that war cannot be avoided, so long as the seeds of it remain in man’s breast and grow and develop in his social, political and economic life. Gandhiji’s cure is, therefore, very

radical and far-reaching. It demands nothing less than rooting out violence from oneself and from one's environment” (Kumarappa B., 1949)

SATYAGRAH

The term Satyagrah was first coined by Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa because he felt that the term Passive Resistance was not the appropriate term for describing the method that he was using. It was unique in the sense that it for the first time offered a method of solution to resolve conflicts without using any physical force or violent method. The word Satyagrah was a combination of two Sanskrit words i.e. Satya (Truth) and Agraha (firm grasping). According to Mahatma Gandhi it meant ‘Truth-Force’. He further explains that “its root meaning was holding on to truth; hence therefore I have also called it love-force or soul-force (Hingorani A.T., 1962). The Rowlact Act proposed by British on Indians was considered very unjust by Mahatma Gandhi. In this context he once said that, it is said that it is a very difficult, if not an altogether impossible task to educate ignorant peasants in Satyagraha and that it is full of perils, for it is a very arduous business to transform unlettered ignorant people from one condition into another. Both the arguments are silly. The people of India are perfectly fit to receive the training of Satyagraha. India has knowledge of *dharma*, and where there is knowledge of *dharma*, Satyagraha is a very simple matter. . . . Some have a fear that once people get involved in Satyagraha, they may at a later stage take arms. This fear is illusory. From the path of Satyagraha, a transition to the path of a-Satyagraha is impossible. It is possible of course that some people who believe in armed activity may mislead Satyagraha by infiltrating into their ranks and later making them takes to arms. . . . But as compared to other activities, it is less likely to happen in Satyagraha, for their motives soon get exposed and when the people are not ready to take up arms, it becomes almost impossible to lead them on to that terrible path” (Gandhi M.K., 1929). This Rowlact Satyagrah transformed his words into action and it made Gandhi realize the potential of the growing mass discontent in the anti-British struggle; and this *Satyagraha* was also a litmus test for the Mahatma, who now became confident in *Satyagraha* as a technique for political mobilization (Chakrobarty B., 1969, p.61). Mahatma Gandhi once said; “it is more correct to say that Truth is God, than to say that God is Truth” (Gandhi M.K., 1931). For him the ultimate goal of life was the realisation of truth and seeing God face to face and the

second goal was to bring about social and political change in the society. For that purpose he used Satyagrah as a means to attain those ends. Satyagrah as a technique of nonviolent protest gave more attention to means i.e. the non-violence than the end i.e. the attainment of truth. Mahatma Gandhi's that uncompromising insistence on non-violence in the pursuit of Satyagrah made it a distinctive as well as controversial technique of social and political change. (Varkey T., 2014). The concept of Satyagrah was often misunderstood by many people but if one deeply studies the Gandhian literature he would find that there were certain specific characteristics of Satyagrah which distinguish it with other methods misunderstood as Satyagrah. There were three fundamental pillars in the Gandhian concept of Satyagrah which needs to be understood because without understanding them it was very difficult to understand the real meaning of Satyagrah. They were truth, non-violence and self-suffering.

TRUTH

Mahatma Gandhi defined Satyagrah as a "relentless search for truth and a determination to reach truth." (R.P. Mishra, 2007) Throughout his life Mahatma Gandhi remained the seeker of truth. He believed that morality was the basis of everything and truth was the substance of all morality. For him truth was the sovereign principle for executing his morality. His definition of truth always kept on expanding due to his search for the Absolute Truth because he believed that until he reaches the Absolute Truth i.e. God he should hold on to the Relative Truth which for that moment will be his beacon light and shield (Balwant Baneja, 1983). It was for that reason he named his autobiography as 'The Story of My Experiments with Truth'. He explains in his autobiography, "If I narrate (my experiment with Truth) in a dispassionate and humble spirit, many other experiments will find in them provision for their onward march. For be it from me to claim any degree of perfection for these experiments. I claim from them nothing more than a scientist who, though conducts his experiment with the utmost accuracy, forethought and minuteness, never claims any finality about his conclusions, but keep an open mind regarding them. I have gone through deep self-introspection, searching myself through and through and examined and analysed every psychological situation. Yet I am far from claiming any finality or infallibility about my conclusions." (Gandhi M.K., 1927). Therefore he never claimed that he

knows the Absolute Truth but he did find the way to reach it. The truth element in Satyagrah which according to Mahatma Gandhi was the Truth-force was also relative truth and not the absolute one. Everytime when he experimented with his concept of Satyagrah he became more and more aware of the relative character of truth as an operative principle. According to him Satyagrah was a dynamic concept and a technique of action in which everytime the relative truth differed while dealing with the social and political problems. In order to avoid the confusion of analysing the real truth he talked about the relationship between truth and non-violence because for him Satyagrah was an experiment of bringing truth and nonviolence together into political conduct. He once said that “Some friends have told me that truth and nonviolence have no place in politics and worldly affairs. I do not agree. I have no use for them as a means for individual salvation. Their introduction and application in everyday life has been my experiment all along.” (B.N. Ray, 2008)

NON-VIOLENCE (AHIMSA)

For Mahatma Gandhi nonviolence was the only way to seek truth or reach to God. It was the means to reach the end i.e. truth. Truth according to him cannot be realised by mere meditation and reading books rather by exercising a heart-felt practice of ahimsa in thought, words and deeds. It is fundamental tool for one’s continual search for truth (Balwant Baneja, 1983). He tried to emphasise that “There is no half way between truth and non-violence on the one hand, and untruth and violence on the other. We may never be strong enough to be entirely non-violent in thought, word and deed. But we must keep non-violence as our goal and make steady progress towards it. The attainment of freedom, whether for a man, a nation or the world, must be in exact proportion to the attainment of non-violence by each. Let those, therefore, who believe in nonviolence as the only method of achieving real freedom keep the lamp of nonviolence burning bright in the midst of the present impenetrable gloom. The truth of a few will count; the untruth of millions will vanish even like chaff before whiff of wind” (Young India, 1926). He explained the positive meaning of ahimsa and said that “ahimsa is not merely a negative state of harmlessness but it is positive state of love, of doing good even to the evil-doer” (Gandhi M.K., 1921). He further elaborates that, “The ahimsa is the basis of the search for truth. I am realising

every day that the search is in vain unless it is founded on ahimsa as the basis. It is quite proper to resist and attack a system, but to resist and attack its author tantamount to resisting and attacking oneself. For we are all tarred with the same brush, and are children of the Creator, and as such the divine powers within us are infinite. To slight a single human being is to slight those divine powers, and thus to harm not only that being but with him the whole world.” Some of the key ingredients of Gandhian ahimsa were a sense of sensitivity and forgiveness, sense of sacrifice, feeling of unity and brotherhood, feeling of gratitude and non-hatred, fondness for open dialogue, etc. There was no place for cowardice in his concept of ahimsa. Similarly there was no place for cowards in Satyagrah. He emphasised on the inseparableness of truth and nonviolence in Satyagrah and described it as follows; “It is a movement intended to replace methods of violence and it is movement based entirely upon truth.” (Bondurant, 1971) He believed that ahimsa needed proper training of strong will power, moral courage and patience. All these properties helped in the transformation of mind for which inner conscience was most important. He was very particular about the practice of ahimsa and it was because of his that uncompromising attitude towards ahimsa that made Satyagrah a unique technique. But at the same time he also explained to those who were practising ahimsa just for namesake that, “all my advice is useless where conviction is wanting. Let every Congressman, therefore, weigh all the pros and cons, then make his definite choice and act accordingly, irrespective of consequences. He will then have acted truly even though it may be mistakenly. A thousand mistakes unconsciously made are better than the most scrupulously correct conduct without conviction behind to back it. It is like a whited sepulcher. Above all we must be true to ourselves, if we will be true to the country and lead it to its chosen goal. Let there be no cant about nonviolence. It is not like a garment to be put on and off at will. Its seat is in the heart, and it must be an inseparable part of our very being (*Young India*, 1926).

SELF-SUFFERING

Self-suffering is another most important key aspect of Satyagrah. It is the weapon of the strong to fight the evil. According to Gandhiji; “Nonviolence cannot be taught to a person who fears to die and has no power of resistance” (Gandhi M.K., 1935) Therefore those who believe that

suffering is the way of cowards is completely wrong. For Mahatma Gandhi individual's dignity was of supreme value so he insisted that submitting to humiliation should be resisted even at the cost of self-suffering of the body, even unto death. He further pointed out that being forced to act against one's own conscience was dehumanising so every Satyagrahi "must refuse to do that which his conscience forbids him to do and must preserve the dignity of the individual though it means loss of property or even life." (Thomas Varkey, 2014) Self-suffering in conjunction with self-purity, is embraced as a way of converting our opponents (and the larger society) because to see a pure person suffering for a just cause can have a transformative impact on those who hold to, support and cooperate with wrong (Nasheed Fareed, 2012). "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." (Gandhi M.K., 1961) Mahatma Gandhi tried to relate love and self-suffering and in that context he says, "Love never claims, it ever gives. Love ever suffers, never resents, never revenges itself...The test of love is tapasya and tapasya means self-suffering." (Bondurant, 1971) He said "We have to endure every hardship that we can imagine and wisdom lies in pledging ourselves on the understanding that we shall have to suffer all that and worse. If someone ask me when and how the struggle may end, I may say that if the entire community manfully stands the test, the end will be near...That as long as there is even a handful of man true to their pledge, there can only be one end to the struggle and that is victory" (Appadorai A., 1992).

Accordin to Arne Naess, in Satyagraha the following suggestions must be kept in mind:

1. The aim in group struggle is to act in a way conducive to long-term, universal, maximal reduction of violence.
2. The character of the means used determines the character of the results.
3. A constructive program, positive peace building work should be a part of every campaign.

4. One should engage in positive struggle in favour of human beings and certain values; that is, fight antagonisms, not antagonists.
5. All human beings have long term interests in common.
6. Violence is invited from opponents if they are humiliated or provoked.
7. A violent attitude on the part of would be Satyagrahis (advocates of Satyagraha) is less likely if they have made clear to themselves the essential elements of their case and the purpose of the struggle.
8. Secrecy should be avoided in Satyagrah. The better opponents understand the Satyagrahi's position and conduct, the less likely they are to resort to violence.
9. The essential interests which opponents have in common should be clearly formulated and cooperation established on that basis.
10. Personal contact with the opponent should be sought.
11. Opponents should not be judged harder than the self.
12. Opponents should be trusted.
13. The property of opponents should not be destroyed.
14. An unwillingness to compromise on non-essentials decreases the likelihood of converting the opponent.
15. The conversion of an opponent is furthered by personal sincerity.
16. The best way to convince an opponent of your sincerity is to make sacrifices for the cause.
17. A position of weakness in an opponent should not be exploited. Satyagraha is concerned with morality over and above 'winning'.

(Naess Arne, 1974).

According to R.R. Diwakar “The word Satyagrah was loaded with so much meaning that it amounts to a philosophy, but it is a practical philosophy of life, of action of self and of co-realisation.” (Diwakar R.R., 1969) For Mahatma Gandhi Satyagrah was his philosophy of life. Its creativity was inherent in its bases of ahimsa and moral persuasion. It was the technique involving a ruthless regard for honesty, a fearless desire to right wrong and an attempt to understand an opponent’s point of view. (Horseburgh H.J.N., 1968) He once quoted that “The Science of Satyagrah...has come to me... by scientific research. It is the result of the hardest labour human being is capable of. I have applied to this research all the skills of a scientist.” (Dhawan G., 1946) The main aim of Satyagrah according to Mahatma Gandhi was to resolve any conflict and bring a total transformation. It works not only to resolve the conflict for temporary purpose but to remove it from its roots. For him conflict had a positive role to play since it provided an opportunity to bring in unity of life and helps in creation of a superior social order and peaceful coexistence. Stayagrah aims to remove the underlying cause of any conflict and for that the solution was not imposed on the parties rather it was made felt from within. It actually targeted to affect the conscience of the opponent and then achieve the solution. (R.P. Mishra, 2007) According to Mahatma Gandhi three steps were important for resolving any conflict. Firstly a Satyagarhis needs to reason with the opponents in order to persuade him. When reasoning or logic does not work then comes the self-suffering. For him when compassion and reasoning failed to give results the last step was civil disobedience and non-cooperation (R.P. Mishra, 2007). He once even quoted that, “The essence of nonviolent technique is that it seeks to liquidate antagonisms but not the antagonists.” (Harijan, 1939)

The main aim of Satyagrahais not the conquest of the opponent but the removal of conflict through genuine agreement.by adopting truth, non-violence and self-suffering. It is a form of persuasion

Non-Cooperation – It basically means repudiation of the benefits of a system with which we are associated. It is an attempt to awaken the masses to a sense of their dignity and power. This can only be by enabling them to realise that they need not fear brute force if they would but know the soul within. (Gandhi M.K., 1920) According to Mahatma Gandhi it was the duty of every individual to participate in politics and law making policy for the well-being of the society.

When the Government makes laws, it was the duty of every individual to differentiate between just and unjust law and cooperate with the just law and not cooperate with the unjust one. He quoted in *Young India* that “non-cooperation is a protest against an unwitting and unwilling participation in evil... Non-Cooperation with evil is as much a duty as cooperation with good.” (Gandhi M.K., 1921). It is “the expression of anguished love” (G. Dhawan, 1946). Mahatma Gandhi believed that the success of any evil system depends entirely upon the cooperation of sufferers. So the main theme or idea behind non-cooperation was not to cooperate with the evil system. He said that “Even the most despotic government cannot stand except for the consent of the governed, which consent is often forcibly procured by the despot. Immediately the subject ceases to fear, his power is gone” (G. Dhawan, 1946). This means that if the people do not fear or cooperate with the government, it cannot operate for a long period. The Nation’s non-cooperation was an invitation to the government to cooperate with it on its own terms, as was every good government’s duty. Non-cooperation was the nation’s notice that it is no longer satisfied to be in tutelage (Gandhi M.K., 1921). It tries to make the opponent to realise that people like those government which are based on non-violence, justice, peace and equality. Mahatma Gandhi further said that non-cooperation worked in two ways. Firstly, by non-cooperating with the opponent a sense of consciousness arouses in the evildoer which helps in transforming him. Secondly, it makes the non-co-operator self-reliant by not accepting any help from the unjust sources. In this context he further quoted that, “The primary motive of non-cooperation is self-purification by withdrawing cooperation from unrighteous and unrepentant government. The secondary object is to read ourselves of the feeling of helplessness by being independent of all government control or supervision, i.e. to govern ourselves in all possible affairs; and in fulfilling both the objects to refrain from doing or promoting injury or any violence, to individual or to property.” (M.K. Gandhi, 1921)

Besides this Mahatma Gandhi added that the concept of non-co-operation was not passive in state, it was an intensively active state, more active than physical resistance or violence. Passive resistance is a misnomer. Non-cooperation used by me must be non-violent and therefore, neither retaliatory nor based on spite, ill-will or hatred. In order to follow a non-violent non-cooperation it was very necessary for the Satyagrahis to be morally strong. It involved the suffering of the participators based on truth and non-violence which helped in transforming the evildoers without

any antagonism. Mahatma Gandhi believed that non-cooperation was a “measure of the discipline and self-sacrifice without which no nation can make real progress.” (D.G. Tendulkar, 1952). It basically meant to solve conflict through peace and non-violence. He quoted to Miss Agatha Harrison “Although non-cooperation is the main weapon in the armoury of Satyagrah, it should not be forgotten that it is after all only a means to secure the cooperation of the opponent consistently with truth and justice”. (M.K.Gandhi, 1939) This nonviolent Non Cooperation included methods like boycott of councils, schools, courts set up by the British Government, boycott of foreign cloths etc. It also included strike, hartal, social ostracism, picketing, non-payment of taxes, etc. For Mahatma Gandhi Hartal or Strike was a spiritual weapon. It was an act of self-purification. But he always insisted that the hartal or disapproval of work should be nonviolent and peaceful. Picketing was also a form of protest in which the picketers assemble outside the place of work and try to draw public attention by doing negative publicity and try to discourage customers and workers, thus hampering company’s normal operation. But all these activities were carried on a nonviolent basis. In other sense it meant transforming the opponent through persuasion. During the period of nonviolent protest in 1920-21 picketing was often used against liquor, opium, foreign cloths, etc. Social shunning was used to exclude the British groups and councils by socially rejecting them. Boycott was another method popularly used by Mahatma Gandhi during the Non Cooperation movement. It included the complete boycott of social, political, economic, educational and other institutions of the British Empire. In this context Mahatma Gandhi said that, “Look, the British are here because we collaborate with them. We supply them with the police, we go to their courts, we hire their lawyers, and everytime we quarrel we make use of their law. In future we do not cooperate, we become autonomous. Once we become autonomous, we go to our own courts, or we don’t fight at all. And the Brits, like the skin of a snake, will simply fall off. The colonial ruler will have nothing to feed on.” (Bhikhu Parekh, 1999). With this a series of non-cooperation movements were carried out throughout India which latter developed into civil disobedience, another form of Satyagraha. Mahatma Gandhi in this context wrote in 1930 that, “A little reflection will show that civil disobedience is a necessary part of non-cooperation.” (G. Dhawan, 1946)

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE- It was the last and most intense form of countrywide agitation against the British rule. It was also known as the last phase of non-cooperation. Mahatma Gandhi

defined it as, “the breach of unmoral statutory enactments.” (Rai A.Shanker, 2000) It was a violation of illegitimate laws, institutions, rules, regulation etc. in a nonviolent way. The word Civil Disobedience was originally coined by Henry David Thoreau and its theory was explained in his famous essay ‘Duty of Civil Disobedience’ published in 1849. He wrote one more famous essay entitled ‘On Civil Disobedience’ published in 1907; Mahatma Gandhi was deeply influenced by Thoreau after reading this book. It actually provided him with an intellectual framework for an active nonviolent resistance and new ideas for non-cooperation. According to Thoreau government was the most corrupt of all institutions and because of that it was ‘not too soon for honest men to rebel and revolutionise.’ (H.D. Thoreau, 2007) He once quoted that, “I heartily accepts the motto- “That government is the best which governs the least”, and I would like to see it acted up to more rapidly and systematically. Carried out it finally amounts to this, which I also believe, - “That government is best which governs not at all,” and when men are prepared for it, that will be the kind of government which they will have. Government is at best but an expedient; but most governments are usually, and all governments are sometimes, inexpedient.” (H.D. Thoreau, 1849). In his opinion therefore people should completely withdraw their support from the government, and for this he adopted the technique of non-payment of taxes. He believed that “there can never be a really free and enlightened state until the state comes to recognise the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority are derived and treats him accordingly.” (H.D. Thoreau, 2007). So Mahatma Gandhi inspired by Thoreau tried to develop civil disobedience as a means of political and social action. According to him civil disobedience was “a complete effective and bloodless substitute of armed revolt,” which signifies, “...the resister’s out Lawry in a civil, i.e. non-violent manner.” (A.S. Rai, 2000). In the civil disobedience movement the Satyagarhis should be prepared for extreme suffering and must avoid violence at all cost. He said that “its use must be guarded by all conceivable restrictions. Every possible provision should be made against an outbreak of violence or general lawlessness. Its area as well as its scope should also be limited to the barest necessity of the case.” (J.V. Bondurant, 1958). He believed that although it was the duty of every individual to obey laws but only if his conscience allows him to do so. He tried to justify the disobedience of law by saying that it was their natural right to disobey the unjust and illegitimate laws. He wrote in Hind Swaraj, “It is contrary to our manhood if we obey laws repugnant to our

conscience. Such teaching is opposed to religion and means slavery.” (A.S. Rai, 2000). Therefore the main aim of civil disobedience was to make people aware of the unjust attitude of government and paralyse it. Mahatma Gandhi further quoted in Young India that, “Complete civil disobedience is a state of peaceful rebellion-a refusal to obey every single state made law. It is certainly more dangerous than an armed rebellion. For it can never be put down if the civil resisters are prepared to face extreme hardship. It is based upon an implicit belief in the absolute efficacy of innocent suffering. By noiselessly going to prison a civil resister ensures a calm atmosphere. The wrongdoer wearies of wrongdoing in the absence of resistance. A full grasp of the condition of successful civil resistance is necessary atleast on the part of the representatives of the people before we can launch on an enterprise of such magnitude. The quickest remedies are always fraught with the greatest danger and require the utmost skill in handling them; it is my firm conviction that, if we bring about a successful boycott of foreign cloth, we shall have produced an atmosphere that would enable us to inaugurate civil disobedience on a scale that no government can resist. I would therefore urge patience and determined concentration on Swadeshi upon those who are impatient to embark on mass civil disobedience.” (Gandhi M.K., 1921). There were many who criticised civil disobedience by labelling it as method of intentionally violating the law which were declared valid and legal. According to Mahatma Gandhi civil disobedience was one of the best accepted legal procedures. In this context Mahatma Gandhi gave few suggestions like- i) civil disobedience is a recognised procedure for challenging law or policy and obtaining court determination of the validity; ii) that theory of jurisprudence recognise the propriety of nonviolent challenge to law or policy; iii) the obligation to obey the law is not absolute but relative, and allows for some forms of such nonviolent challenge; (iv) that protest and civil disobedience should receive protection under the first amendment; (v) that the act of protest of disobedience should cause the punishment which is nominal and not more severe (Freeman H.A., 1966)

FASTING- Apart from non-cooperation and civil disobedience another method which he frequently used was fasting. According to Mahatma Gandhi fasting was the highest expression of the prayer of a loving and pure heart. It was the means of resisting injustice and transforming the evildoer. He quoted that, “...in addition to truth and nonviolence, a Satyagarhis should have the confidence that God will grant him the necessary strength and that , if there is slightest impurity

in the fast, he will not hesitate to renounce it at once. Infinite patience, firm resolve, single mindedness of purpose, and perfect calm must of necessity be there. But since it is impossible for a person to develop all these qualities at once, no one who has not devoted himself to following the ways of ahimsa should undertake Satyagrahi's fast. Fasting as method of nonviolent protest was much criticised by many and was labelled as blackmail, but the fact was that Mahatma Gandhi often used that weapon on his own side and very less against the British rule. He used it against British only once in a slightly different context, not in order to get something from them but because he felt that they had been spreading malevolent rumours about him. He thought fasting was justified because it was part of dying. Just as violence specialised in the art of killing, so nonviolence specialised in the art of dying. According to him through death and suffering one can trigger love among others and develop the technology of nonviolence. His fast unto death was basically similar to the crucifixion of Christ worked out in a certain context. When he embarked on a fast unto death, the British said this was blackmail, but Mahatma Gandhi responded and stated that, 'It is not blackmail; it is voluntary crucifixion of flesh.' In other words, I torture myself, crucify myself, because I love my fellow-Indians and cannot bear that they would stop so low as to use violence and kill each other. I want to bring them back to sanity. I know they love me, and because I know they love me, I want to evoke their love and mobilise it by saying to them that if they continue to behave in this way they will not have me anymore. That was the meaning of fasting unto death, and it could only be used in relation to those you loved, and who loved you- people to whom you were closely bonded and solely for the purpose of evoking the best in them. It should not be kind of moral blackmail in which you said, 'Unless you do this for me-give me this house free or whatever-I will fast unto death.' (Bhikhu Parekh, 1999)

All the above three components completes Satyagraha and are very essential part of it. Satyagraha therefore was both truth-force and soul-force. Although Mahatma Gandhi has not penned down much about the procedure of Satyagraha but J.V. Bondurant had tried to explain it in details. The fundamental rules of Satyagraha according to him are- (i) outside aid may be excepted but should never be counted upon; (ii) Satyagrahis throw the tactics of positive resistance, persuasion and adjustment, must press the movement ever forward; (iii) Propaganda must be made an integral part of the movement. Education of the opponent, the public, and

participants must continue apace; (iv) situation must be continuously reassessed and the objective with a view to possible adjustment of demands should be essential; (v) Progressive advancement of the movement through steps and stages determined to be appropriate within the given situation. Direct action is to be launched only after all other efforts to achieve an honourable settlement have been exhausted; (vi) The moral and discipline of the Satyagrahis must be maintained through active awareness of any development of impatience, discouragement, or breakdown of non-violent attitude; (vii) Every effort should be made to win over the opponent by helping him thereby demonstrating sincerity to achieve an agreement with, rather than a triumph over the adversary; (viii) Satyagraha excludes all compromise which affects basic principles or essential portions of valid objectives; (ix) Insistence upon full agreement on fundamentals before accepting a settlement. (J.V. Bondurant, 1971) Thus the technique of Satyagraha evolved as a prologue to social and political change and penetrated deep into the life of the people. Every Satyagrahi offered nonviolent resistance out of strength and bravery and not because he was helpless and cannot use violence. (R.K. Diwakar, 1969). Nirmala Singh stated that it was basically a moral war fought with moral weapon and moral soldier for a moral triumph. The moral weapon was a moral force or soul-force born of nonviolent resistance. The moral soldier was an individual who had undergone a moral transformation by disciplining himself under nonviolence, love service and sacrifice. And moral triumph was the triumph of truth over untruth, good over evil, love over hatred and spirit over body. That moral war was the realisation of a higher ideal i.e. to see 'God face to face', to realise the Absolute truth. It was not just a table-talk but a practical philosophy of actions giving shapes to the idea of human unity. (Nirmala Singh, 1997) Thus Satyagraha was one of the most novel and creative invention of Mahatma Gandhi in the field of nonviolence and also was a unique contribution to the world.

According to J.V. Bondurant Satyagraha is a force (defined as 'the exercise of power or influence to effect change') that also contains an element of coercion (defined as 'the use of force to compel action contrary to the will or reasoned judgment'). It may inflict injury on the opponent materially, in such a case as boycott and through mental discomfiture in the use, for example, of fasting. In other words, although Satyagrahis always persuasive, it also contains a positive element of coercion because policies of non-cooperation, boycott and strike involve 'an

element of compulsion which may affect a change on the part of an opponent which initially was contrary to his will and he may suffer from the indirect results of these actions' (Bondurant J., 1969). But the best part is that the Satyagrahi in any case does not resort to violence. The importance of ahimsa or non-violence in Satyagraha prevents the Satyagrahi to inflict injury though he may, by his act, cause injury. Ahimsa denotes not merely refusal to use violence, it also contains a positive psychological element seeking to eliminate ill-will. Love is an important constituent of ahimsa for, without love, ahimsa will remain a mere theoretical conceptualization (Chakraborty B., 2006). Truth and ahimsa are inseparable and on this basis Bondurant elaborates that 'testing of truth can be performed only by action based upon refusal to do harm or, more accurately, upon love. For truth, judged in terms of human needs, would be destroyed, on whichever side it lay, by the use of violence (Bondurant J.V., 1969)

3.2 INFLUENCES ON MAHATMA GANDHI

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi an ordinary curious boy grew up to be the most influential and famous person of his time. He was an ordinary man with an extra-ordinary thinking. His attitude of helping others and practising everything he preached made him such a big personality and earned him the title of 'Mahatma'. Since his childhood he was fostered with the sense of truth and nonviolence which led him to become a person who discovered the need to cultivate humanity through truth and nonviolence. (M. Pinkava, 2015) He never claimed his concept of truth to be absolute rather his entire life was his experiment with truth. Throughout his life he learned from others and tried to preach only those things upon which he acted himself. He did not want to project himself or his ideas as an ideology he did not even want to accept the title of 'Mahatma' but due to the intense love and pressure of his followers and fellow-mates he had to surrender. All his actions were moral, be it social or political. All the qualities in Mahatma Gandhi were mainly due to the various influences which he encountered throughout his life, be it within India, outside India or from different religions and religious scriptures.

INFLUENCES ON MAHATMA GANDHI DURING HIS CHILDHOOD

His childhood was an interesting journey of him incorporating the idea of truth, nonviolence, peace and love. There were many incidents of his childhood which actually worked in shaping the character of Mahatma Gandhi. Among many stories of his childhood there are two stories which enlightened his sense of truth and nonviolence. In the context of truth Mahatma Gandhi relates one of his stories which reflect his strong truthful character. He narrates:

“There is an incident which occurred at the examination hall during my first year at high school which is worth recording. Mr. Giles, the educational inspector, had come on a visit of inspection. He had set us five words to write as a spelling exercise. One of the words was ‘Kettle’. I had miss-spell it. The teacher tried to prompt me with the point of his boot but I would not be prompted. It was beyond me to see that he wanted me to copy the spelling from my neighbour’s slate, for I had thought that the teacher was there to supervise us against copying. The result was that all the boys, except myself, were found to have spelt every word correctly. Only I had been stupid. The teacher tried later to bring this stupidity home to me but without effect, I never could learn the art of copying.” (Desai M.H., 1993). This story reflects that he was of very clear and honest conscience and courageous enough of not getting the perfect score and being seen as a stupid. That incident helped him to realise his true reflection and encouraged him to search for more sophisticated truths that would lead him to become a nonviolent person in life. Similarly there was one another story in his autobiography which reflected the relationship between truth and nonviolence and showed how the consciousness for truth enables the rivals to act non-violently. In that story he steals and then reveals the truth in front of his father and ask him for his forgiveness. The story is as follows:

“...When I was 15...I stole a bit of gold out of my meat-eating brother’s armlet. This brother had run into a debt of about 25 rupees. He had on his arms an armlet of solid gold. It was not difficult to clip a bit out of it. Well it was done, and the debt declared. But this became more than I could bear. I resolved never to steal again. I also made up my mind to confess it to my father...I wrote it on a slip of paper and handed it to him myself. In this not not only did I confess my guilt, but I asked adequate punishment for it, and closed with a request to him not to punish himself for my offence...[when he] read it through...pearl drops trickled down his cheeks,

wetting the paper. For a moment he closed his eyes in thought and then tore up the note....Those pearl drops of love cleansed my heart, and washed my sin away...This was for me an object-lesson of Ahimsa.” (Desai M.H., 1993)

The moral behind the story reflected that the truth helps one to be free and nonviolent and if the person is nonviolent his action will make realise the other the truth behind his nonviolent behaviour. The main reason behind his father acting non-violently was his truthful character, he openly admitted to what he did and apologised for it.

His family had a great influence on him. He was born in a Vaishnav Hindu family, which was deeply religious. His ancestral name was Gandhi which meant ‘Baniya’, a business class. Mahatma Gandhi had a deep respect for his father. He was a practical man with very high values. His father had no education save that of experience and because of that Mahatma Gandhi once wrote that, ‘he was likewise “innocent of history and geography”, but he was incorruptible and had earned a reputation for strict impartiality in his family as well as outside. He was the lover of his clan, truthful, brave and generous.’ (Louis Fisher, 1951) He learnt a lot from his rich experience of practical affairs”. (Gandhi M.K., 1969) This quality of his father helped Mahatma Gandhi to become a practical idealist and taught him to deal with many intricate problems both in social and political life on a practical basis. Therefore, Mahatma Gandhi once even said that, “I am not a visionary. I claim to be a practical idealist.” (R.K. Prabhu &U.R. Rao, 1946) .

Besides this during his childhood he was deeply influenced by three women. One was his mother Putlibai, his old servant Rambha and his wife Kasturba. His mother Putlibai was a true Vasihnavite and a pure vegetarian. She was very much devoted to religious practices she never ate a meal without prayer, and attended temple services daily. Long fasts did not dismay her and arduous vows, voluntarily made, were steadfastly performed. (L. Fisher, 1951) One of the practices was vowing not to eat during the day until seeing the sun. Gandhi and his brother would run out on cloudy days and look at the sky when it seemed the sun was coming out, they ran back in and tell her they saw the sun. And she would go out and look, and not seeing the sun, would continue fasting cheerfully saying “God did not want me to eat today”. Therefore, Mahatma Gandhi had once even said that, “my mother had strong common sense.” (Gandhi M.K., 1969) Such a saintly and serene character of her mother was a daily lesson in loyalty to a

vow, self-control and self-deprivation which helped him to restore onto fasts in his later years for India's independence. (M.H. Desai, 1993) .

Another woman who influenced Mahatma Gandhi during his childhood was an old servant named Rambha. She taught him the power of repeating the name of God Rama. This prayful recitation of a holy name was a practice found in the lives of many Hindu saints. Mahatma Gandhi wrote about the practice as a panacea for many ills. He began repeating the name of Rama to overcome his fear of ghosts. As time went on he repeated the name for patience, serenity, strength in adversity and wellbeing. He also considered Ramayana as the greatest of all devotional literature. (W.J. Jackson, 2013). He said that, "I think it is due to the seed sown by that good woman Rambha, that today, 'Ramanama' is an infallible remedy for me". (Gandhi M.K., 1958).

Kasturba, Mahatma Gandhi's wife also played an important role in his life. He once said that, "Kasturba has been my mother, friend, nurse, cook, bottle washer and all these things we have come to a reasonable understanding that I should have all the honours and she should have all the drudgery." (Tendulkar D.G.,1969). Her varied qualities like immense patience, effortless and tireless service, unconditional love and immeasurable prudence helped in bringing out the highest potential latent in Mahatma Gandhi's personality.

Another lesson which had a great impact on him was the experiment of eating meat. Mahatma Gandhi in his early years was rebellious of certain things and one among them was following strict vegetarianism even though his mother was a strict vegetarian. In his school days he was physically very weak, more of a kind of demure. He believed that meat eating would help him to become brave like other taller and stronger boys in the school. According to him he was very coward and afraid of thieves, ghosts and snakes. So he believed that if he eats meat he would be able to overcome all his weaknesses. There was one another belief in those days among the young boys that if all Indians would start eating meat they would be able to expel the British and make India free. So, inspite of meat being forbidden in his religion he ate it almost for one year. But with the passage of time he realised that it was not necessary to eat meat to become strong, brave or patriotic rather it was the truthful conscience and nonviolence.

Besides this during his childhood there were different stories from the Puranas which made a great impact on Mahatma Gandhi and helped in building his character. One of them was the

story of a famous figure 'Sharvana', who was a very loyal son and sacrificed his own comforts for his aged parents. This story gave him the lesson of selflessness and devotion.

Another popular story was that of Raja Harish Chandra, who was renowned for never lying and always keeping his word. That story influenced Mahatma Gandhi's sense of sticking to dharma, his duty and his conscience regardless of trials and tribulations. The story showed a good man remaining true to his vow of truth and after terrible losses, finding that everything works out well in the end and because he is steadfast. (Jackson W.J., 2013) Mahatma Gandhi said that, "Why should not all be truthful like Harischandra was the question I asked myself day and night. To follow truth and to go through all the ordeals Harischandra went through was the one ideal it inspired in me." (Gandhi M.K., 1969, p.4)

INFLUENCE OF DIFFERENT RELIGIONS ON MAHATMA GANDHI

Mahatma Gandhi has firmly affirmed that, "man without religion is a man without roots." (Gandhi M.K., 1946) Mahatma Gandhi during his childhood was very anti-religious. Being born in a religious family he had to perform many practices and many things which were against his will. He did not like visiting temples and sometimes he did not even tell his parents that he absented from temple so that they do not get hurt. He did not like the pomp and glitter of the Hindu temple and had no living faith in God. Religion to him meant irksome restrictions like vegetarianism which intensified his youthful protest against society and authority. Who made the world; who directed it he asked. Elders could not answer, and the sacred books were so unsatisfactory on such matters that he inclined somewhat towards atheism. (Louis Fisher, 1951) But besides his anti-religious feeling he also had curiosity to know about the reality behind different religions and so he started taking interest in it. He used to listen attentively to his father's frequent discussion with his Parsis and Muslim friends on the difference between their faiths and Hinduism. (Louis Fisher, 1951) He also learned much about Jainism from his family as the Jain monks used to visit his family very often. He was a great observer and both Jainism and Buddhism had a great impact on his thoughts and shaped his work. It helped him in the reformation of Hindu religion. In India religion was related to Dharma and was not a matter of individual experience. He did not believe in idealisation of God rather he compared God with truth which was very significant. According to him everyone has their own concept of thinking

and belief. There may be some who do not believe in God but at the same time no one can deny the power of truth. His description of God shows that it is something which is accepted by all men in the way they like. He stated that, "To me God is truth and love. God is Ethics and Morality. God is forgiveness. God is essence of life and light and yet, he is above and beyond all these. God is conscience. He is even the atheism of atheist. For in his boundlessness, God permits the atheist to live. He is the searcher of hearts he is personal God to those who need his personal presence he is embodied to those who need his touch. He is the purest essence...He is all things to all men. He is in us and yet beyond and above us." (Gandhi M.K., YI, 1925) Later in his autobiography he stated that, "what I want to achieve-what I have been striving and pinning to achieve these thirty years- is self-realisation, to see God face to face, to attain moksha" (Gandhi M.K., 1999)

India being a secular country was multi-religious and so Mahatma Gandhi was very much interested in the comparative study of all the religions. According to him all religions were true but had errors only because it was conveyed to people through imperfect human instrumentality. He was the only man who brought religious sensibility into the public domain. He always judged other people according to their point of view and not of his own. In this context he once wrote in *Young India* that, "It has been my experience that I am always true from my point of view, but I am often wrong from the point of view of many honest critics. I know that we are both right from our respective point of view. And this knowledge saves me from attributing motives to my opponent or critics. The seven blind men who gave seven different descriptions of the elephant were all right from their respective point of view, and wrong from the point of view of one another, and right and wrong from the point of view of the men who knew the elephant. I very much like this doctrine of the manyness of reality. It is the doctrine that has taught me to judge a Mussalman from his own standpoint and a Christian from his. Formerly I used to resent the ignorance of my opponents. Today I can love them because I am gifted with the eye to see myself as others see them vice-versa. I want to take the whole world in the embrace of my love" (Gandhi M.K., 1926) He believed that there was nothing wrong in studying other's religions and assimilating what was good. According to him "if we are to respect other's religion as we would have them to respect our own, a friendly study of world's religions is a sacred duty. My respectful study of other's religion has not abated my reverence for, or my faith in the Hindu

scriptures. They have indeed left their deep mark upon my understanding of the Hindu Scriptures. They have broadened my way of life. (Gandhi M.K., YI, 1926) He further tried to give more elaborate description of religion and wrote that, “Let me explain what I mean by religion. It is not Hindu religion which I certainly prize above all other religions, but the religion which transcends Hinduism, which changes one’s very nature, which binds one indissolubly to the truth within and whichever purifies. It is the permanent element in human nature which counts no cost too great in order to find full expression and which leaves the soul utterly restless until it has found itself, known its Maker and appropriated the true correspondence between the Maker and itself. (Gandhi M.K., YI, 1920)

Mahatma Gandhi’s mission in life was to moralise all the religions. He believed that “there is no religion higher than truth and righteousness. Morality is prized by almost all the great religions of the world.” (M. Barua, 1999) He further explained in Young India that, “As soon as we lose moral basis, we cease to be religious. There is no such thing as religion overriding morality. Man, for instance cannot be untruthful, cruel and incontinent and claim to have God on his side.” (Gandhi M.K., 1921). Being a Hindu, he was not a blind follower of Hinduism. According to him Hinduism was the most tolerant and liberal of all religion. It believed in oneness of all living beings coming from one universal source. But at the same time he did not even hesitate to criticise it due to its some unreasonable practices. He strongly criticised Caste system that was prevalent in Hinduism as it was the root cause of all difference. The caste system contradicted the theory of Hinduism i.e. all life is one and comes from one universal source. He was also strictly against untouchability which was again the child of cast system. He considered it as the plague of Hindu society. He was also against animal sacrifices which were justified in the Vedas, because it was against his concept of nonviolence. Hinduism for him was not restricted to boundaries. He was not in favour of one God, nor in one particular way of realising God. In this context with reference to Lord Rama and Lord Krsna he even quoted in Young India that, “My Krsna is not the historical Krsna. I believe in the Krsna of my imagination as a perfect incarnation, spotless in every sense of the word, the inspirer of the Gita, and the inspirer of the lives of millions of human beings. But if it is proved to me that the Krsna of the Mahabharata actually did some of the acts attributed to him even at the risk of being banished from the Hindu fold, I should not hesitate to reject that Krsna as God incarnate.” (Gandhi M.K., 1935)

According to him he was a Hindu no matter whether he was theist or atheist, he believed in one or many Gods, or he believed in Vedas or not. He drew inspiration from many Hindu scriptures like Ramayana, Mahabharata, Gita, Upanishads and life of the saints. He also drew inspiration from scriptures of other religion as well like Koran, Bible. He once quoted in Harijan that, "It is no business of mine to criticise the scriptures of others faiths, or to point out their defects. It is, and should be, however, my privilege to proclaim and practice the truths that there may be in them. I may not therefore, criticise or condemn things in Koran or the life of the Prophet that I cannot understand. But I welcome every opportunity to express my admiration for such aspects of his life as I have been able to appreciate and understand. As for things that present difficulties, I am content to see them through the eyes of devout Mussalman friends, while I try to understand them with the help of the writings of eminent Muslim expounders of Islam. It is only through such a reverential approach to faiths other than mine that I can realise the principle of equality of all religions. But is both my right and duty to point out the defects in Hinduism in order to purify it and to keep it pure. But when non-Hindu critics set about criticising Hinduism and cataloguing its faults they only blazon their own ignorance of Hinduism and their incapacity to regard it from the Hindu view-point. It distorts their vision and vitiates their judgement. Thus my own experience of the non-Hindu critics of Hinduism brings home to me my limitations and teaches me to be wary of launching on criticism of Islam or Christianity and their founders." (Gandhi M.K., 1937) According to him there were two kinds of Hinduism he once remarked to Shri Pyarelal in this context that, "There are Two aspects of Hinduism. There is on the one hand the historical Hinduism with its untouchability, superstitious worship of stocks and stones, animal sacrifices and so on. On the other we have the Hinduism of Gita, the Upanishads and Patanjali's Yogasutras which is the acme of Ahimsa and oneness of all creation, pure worship of one immanent, formless, imperishable God. Ahimsa which to me is the chief glory of Hinduism has been sought to be explained away by people as being meant for Sanyasis only. I do not share that view. I have held that it is the way of life and India has to show it to the world." (Harijan, 1946)

According to him "The most distinctive and the largest contribution of Hinduism to India's culture is the doctrine of Ahimsa. It has given a definite bias to the history of the country for the last three thousand years and over, and it has not ceased to be a living force in the lives of India's millions even today. It is growing doctrine; its message is still being delivered. Its teachings has

so far permeated our people that an armed revolution has almost become an impossibility in India, not because as some would have it, we as a race are physically weak, for it does not require much physical strength so much as a devilish will to press a trigger to shoot a person, but because the tradition of ahimsa has stuck deep roots among the people.”(Gandhi M.K., 1999) therefore Mahatma Gandhi was very fond of Hinduism as it talked about unity of all people which was the peculiarity of Hinduism.

Like Hinduism Mahatma Gandhi was also very impressed with Buddhism and Jainism because both were the exponents of nonviolence. Buddhism strongly supported peace, nonviolence and good of all human beings. Mahatma Gandhi often acknowledged the influence of Lord Buddha on his thought. He followed his preaching and adopted the same code of morality as adopted by Buddha to achieve ‘Moksha’ or salvation. The concept of Mahatma Gandhi’s Sarvodaya also had its roots in the blending of the teaching of Vedantic Buddhist concept of Sarvabhutahita’ or the good of all living beings.(Seikh Tabassum, 2008) He went on to the extent of saying that influence of Buddha’s teachings opened his eyes to a limitless possibilities of nonviolence. According to Albert Schweitzer, “Gandhi continues what the Buddha began. In the Buddha the spirit of love sets itself the task of creating different spiritual conditions in the world, in Gandhi it undertakes to transform all worldly conditions” (Schweitzer A., 1960). For Mahatma Gandhi Lord Buddha was the greatest teacher of ahimsa who taught us to defy appearances and trust in the final triumph of Truth and Love.” Like the Buddhist, Mahatma Gandhi believed that ahimsa without compassion is nothing, just as gold is an amorphous material without goldsmith’s artistic shape or the root is nothing without the magnificent tree” (Gandhi M.K., 1929). There were many other preaching of Lord Buddha which became a cardinal lesson in life of Mahatma Gandhi. For instance, the example of Buddha choosing to sacrifice the life of a bandit, who had brought the lives of a boatful of people under threat, showed that he seemingly choose violence in certain conditions. Similarly Mahatma Gandhi was also in favour of choosing violence in certain conditions which he believed was necessary. In this context the example of Mahatma Gandhi putting one ailing calf to death has been cited. He says that, “my action in putting the ailing calf out of pain was a visible image of the purest ahimsa...If I had dealt with the calf as I did in order to assuage my own pain, it would not have been ahimsa, but it was ahimsa to assuage the calf’s pain. Indeed ahimsa implies an inability to go on witnessing another’s pain. It

is bad logic to say that we must look on while others suffer. (Puri B., 2009) Mahatma Gandhi's ahimsa was an active and flexible ahimsa not passive and stagnant. He was also influenced by Buddha's concept of Nirvana (Supreme Bliss) and the Eight-fold Path. According to Buddha the main cause of himsa was man's greed, anger, separateness, etc. therefore he suggested for a right livelihood of the eight-fold path which prohibits a lay person from trading in weapons, human beings, flesh, intoxicants and prisons. Fishing and hunting was also prohibited as all meats known by seeing, by hearing or by suspicion to have been killed for one's personal use was sternly denounced. (T. Rigzin & F. Hamilton, 1983) Besides this with regard to the Conflict Resolution theory in Buddhism which dealt with resolving the conflict through mediation and dialogue, Mahatma Gandhi adopted the Transformative approach to mediation in conflict resolution. According to this approach not only the situation was changed, but the people also through mediation activities, which encourage empowerment and mutual recognition. He also believed that it was beneficial to listen to other's views and ideas instead of directly using force. Apart from mediation dialogue also plays an important role in conflict management. It helps in bringing people in conflict together and sometimes even finding out a joint solution to mutual problems. Apart from that there are several other ways also in which it contributes to the conflict resolution. Firstly, by demonstrating that people from opposing sides can learn from one another. Secondly, it encourages the formation of and linkage with other dialogue groups, which spreads the goodwill further and enhances the sense of effectiveness among participants. Thirdly, dialogue groups can collect, reinvent or generate creative ideas that might contribute to a solution, and they can then publicise these ideas to decision makers and their own population. Fourthly, they can obtain access to influential or powerful people who might be able to implement their ideas. (H. Burgese & M. Burgese, 1997) Thus Mahatma Gandhi had firm faith in nonviolence like Buddha and he had even declared that the nonviolent way to freedom would be found to be the shortest, even though it may appear to be the longest, to our impatient nature. (D.G. Tendulkar, 1947)

Jainism always had influenced Mahatma Gandhi since his childhood due to the active presence of Jain monks in his house who used to visit his father for religious discussions. According to Dr. R.N. Dandekar, Jainism influenced Mahatma Gandhi in his emphasis on non-attachment (ana-sakti) in the interpretation of Gita. Jain doctrine of asrava samvara, nirjara is akin to his emphasis

on non-attachment rather than on disinterestedness (niskamatava). The word Sarvodaya which has been traced to a Jain work towards the society of the middle ages has been given more connotations by him that it did in those days. He represented the Jain ideal of Sambara. Tilak hold that Mahatma Gandhi was a Jain on account of his extreme insistence on ahimsa and fasting for a long time. (Seikh T., 2008) Besides this Mahatma Gandhi also believed in Jain's philosophy of 'anekantavad' i.e. many sidednesses of truth and reality. He said that his 'anekantavad' is the result of the twin doctrine of Satya and Ahimsa. (Iyer R., 1973) It was closely related to his concept of Absolute truth which prevent ill thinking among people instead of differing beliefs. Jainism's ahimsa had an extreme touch. Mahatma Gandhi does relate himself to that but he often said that he was more close to the teachings of Buddhism than Jainism. He adopted several aspects of Jainism but at the same time he also differed from it. His decision on several occasions to fast unto death, given its political motivations, is very different from the exclusively spiritual goal of the Jains fast-death. in a letter to Mahatma Gandhi a Jain phrased the difference very aptly, "whereas your view of ahimsa is based on the philosophy of action, that of the Jain is based on that of renunciation of action." (Gandhi M.K., 1928) In response to this Mahatma Gandhi said that he had blended renunciation and action into one force. His ahimsa was more reactive and flexible rather than absolute and passive. But he viewed both Jainism and Buddhism as a reform movement in Hinduism and not as a separate religion.

Apart from Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism Mahatma Gandhi was also impressed with Islam. He advocated his views about Islam and considered it to be as another great religion in the world. He had very high respect for Islam and considered it as the religion of peace, love, kindness and brotherhood of all human beings. He once even stated that, "I do regard Islam to be a religion of peace in the same sense as Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism are. No doubt there are differences in degree, but the object of these religions is peace. I have given my opinion that the followers of Islam are too free with sword. But that is not due to the teachings of the Koran. That is due, in my opinion, to the environment in which Islam was borne." (Gandhi M.K., 1927) He was also impressed by the personal and social code of behaviour that Islam prescribes. In the Koran there are rules and regulations for virtues like obedience to parents, avoidance of adultery, cheating and lying, refraining from theft, murder etc. The five pillars of Islam which prescribes

prayer, fasting, alms giving and hospitality are the duties that every Muslim has to perform. All these aspects of Islam influenced Mahatma Gandhi to a great deal. (Barua M., 1998)

Another most inspirational religion for Mahatma Gandhi which influenced him a lot was Christianity. Although in his early childhood he developed a sort of dislike for Christianity due to certain incidences but with the passage of time he developed firm faith on its teachings during his studies in England he met a Christian who inspired him and told him about Christianity and suggested him reading Bible. The New Testament and The Sermon of the Mount influenced him to a great extent and went straight into his heart. He said that, "My young mind tried to unify the teachings of Gita, the Lights of Asia and the Sermon on the Mount. That renunciation was the highest form of religion appealed to me greatly." (Gandhi M.K., 1948) About the New Testament he once even stated in Young India that, "The New Testament gave me comfort and boundless joy as it come after the repulsion that parts of the Old had given me. Today supposing I was deprived of the Gita and forgot all its contents but had a copy of the Sermon (on the Mount), I should derive the same joy from it as I do from the Gita." (Gandhi M.K., 1955) Another teaching of the New Testament specially the Sermon: "You have heard that it hath been said: An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you not to resist evil; but if one strikes thee on thy right cheek, turn to him thy other also" also impressed him a lot.

Thus the core of every religion according to Mahatma Gandhi was truth, ahimsa and brotherhood. He stated in Yurveda Mandir that, "Even as a tree has a single trunk, but many branches and leaves, so there is one true and perfect Religion, but it becomes 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 are interpreted by other men equally imperfect. Whose 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 for 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" (Gandhi M.K., 1955). He shared the Hindu assumption that, "Religions are different roads

converging at the same point. What does it matter that we take different road so long as we reach the same goal?" (Copley A. & Paxton G., 1997)

After studying all the religions he came to a conclusion and quoted in Sabarmati that, "After long study and experience, I have come to the conclusion that (1) all religions are true; (2) all religions have some error in them; (3) all religions are almost as dear to me as my own Hinduism, in as much as all human beings should be as dear to me as one's own close relatives. My own veneration for other faiths is the same as that for my own faith" (Gandhi M.K., 1928). He further said that, "To me religion means truth and ahimsa (nonviolence) or rather truth alone, because truth includes ahimsa, ahimsa being the necessary and indispensable means for its recovery." (Young India, 1928). By advocating tolerance and the equality of religions, Gandhi suggested that we all share the same common ground of nonviolence and can live at peace with one another, even while holding different faiths. With this basic wisdom, Gandhi paved a new path to peace. He understood that most wars and injustice have religious roots in ethnic hatred, pride and fanaticism. He felt that just as the violence he witnessed in India was based in religious division and hatred, so will future wars be rooted in division and ethnic hatred. The remedy is simple: Our peace-making efforts must begin with interreligious dialogue and cooperation, regionally and nationally. This will not only hasten the coming of peace, but model the peace we seek (John Dear, 2002). Thus the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi in a multi-religious country like India could be very helpful in serving as a secular blueprint to contemplate over and implement. For this only one thing is needed and that is that people discovering the eternal and universal truths in their own religion become bold enough to live in accordance with those truths.

INFLUENCE OF DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES ON MAHATMA GANDHI

Mahatma Gandhi had himself mentioned in his autobiography that, "three moderns have left a deep impression on my life and captivated me. Raychandbhai his living contact; Tolstoy by his book, 'The Kingdom of God is Within You'; Ruskin by his 'Unto This Last'. Besides these three personalities Gopal Krishna Gokhale and the Gita and the Bible influenced him throughout his life." (Autobiography, 1948)

RAYCHANDBHAI

Raychandbhai, a Jain businessman and a highly spiritual and distinguished reformer of Bombay had a deep influence on Mahatma Gandhi. He in his autobiography acknowledged Raychandbhai as his “guide and helper” and “his refuge...in moments of spiritual crisis.” He said that there was no business or other selfish tie that bound him to me yet I enjoyed the closest association with him. I was but a breifless barrister then, and yet whenever I saw him he would engage me in conversation of a seriously religious nature. Though I was then groping and could not be said to have a serious interest in religious discussion, still I found his talk of absorbing interest. I have since met many a religious leader or teacher. I have tried to meet the heads of various faiths, and I must say that no one else has ever made on me the impression that Raychandbhai did. His words went straight home to me. His intellect compelled as great a regard from me as his moral earnestness and deep down in me was the conviction that he would never willingly lead me astray and would always confide to me his innermost thoughts. In my moments of spiritual crisis therefore he was my refuge.”(Gandhi M.K., 1929)

LEO TOLSTOY

The second one who impressed Mahatma Gandhi was Leo Tolstoy with his book ‘The Kingdom of God is Within You’. It was mainly during the period when Mahatma Gandhi was in South Africa and developing his Satyagraha and philosophy of nonviolence to fight racial discrimination, he came in contact with the ideas and writings of Russian author Leo Tolstoy. Tolstoy during the latter year of his life became the mentor of Mahatma Gandhi on Nonviolence. His book was his constant companion. During a speech in the Sabarmati Ashram on September 10, 1928, Mahatma Gandhi acknowledged the importance and impact of Tolstoy’s book The Kingdom of God is Within You. He said that, “The title means that God’s kingdom is in our heart, that if we search for it outside, we shall find it nowhere. I read the book forty years ago. At that time I was sceptical about many things and sometimes entertained atheistic ideas. When I went to England I was a votary of violence, I had faith in it and none in nonviolence. After I read this book that lack of faith in nonviolence vanished.” Further in his speech he mentioned about

the effect of Tolstoy's life on him and in this context he added that, "I attach importance to two things in his life. He did what he preached. His simplicity was extraordinary; it was not merely outward; outward simplicity of course he had, though he was born in an aristocratic family and had all the good things of life to enjoy, had at his disposal all that wealth and possession could give a man, he changed the direction of his life's voyage in the prime of Youth. Though he had enjoyed all the pleasure and tasted all the sweetness which life can offer, the moment he realised the futility of that way of life, he turned his back on it, and he remained firm in his new convictions till the end of his life. I have therefore stated...that Tolstoy was the very embodiment of truth in this age. He strove uncompromisingly to follow truth as he saw it, making no attempt to conceal or dilute what he believed to be the truth. He stated what he felt to be the truth without caring whether it would hurt or please the people or whether it would be welcome to the mighty Emperor. Tolstoy was a great advocate of nonviolence in his age." (Weber T., 2004) Mahatma Gandhi after reading Tolstoy's book also found out that the best way to help the poor was to get off their backs and practice "bread labour", "the divine law that man must earn his bread by labouring with his own hands", which was to be central to his economic and social philosophy (Weber T., 2004) In Tolstoy's remembrance Gandhiji also established Tolstoy Farm in South Africa which was run on Tolstoyan Principles.

JOHN RUSKIN

Among the three moderns the last one who influenced Mahatma Gandhi a lot was John Ruskin with his book 'Unto This Last'. He first got to read the Ruskin's Unto This Last during his journey to Natal. It was given to him by his dear friend Mr. Pollak. He was so impressed and gripped by the book that during the 24 hours journey he could not even sleep at night. He was so influenced by the idea of the book that he decided to change his life according to it. According to him he discovered some of the deepest conviction of his life. Later he even translated the book into Gujrati and entitled it as Sarvodaya (The welfare of all) as his primary mission of life. He even described it as the 'magic spell'. Mahatma Gandhi derived three important lessons from this book:

- i) That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
- ii) That 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.
- iii) That a life of labour i.e. the life of a tiller of the soil and the handicraftsmen is the life worth living.

He said that the first of these conclusions he knew. The second he had faintly realised. The third had never occurred to him. Unto This Last made it as clear as daylight for me that the second and the third were contained in the first. I arose with the dawn, ready to reduce these principles to practice. (Gandhi M.K., 1948) The notion of trusteeship was also seeded in his mind from Ruskin. The latter's strong revulsion against human exploitation caused by industrialism, brings about in him, an "instantaneous and practical transformation" (Baneja B., 2011)

Besides these three great personalities there were other distinguished personalities too in India who influenced Mahatma Gandhi. With an open attitude he was ready to accept all the good qualities from them. One of the most important aspects of Mahatma Gandhi's life was service to poor. He loved the poor and downtrodden and feels closer to God when he worked for them. For this reason he was greatly influenced by Swami Vivekananda's concept of 'Daridranarayan' i.e. 'the poor as God'. He adopted this concept in his life and popularised it a lot. He called the poor people as 'Harijans' or 'the beloved people of God'.

GOPAL KRISHNA GOKHALE

Although he met many personalities who influenced him but yet the thrown in his heart remained vacant and his search was on. But when he met Gopal Krishna Gokhale he realised that he was the man for him. He got attracted to him mainly because Gokhale insisted on doing political work in the spirit of religion. Gokhale believed and endeavoured to act according to his belief that politics could be means of service to the people of India only if it was spiritualised i.e. if political workers took to their work in the spirit of seekers of Truth. (Gandhi M.K., 1955) Mahatma Gandhi's love and respect for Gokhale can be seen in his autobiography where he devoted almost seven chapters on him. He wrote in his autobiography..."When I met Gokhale he

gave me an affectionate welcome, and his manner immediately won my heart. With him too this was my first meeting, and let it seemed to me as though we were renewing an old friendship. Sir Pherojshah has seemed to me like Himalaya, the Lokmanya like the ocean. But Gokhale was as the Ganges. One could have a refreshing bath in the Holy River. The Himalaya was unscalable, and one could not easily launch forth on the sea, but the Ganges invited one to its bosom. It was a joy to be on it with a boat and an oar. In the sphere of politics the place that Gokhale occupied in my heart during his lifetime and occupies even now was and is absolutely unique.” (Gandhi M.K., 1955). In a speech delivered at Bangalore in 1951, Mahatma Gandhi said that, “I have declared myself his disciple in the political field and I love him as my Raja Guru; and this I claim on behalf of the Indian people. He taught me that the dream of every Indian who claims to love his country should be not to glorify the country in language but to spiritualise its political life and institutions. He inspired my life and is still inspiring it in that I wish to purify myself and spiritualise myself. I have dedicated myself to that ideal. I may fail and to that extent I fail, I am an unworthy disciple of my master.” (Gandhi M.K., 1955)

Among the western philosophers apart from John Ruskin and Leo Tolstoy he was influenced and inspired by others too. One among them was Henry David Thoreau. Mahatma Gandhi was very deeply impressed by his book ‘Civil Disobedience’. From Thoreau Mahatma Gandhi learned the lesson of resisting things that were wrong. It was Thoreau who suggested that every individual could resist the immoral acts of governments by not cooperating with them. This view also helped Mahatma Gandhi in developing the concept of Satyagraha. But to some extent Thoreau’s disobedience was only limited to non-payment of tax whereas Mahatma Gandhi’s disobedience covered everything. But this does not mean that he was not much influenced by him because once he mentioned in his autobiography that, “there is no doubt that Thoreau’s ideas greatly influenced my movements in India. (Gandhi M.K., 1948)

Another western philosopher who influenced Mahatma Gandhi was Socrates. It was mainly during his struggle in South Africa where for the first time he founded his new method protest called Satyagraha. The most important attribute of Satyagrah was to sacrifice and suffer for the sake of truth and justice. For this purpose he was looking for historical figures who had so sacrificed their lives for the sake of truth and Socrates was a natural choice. He portrayed

Socrates as a heroic extraordinary person with a fine moral character and entitled the book covering the story of Socrates as 'The Story of a Soldier of Truth'. (Wakabayashi J. & Kothari R., 2009)

Ralph Waldo Emerson was another important man who influenced Mahatma Gandhi. He was impressed by his ideas on education. During his second term of imprisonment in South Africa Mahatma Gandhi read the essays of Emerson. In a letter to his son on March 25, 1909 he wrote that, "Emerson, Ruskin and Mazzins all confirm the view that education does not mean a knowledge of letters but it means character building" (Diwakar R.R., 1963) For Mahatma Gandhi also education was not merely a source of learning rather it was a tool for character formation.

INFLUENCES OF DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS BOOKS

Like different religions Mahatma Gandhi also had equal respect for all the scriptures of different religion. Once he quoted in Harijan that, "We have regular readings of the Bhagwad Gita (in the Ashram) and we have now reached a stage when we finish the Gita every week by having readings of appointed chapters every morning. Then we have hymns from the various saints of India, and we therein include hymns from the Christian hymn-book. As Khansaheb is with us, we have readings from the Koran also. I derive the greatest consolation from my reading of Tulsidas's Ramayana. I have also derived solace from the New Testament and the Koran. I don't approach them with a critical mind. They are to me as important as the Bhagwad Gita, though everything in the former may not appeal to me—everything in the Epistles of Paul for instance,—nor everything in Tulsidas. Therefore there is no question of selection. I exercise my judgment about every scripture, including the Gita. I cannot let a scriptural text supersede my reason. Whilst I believe that the principal books are inspired, they suffer from a process of double distillation. Firstly, they come through a human prophet, and then through the commentaries of interpreters. Nothing in them comes from God directly. Matthew may give one version of one text, and John may give another. I cannot surrender my reason whilst I subscribe to divine revelation. And above all, 'the letter killeth, the spirit giveth life.' But you must not

misunderstand my position. I believe in faith also, in things where reason has no place.” (Gandhi M.K., 1936) He further wrote in Young India that, “I am not a literalist. Therefore, I try to understand the spirit of the various scriptures of the world. I apply the test of Truth and Ahimsa laid down by these very scriptures for interpretation. I reject what is inconsistent with that test, and I appreciate all that is consistent with it. Knowledge cannot be the prerogative of any class or section. But I can conceive the impossibility of people assimilating higher or subtler truths unless they have undergone preliminary training, even as those who have not made preliminary preparations are quite unfit to breathe the rarefied atmosphere in high altitudes, or those who have no preliminary training in simple mathematics are unfit to understand or assimilate higher geometry or algebra.” Gandhi viewed the Hindu scripture as a radical call to complete renunciation, steadfast love, and perfect nonviolence. (Dear John, 2002).

BHAGWAD GITA

For Mahatma Gandhi Bhagwad Gita was the most important book in his life. He considered it as his spiritual dictionary. Therefore he once quoted that, “The Gita became an infallible guide of conduct. It became my dictionary of daily reference.” (Gandhi M.K., 1955) For the first time he read Gita in England. He was invited by two Theosophists brothers who were reading Sir Edwin Arnold’s translation of Gita entitled ‘The Song Celestial’. By that time Mahatma Gandhi had never read Gita. Under their influence he started reading it and with the passage of time the book became his great companion in all matters of life. He mentioned in his autobiography that, “If one ponders on objects of senses, there springs attraction; from attraction grows desire; Desire flames to fear passion, passion breeds recklessness; then the memory-all betrayed-Lets noble purpose go, and saps the mind, till purpose, mind, and men are all undone.” Made a deep impression on his mind and still ring in his ears. The book struck him as one of priceless worth. The impression has ever since been growing on him with the result that he regard it today as the book par excellence for the knowledge of truth. It has afforded his invaluable help in his moments of gloom.” (Gandhi M.K., 1955) Bhagwad Gita for Mahatma Gandhi was a source of comfort; it provided him with solutions during his time of trouble. In this context he even said that, “When doubt haunts me and When I see not one ray of light on the horizon, I turn to the Bhagwad Gita,

and find a verse to comfort me.” (Prabhu R.K. & Rao U.R., 1969) That was the reason he carried Gita along with him all the time. The most important aspect of Gita which influenced him a lot was an active opposition to evil. It actually meant that if a person believes something to be wrong he/she should actively fight against it without caring about the repercussions because that is morally correct and if he/she does not fight then that indicates that he/she is cooperating with the evil. Apart from this there were few words in Bhagwad Gita which fascinated him a lot i.e. ‘aparigraha’ (non-possession) and ‘Samabhava’ (equability) and ‘Anasakti’ (non-attachment). According to Mahatma Gandhi Anasakti or non-attachment to the fruits of one’s action was the principal message of the Gita. He said that, “After forty years of unremitting endeavour fully to enforce the teachings of the Gita in my own life, I have in all humility felt that perfect renunciation is impossible without perfect observance of Satya and Ahimsa in every shape and form” (Gandhi M.K., 1945). The real meaning of his statement could be understood by following his line of reasoning i.e. it is the desire for the fruit of action that causes a person to get attached to whatever he/she is desiring; and attachment leads to all kind of erratic or indiscrete behaviours such as lying, cheating, stealing, killing and so on. The underlying cause behind almost all acts of imprudence, untruth and violence is the lack of control over one’s mind, senses, and desires. This lack of self-control leads one to form a strong irrational attachment to the desired fruit of action. Therefore Mahatma Gandhi claimed that although the Gita does not directly preach or endorse ahimsa, the idea of nonviolence is implicit in its major theme of Anasakti or non-attachment. (Majumdar Uma, 2014).

BIBLE

The two Theosophist Olcott brothers approached Mahatma Gandhi to read Gita along with them considering that Mahatma Gandhi being the native of India must have better Knowledge of Sanskrit could help them, but he was of no help. He admitted this in his autobiography and said that, “I felt ashamed, as I had read the divine poem neither in Sanskrit nor in Gujrati” (Gandhi M.K., 1948). But he was not a person who would take his ignorance lightly rather he decided to turn his shame into a strong incentive to read not only Gita but also Christian Bible and Islamic Qur’an. The New Testament in the Bible influenced him a lot. With regard to the New Testament

he quoted in his autobiography that, “Especially, The Sermon on The Mount...went straight to my heart. I compared it with the Gita. The verses, ‘but I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man take away the coat, let him have the clock too,’ delighted me beyond measure and put me in mind of Shamal Bhatt’s ‘for a bowl of water give a goodly meal’ etc. My young mind tried to unify the teachings of the Gita, the light of Asia and The Sermon on The Mount. That renunciation was the highest form of religion appealed to me greatly (Gandhi M.K., 1948). After reading Bible Mahatma Gandhi believed that if one “turned the other cheek”, then overtime the enemy would have no other choice but to respect that person for their self-control. He adopted and expanded his belief in peaceful, nonviolent resistance or Satyagraha from Bible; for Jesus suggested a new radical response to injustice: instead of demanding rights, give them up freely! According to Jesus, it is more important to give justice and mercy than to receive it”. Similarly even though Mahatma Gandhi advocated Satyagrah but he never supported passive resistance. And the most important example of this was his calling off the famous non-cooperation movement when it was at its peak, after the Chauri-Chaura incident. (Bible, NIV, 1978)

Thus throughout his life Mahatma Gandhi was influenced and inspired by different sources. All these helped him in acquiring nonviolence and truth and shaping his life. His life was rooted in India’s religious tradition with its emphasis on a passionate search for truth, a profound reverence for life, the ideal non-attachment and the readiness to sacrifice all for the knowledge of God. He lived his whole life in the perpetual quest of truth. (Gandhi M.K., 1995)

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