ABSTRACT

Gandhi gives the term religion a very wide and comprehensive meaning which in so many ways is different and unique. While introducing religion into politics, Gandhi thought that religion sub serves politics and that politics here fit of religion is a death trap which kills the soul, behind every word he uttered and every act he did, there was a religious consciousness and a downright religious motive. He was of the view that most of the religious men he met were politicians in disguise and the ones who the whore guise of politicians were at heart religious men Two questions arise out of this position. First In what sense does politics encircle life like the coil of the snake? How was it that in his attempt to lead a truly religious and spiritual life he came up against political evils? What exactly did he mean by religion when he said that he was trying to introduce religion into politics? The answer to these questions would take us into Gandhi’s concept of religion.

INTRODUCTION

Gandhi gives the term religion a very wide and comprehensive meaning which in so many ways is different and unique. While introducing religion into politics, Gandhi thought that religion sub serves politics and that politics here fit of religion is a death trap which kills the soul, behind every word he uttered and every act he did, there was a religious consciousness and a downright religious motive. He was of the view that most of the religious men he met were politicians in disguise and the ones who the whore guise of politicians were at heart religious men Two questions arise out of this position. First In what sense does politics encircle life like the coil of the snake? How was it that in his attempt to lead a truly religious and spiritual life he came up against political evils? What exactly did he mean by religion when he said that he was trying to
introduce religion into politics? The answer to these questions would take us into Gandhi’s concept of religion.

Gandhi did not become a Mahatma, simply on account of his religious views. There was another side to his activities the impact of which upon the lives of his countrymen was no less tremendous. Though not a recognized religious leader or a great social reformer, his contribution to society towards of social reform and religious reconstruction was phenomenal. To Gandhi, politics bereft of religion is a death trap because it kills the soul. Politics too, like other human activities, must be governed either by religion or irreligion. Without the moral basis provided by religion, life would be a mere maze of sound and fury signifying nothing. By religion, however, he means, not a particular creed, but that which underlies and harmonizes all religions. To him, religion means “belief in the ordered moral Government of the universe.” It is not less real because it is unseen. This religion transcends Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity etc. It does not supersede them. It harmonizes them and gives them reality.

The spiritual and religious laws do not but express themselves only through the ordinary activities of life. Thus, religion provides a moral basis to all activities; Gandhi did not know any religion apart from human activity. It provided a moral basis to all other activities which would otherwise lack reducing life to a maze of sound and fury signifying nothing. Gandhi was in politics, only because: Politics today encircles us like the coils of a snake from which one cannot get out no matter however one tries.. I wish to wrestle with the snake...... I am trying to introduce religion into politics.

Gandhi was of the view that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics, do not know what religion means. A living unshakeable faith in God, an insistence on the primacy of spirit is the core of his philosophy. So immovable is his faith that he feels he may live without air and water but not without God. He say the fullest life is impossible without such faith and unless one has a living faith in God. To Gandhi “truth is God. Thus God is a living force. The spiritual force of God resides in, but is not the body. He, who denies the existence of that great force, denies to himself the use of that inexhaustible power and thus remains impotent. Strength comes from God.”

As a true Vaishnav Hindu, Gandhi was conscious of God. Every minute of his life, whether asleep or awake, was controlled by God. He felt the sense of entire dependence on Him and humbly sought His guidance. His help never failed Gandhi and this help was to him, “the visible finger of the invisible God. Often in the name of God, in answer to his voice, he undertook fasts. And he had real mystic experiences. Here is one of these in his own words: “It relates to my 21 day fast for the removal of untouchablity, I had gone to sleep...at 12-00 O’clock in the night something woke me up suddenly and some vice whispered, thou must go on a fast. How many days I ask. The voice again said. I twenty one days! When does it begin? It say, I you begin tomorrow!

On another occasion he described his experience by stating that: “what he did hear was like a voice from a far and yet quiet near. It was as unmistakable as some human voice definitely speaking to me and irresistible. I was not dreaming at the time. I heard the voice. The hearing of voice was preceded by a terrific struggle, within me. Suddenly the vice came upon me. I listened,
made certain it was the voice and the struggle ceased. I was calm... The determination was made accordingly, the date and the hour of the fast was fixed.\(^6\)

Though he sometimes uses the language of the theist, yet in his ideas about God, Gandhi is extremely catholic. He identifies God with truth. He also identifies Him with Love, Ethics, Law and conscience. He once said: “faith in one self multiplied to the 9th degree.”\(^7\)

To Gandhi, there is no antithesis between God and man. The spiritual feeling (soul) is the only reality in man as well as in the lower order of creation. It transcends time and space, he believed, in Advaita and believed in essential unity of man and for that matter of all that lives. The soul is the Godhead within man, it is self acting, it persists even after death; its existence does not depend upon the physical body. Hence, whatever happens to one’s body must affect the whole of the matter and the whole of the spirit. He identifies soul force with non-violence and points out that imperfect man cannot grasp the whole of the Essence.\(^8\)

Gandhi considers the senses and reasoning as an inadequate media of apprehending the absolute reality. To him, God is indescribable, inconceivable and immeasurable. God transcends the senses and the intellect. The general masses, whose coarse intellect can never penetrate into the unfathomable deep, do not have much to do with such a God if they do not feel His presence in their midst. If He is the creator and father of all, why do we not feel His presence in every beat of our heart? They say: We must not endeavor to perceive him through the senses because he is beyond them. It is Just like trying to import faith in God through the intellect. It cannot be as it is essentially a matter of the heart. Faith can be turned into knowledge by experience and it can come only through the heart and not the intellect. The intellect, if anything, acts as a barrier in matter of faith.\(^9\) “God cannot be realized through intellect. Intellect can only lead to a certain extent and no further. It is a matter of faith and experience derived from that faith...”\(^10\) There are subjects where reason is not enough and we have to accept things on faith. Faith does not contradict reason but transcends it. Faith is a kind of sixth sense which works in cases which are outside the purview of reason.\(^11\) Faith is living wide awake consciousness of God.

For Gandhi, the method of religion is not different from that of science. Scientific truth can be verified only by following the prescription given for comprehending the facts which are taken for granted. Thus, we cannot understand electricity except by the galvanometer test. “Precisely in that manner speak the rishis and the prophets. They say anybody following the path they have trod can realize God. I hold that complete realization is impossible in this embodied life. A living immovable faith is all that is required for reaching the full spiritual height attainable by human being.\(^12\)

Gandhi insists that the divine is the central truth in man. No one will we hope, dispute that Gandhi is extremely catholic in his conception of God. God is to him only another name for reality, the truth, the law, the harmony that pervades the universe. His view that belief in God and soul is a matter of faith has the support of saints and prophets.\(^13\) But though one’s will is free, “we cannot command results; we can only strive\(^14\) and so far as I am concerned it is enough satisfaction to know that I have striven to discharge the duty that rested on me.\(^15\)
Gandhi is, however, concerned not so much with philosophical explanation of evil as with the specific kind of evil political, social or economic. CF. Andrews has clarified Gandhi’s position with regard to one’s love for religion. It is not necessary for a Christian to identify himself with Christian orthodoxy; rather he should transcend the narrow religious commitments. He pointed out that Hinduism satisfied his soul, filled his whole being and he found a solace in the Bhagavad-Gita and Upanishads that he missed even in the Sermon on the Mount.\textsuperscript{16}

Rather than being one cohesive religion, Hinduism is the melting pot of various religions. But for Gandhi, religion did not mean Hindu religion alone, that is why he said, “By religion, I do not mean Hindu religion”\textsuperscript{17} Religion does not mean merely offering one’s Namaz or going to the temple. “Religion means knowledge of oneself and knowledge of God.”\textsuperscript{18} By religion, Gandhi meant that: “religion which transcends Hinduism and all other religions and brings the follower face to face with the Supreme. The aim of all religions is to suppress the beast in man and to enshrine his spiritual and moral will. For example, the victory of Rama over Ravana is a symbol of the conquest of physical power by spiritual strength. Thus, Gandhi perceived religion in a very broad sense. “Man without religion is a man without root. Therefore, religion is the basis on which all structure has to be erected if life is to be real.”\textsuperscript{19}

Gandhi imbibed his religious outlook from the very cradle. The saintliness of his mother greatly impressed him. Gandhi’s tolerance for all branches of Hinduism and other religions goes back to this early period. In his childhood, his father, though a Vaishnava, was frequently visited by thin monks and Musalman and Parsi friends with whom he discussed their respective faiths, Gandhi would always listen to them with respect and often with interest. To be more precise, the religious evolution of Gandhi can be studied in four phases. Being a Vaishnava by birth, he did imbibe the sanctity of Ramayana from his family background. The recitation of Ramayana, the listening to the reading of Tulsidas’s Ramayana, and the Bhagvad Gita and the stories of Shravana and Harishchandra, inculcated in him a deep reverence in the supremacy of truth as the essence of all morality. indeed, in Gandhi’s thought one finds crystallized the hard core of Vedantic tradition as the dominant one which makes Gandhi call himself a Vedantic. The Gita was his “dictionary of daily reference” He observed: words like Aparigraha (non—possession) and Sambhava. (Equality)” gripped me. Though I admire much in Christianity, I find a solace in Bhagvad Gita and Upanishads When doubts haunt me. I turn to the Bhagavad-Gita. My life I owe it to the teachings of the Bhagavad-Gita. \textsuperscript{20}

The fundamental notion of Gandhism is the metaphysical conception of an omnipresent spiritual reality, an all embracing living light which can be called Sachchidananda or Brahman or Rama, or simply, Truth. This supreme absolute is both the starting point and final goal of Gandhian thought. Gandhi wrote:“I do dimly perceive that whilst everything around me is ever changing and everything, there is underlying all that change a living power that is changeless, that holds all together, that creates, dissolves and recreates. That informing power and spirit is God, and nothing else I see merely through the senses can or will persist. He alone is, and is this power benevolent of malevolent? I see it as purely benevolent, for I can see that in the midst of death, life persists, in the midst of darkness light persists. Hence, I gather that God is life, truth and light.”\textsuperscript{21} Closely related to the conception of God is the conception of soul in Gandhi’s philosophy. Metaphysically, it is not different in essence from God of ultimate reality. Gandhi
said “The only way to find God is to see him in His creation and be one with it. This can only be done by the service of all.”

Gandhi had the propensity for the deeply religious and he accepted the fundamental tenets of Hindu religion, with an unflinching faith in God. He also believed in the Karma theory and transmigration of soul to the extent that for him these beliefs worked as inexorable laws of nature. Hence, he believed that even a little of meritorious Karma performed would be conserved and yield fruit. Despite his innate faith in Hinduism, he aspired for a universal humanistic religion which imbibed the best elements of all religions. In fact, he viewed every religion to be a specific road to the same divine goal. “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.”

Gandhi’s concept of religion was most comprehensive and deep. He endowed it with the quality of tolerance. He found all religion valid and none exclusive. He observed: “I do not believe in the exclusive divinity of the Vedas. I believe in the Bible, Quran and Zend Avesta, to be as much divinely inspired as the Vedas.”

Similarly, Jainism and Buddhism had tremendous inspiration for him for they stressed on non-violence, celibacy, non-possession and non-stealing. Gandhi was as much a Hindu as a Buddhist for he did not differentiate in practice the philosophy of Nirvana tloksha or salvation, the ultimate goals of life. Virtually, the genesis of Gandhi’s religion can be traced to non-Indian sources as well, for example, Gandhi’s emphasis on truth is as much a part of his borrowing form Hinduism as embodied in Confucianism and Taoism. Gandhi borrowed the best from every religion and at the same time believed that the salvation for him was possible only through Hinduism. He remarked: “The Gita contains the gospel of Karma or Work, the gospel of Bhakti or devotion and the gospel of Jnana or Knowledge. Life should be a harmonious whole of these three.”

No doubt, he justified, Varna—Ashrama and the division of society in broad economic classes, but the criterion behind this division was duty and not privileges. What he accepted was horizontal case system on a functional basis whereby none of the four functional groups were higher or lower but were of equal importance in the functioning of social organisation. He approved Varna—Ashrama as a system of self-restraint and conservation of energy.

That Gandhi was opposed to Machiavellian approach to politics seems plausible. His exhortations with regard to the restoration of moral values in political practice might appear utopian in the present context when politics has gone downhill. But for him, it was a practical proposition. His periodic reference to conscience in dealing with decision—making in day to day functioning was an indication of his faith in the corrigibility of man. Gandhi was disturbed by the emergence of religious intolerance, communal frenzy and the like, which marred peace and harmony in society. He perceived in the national development, an underlying current of communal hatred and violence and stressed Hindu—Muslim unity to the extent that he supported the Khilafat Movement.

However, his support to the Khilafat Movement was misinterpreted by many of his colleagues as a move towards appeasing the Muslims. Gandhi, to his utter discomfiture, found in nationalism, an overt and covert use of religion and religious symbols for political purpose.
Gandhi made a break with this tradition and coined new phrases and terminology suited to attract the Hindus. In spite of all his efforts to assuage the feelings of the Muslim community, his position on the Hindu—Urdu controversy attracted the attention of Muslims. Gandhi who favoured Hinduism in Devnagiri and Persian script greatly identified Hindustani with Hindi in Nagri script to the near exclusion of the Persian script.

His remarks that,

"Muslims did not yet regard India as their home: and the Musalman as a rule is a bully provoked the Muslims."

"What fifty thousand well-equipped soldiers could not do, what Mahatma had done. He is the one man boundary force."

With a noble heart, Gandhi in a rather over-simplified manner, had developed the notion of treating all religions alike without differentiating the essential religious identities which were responsible for the latent and obvious enmity between the Hindus and the Muslims. In 1938, Gandhi elaborated:

"My Hinduism is not sectarian. It includes all that I know to the best in Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism. I approach politics as everything else in a religious spirit. Truth is my religion and Ahimsa is the only way of its realization. I have rejected once and for all the doctrine of the sword. I may have not leaved a single stone unturned to achieve Hindu Muslim unity; God fulfils himself in strange way.

Gandhi also emphasized that the Gita, the Quran, the Bible, The Granth Sahib and Zend Avesta contained gems of wisdom, now it is up to the followers whether they follow to believe their teaching. The dichotomy between theory and practice of religion by itself baffles everybody.

Thus, Gandhi is justified in interpreting Secularism in his own terms, giving it a spiritualist base. Gandhi embodies a Vedantic vision of a core of truth in all religions and teaches not only tolerance of, but respect towards all religions, He stood for secularism though he claimed to be a staunch Sanatani Hindu and Vaishnava. He argued that his faith was based on the understanding of the Shastras among which he listed the Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas and the Bhagavada Gita. His secularism finds theoretical justification in his working. He recommended a daily reading of the Gita the Quran, and the Bible to the Hindu, Muslim and Christian students respectively. He stresses the need for a curriculum of religious instructions of basic principles of all other faiths than one’s own. He rejected the concept of coercion in the field of religion and earnestly pleaded for leaving every individual to follow the religion of his choice, without any interference from the State. He categorically stated that the state should undoubtedly be secular. He did not accept the concept of State Religion; neither did he favour institutionalization of any kind.
Mahatma Gandhi considered a self-regulated stateless society as his ideal. But the imperfections of the individuals who constitute society compelled him to content himself with the second best, namely, a society with a predominantly non-violent Government which governs the least. Gandhi tried to eliminate poverty from society. Plato attributed pallperism to a lack of proper education and training, as well as unjust social laws and an unjust constitution of the State. Suggesting the means of quelling communal riots non-violently, Gandhi wrote in September, 1940: “Goondas do not drop from sky, nor do they spring from earth like evil spirits. They are the product of social disorganization and society is therefore responsible for their existence. In other words, they should be looked upon as a symptom of corruption in our body politic. To remove the disease we must first discover the underlying cause.”

To him the individual is the one supreme consideration. He elaborated this idea in 1935:

I look upon an increase of the power of the state with the greatest fear, because although while apparently doing good by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality which lies at the root of all progress.

His concern for the freedom of the individual led him to propound a view which bears a close resemblance to philosophical anarchism. But it is worth noting that with the growing importance of the socialists in the Congress organization from 1934 onwards he did not hesitate to call himself a socialist and on some occasions even a communist. In 1937, he claimed that socialism and even communism are included in the first verse of the Ishopanisad. In 1940, he claimed. In his writings that he was a socialist long before those he knew in India had avowed their creed. In 1946, he claimed to be the foremost communist.

Socialism is usually taken to mean a form of society and government under which the state assumes ever-increasing functions regulating the life of the individual in different fields of activity. It is in this sense that Gandhi professes Socialism. It is necessary to go into these problems in chronological order with a view to finding out the extent to which his ideas on State and Society underwent change in course of time under the impact of changing circumstances. In every age and every country, social and political environments have moulded political thoughts. Gandhi could not have been an exception to this. The influence of Herbert Spencer (1820—1903) and John Stuart Mill (1806—73) was predominant when Gandhi was receiving his education in England. He refers to the works of Spencer and Mill in his Hind Swaraj. But he s not an individualist like Spencer and he differed considerably from Mill. The latter made a distinction between self-regarding faults and other regarding, faults. Mill said that no person ought to be punished ‘imply for being drunk: but a soldier or policemen.’ should be punished simply for being drunk on duty. In 1930, ‘Gandhi attacked this theory when he stated that:

“There are some people who think that we can afford to act as we please in matters that affect only ourselves but no men can, in fact do anything in the World which does not, directly or indirectly affect the welfare of his fellowmen.”

He goes so far as to emphasis the importance of thoughts because evil thoughts affect not only the individual but also his fellowmen and society. He was generally averse to compelling an individual to adopt a particular course of action. But, during his crusade against drinking in 1921,
he departed from this principle. He wrote that people cannot be made sober by compulsion, and that those who wish to drink must have facilities provided to them. The State does not cater to the vices of its people. We do not regulate or license house of ill fame. We do not provide facilities for thieves to indulge in their propensity for thieving. He declared: “I hold drink to be more damnable than thieving and perhaps, even prostitution. Is it not often the parent of both?” 39

He supported compulsion on the ground that drinking propensity is more than a disease than a vice. As such, he held that diseased persons have got to be helped even against themselves. In another case too he was in favour of using compulsion, it was concerning the parents or guardians neglecting to send their children to a primary school. This may be justified on the ground that the guardian is a trustee of the children under his care and that he becomes guilty of his neglect if he does not send them to a school in a community where free and compulsory education is provided.

Barring such exceptions, Gandhi was against the use of compulsion even with a view to making an individual virtuous. In August 1946, he therefore observed: How can I, the champion of Ahimsa, compel anyone: to perform even a good. 40

It is interesting to note that he does not prohibit the slaughter of all sorts of goats, sheep and cows. He specially stated that the she goats and cows which are either pregnant or mulch neither are not to be slaughtered nor their young ones which are less than six months old. He prohibits the killing of balls set at liberty and the boneless fish. Has not a well known Englishman said that to make mistakes as a freeman is better than being in bondage in order to avoid them?” Gandhi believed in the truth of the saying that the mind of a man who remains good under compulsion can not improve: in fact, it worsen and when compulsion is removed all the defects came up to the surface with even greater force. To both Gandhi and Thoreau government appeared to be unnecessary if and when individuals acquire perfect self control. In 1931 Gandhi wrote:

‘Political power means capacity to regulate national life through national representatives. If national life becomes as perfect as to become self regulated, no representation becomes so necessary. In such a state everyone is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbour. In the ideal state, therefore, there is: no political power because there is no State, but the ideal is never fully realized in life. Thoreau had further strengthened this argument by stating that government is the best which governs the least.” 41

Gandhi allows disobedience to law only when there is public opinion in favour of the person claiming to voice forth the grievance of the people. When India attained independence Gandhi laid emphasis on the necessity of obeying the law of the State. In September, 1947 he wrote that: “in democracy, the individual would be governed and limited, by the social will which is the state, which is governed by and for democracy. If every individual takes the law into his own hands, there would be no State. It would be reign anarchy in the sense of almost to be absence of social law or state. That way lays destruction of liberty; therefore, you should subdue your anger and let the state Secure-justice.” 43
He admitted that in a reasonable good state, citizens do not refuse to obey very single unjust law. He considered it necessary to reserve the right of individual judgment in some special cases. “I value individual freedom but you must not forget that man is essentially a social being. He has risen to his present state by learning to adjust his individualism to the law of the beast of the jungle. We have learnt to strike the mean between individual freedom and social restraint. Willing submission to social restraint for the sake of the well being of the whole society, enrich both the individual and the society of which he is a member.”

We know to our cost how rationing, control and food zones have increased the power of the bureaucracy enormously. One of the cardinal features of Gandhian society was the insistence on bodily labour. The American writer, Edward Bellamy proposed that everyone should work as a common labourer for three years before being selected for his profession. Gandhi tried the experiment of inducing the members of his Tolstoy Farm to undertake labour voluntarily in 1910. In 1925, he propounded the view that franchise should be restricted to those adults who perform some kind of bodily labour. In 1947, he elaborated the idea and stated: “Thus a simple labourer would easily be a voter, whereas a millionaire or a lawyer or a merchant and the like would find it hard if they did not do some body labour for the state.”

In his view, the only way of eradicating idle parasitism in society is to insist on the performance of physical labour. As is well known that Gandhi was an advocate of Rama Rajya. In 1946, he explained how his conception of Rama Rajya does not mean replacement of British army by an Indian army. Gandhi held the view that unless we switch our minds off from cities to the village we cannot serve them. It is not the cities that make India. Real India lives in the villages, and villages can be reconstructed only by reviving the defunct handicrafts of the countryside.

In independent India, rural community must achieve its own welfare and thus point the way to the welfare of Mankind. Gandhian constructive worker can give attention to the following seven—point programme of Rural Welfare.

- More food through better agriculture and an equitable redistribution of land through peaceful methods of persuasion.
- Quality food through mass education in the elementary rules of dietetics at the village level.
- Better health through the above and through a rational sanitation drive.
- Improvement and re-organization of cottage and village industries.
- Promotion of co-operation to make panchayats real.
- Promoting education of Adults in particular and liberal education should be available to every boy and girl without any discrimination of caste or class.
- Moral rearmament of the people through cultural and recreational programmes deriving inspiration from the past traditions of India and going forward to link up with the past traditions of the modern world.
None of these are new items. But they must be taken up in a new spirit. Special priorities should be given to Rural Youth programme and out of school education which will prepare a really good citizen. Gandhi was of the view that unless and until we befriend the Harijan, unless and until we treat him as our own brother, we cannot treat humanity as one brotherhood the whole movement for the removal of untouchability is a movement for the establishment of universal brotherhood and nothing less.

National regeneration, according to Gandhi, could not be brought about by reviving the Golden Age of the past. He, like Hindus in general, believed that the past was a source of inspiration and self—confidence, never a model or blue print for the present. Gandhi argued that although India could not adopt the modern civilization, there was “much” that it could “profitably assimilate for it. Gandhi’s notion of social change basically stemmed from his firm belief that reform is to be sought first in the character of man before it is attempted in society. It is a tribute to Gandhi’s sagacity that he realized that no man is perfect; everyone experiences a sense of inadequateness and requires help, albeit in different fields. The wealthy man having all material benefits requires spiritual upliftment, while a pauper seeks a full stomach. Both must be provided for. In this context, Gandhi’s concept of Daridranarayan, i.e., divinity in the poor and trusteeship, i.e., goodness in the rich are, in fact, the cornerstones of his theory of social change which bears striking resemblance to the idea of Nobleness and Charity.

In fact, Gandhi’s social philosophy stems from his morality for he was essentially a Karma yogi. For him, social transformation was, therefore, a mode of personal conduct and a form of service to the people. In fact, it was Gandhi’s broad-minded vision that made him view life as a whole and believe that social reconstruction is impossible unless we try to remake the individual as well. With this end in view, whereas on one hand, he visualized the vivid picture of a desired social order, on the other, he also formulated a complete ethics for remaking the man and thus tried to make up for the deficiencies and to rectify the discrepancies in the former social philosophies.

Indeed, the Gandhian concept of social revolutionary change conforms to modern thinking where the destruction of the older and the creation of a new one are supposed to go hand in hand. In Gandhism, the distinction between revolution and evolution is lost. For him, what mattered most in social change was the capacity to assimilate the new radicalism in affecting such social change? Gandhi was governed not by world appeal to the masses. Gandhi once wrote: “I have come to the fundamental conclusion that if you want something really important to be done, you must not merely satisfy reason, you must move the heart also.”

Besides an appeal to the heart, what was necessary also was a conversion of human nature through service and love which provided the basis of Gandhi’s social change towards a social order where the greatest good of each and everyone is ensured.

Gandhi said, “I have claimed that I was a socialist long before those I know in India have avowed their creed. But my socialism was natural to me and not adopted from any book. It comes out of my unshakeable belief in non-violence. No man can be actively non-violent and not rise against social in justice where it occurred.”
A Sarvodaya society according to Gandhi would be ideal society. It is a self-regulated society in which social harmony would be the main object of life. A state based on Sarvodaya ideal would not be Sovereign state. It is a state where the concept of service rather than of power would predominate. While Gandhi’s ideas were a conglomeration of humanist philosophies of the West, he had skillfully and deftly adapted them in an indigenous idiom with the result that the idiom acquired a new meaning altogether.

The classical four—fold division of Hindu society (Varna Ashrama Dharma) has been equated with caste. Gandhi’s reference in his earlier writings of the caste has to be seen in a historical perspective. Gandhi had said: “The vast organization of caste answered not only is religious wants of the community but it answered to its political needs. The villagers managed their internal affairs through the caste system, and through it dealt with any ruling power. It is not possible the cast system its wonderful power of organization.”

Untouchability, indeed, is the greatest blot on Hinduism and to remove it there has to be a penance that the caste Hindus owes to Hinduism and to themselves. The purification required is not of untouchables but of the so-called superior castes. Gandhi called these untouchables, Harijans, the sons of God, and even designated his last Newspaper as Harijan.

Gandhi always regarded non-violence and truth as an instrument for the removal of untouchability. It is not enough for you to hold the belief passively that untouchability is a crime. He who is a passive spectator of crime is readily, and in law, an active participant in it. You must therefore, begin and continue your agitation along all lawful and legitimate lines.

The solution of the communal tension, he wrote, can be made if, firstly, all minorities are given representation in the elected bodies in appropriate proportion and secondly, the public employment should be made by a committee including representative of minorities also. He wanted reservation of seats in the elected bodies only for the transitional period He suggested that measures should also be taken to reduce the educational, social, political and economic backwardness of various minorities instead of giving artificial protection. Grounds of adequate protection were so well prepared by Gandhi that the Constituent Assembly agreed for reservation of seats to Scheduled Castes and Anglo Indians in the House of people and State Legislatures. Articles 331 and 333 empower the President and Governors respectively to ensure this. Since he began his championship for the cause of the depressed, he paid whole—hearted attention to the cause of the resurrection of the status of women. Several years ago, Rudyard Kipling, an eminent English poet, had opined that “the female of the species is more deadly than the male.”

Another dimension of Gandhian reform was in the field of education. Educational system and social order are closely related. The former aims at social system preparing the individuals with a particular end in view. In fact, education has been one of the most influential instruments of modernization. It has led to the mobilization of people’s aspiration for nationalism, liberalism, and freedom. It alone has been responsible for the growth of an enlightened intelligentsia which carried forward not only our movement for independence but relentless struggle for social and cultural reform.
To Gandhi as against many other philosophers, who have advocated methods of transformation, Satyagraha was a revolutionary technique involving self—suffering, purification and love. Gandhi visualized humanity as a large family and, sought to apply Satyagraha to various fields of activity. It was not necessarily only a political instrument but a much more comprehensive one meant for bringing in its fold all the aspects of life with a view to change the basic structure of society. It was more through the appeal to the heart than to the head. Explaining it, Gandhi says that:"I have come to the fundamental conclusion that if you want something really to be done you must move the heart also. The appeal of reason is more to the head but penetration of the heart comes from suffering. It opens up to the inner understanding of man and, therefore, is more enduring. The method of self—purification is the root of the technique of non-cooperation”.

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26. Ibid., pp.576.

27. Harijan, August 29, 1936, p. 226


32. Young India, June 19, 1924.


37. Young India, 13.11.1924,


39. Young India, 8.6.1921, Ahmadabad, (1919’1932)

40. Ibid. 2.7.1931.

41. Ibid., 2, 7.1931.

42. The Harijan, 27.5. 1939.
43. Ibid. 28.9, 1947.


46. Young India. November 11, 1931.

47. Harijan, April 20, 1940, p. 365.

48. Ibid., p. 108.

49. Young India, 1931. P. 204.


52. Harijan, May 19, 1939, p. 136.