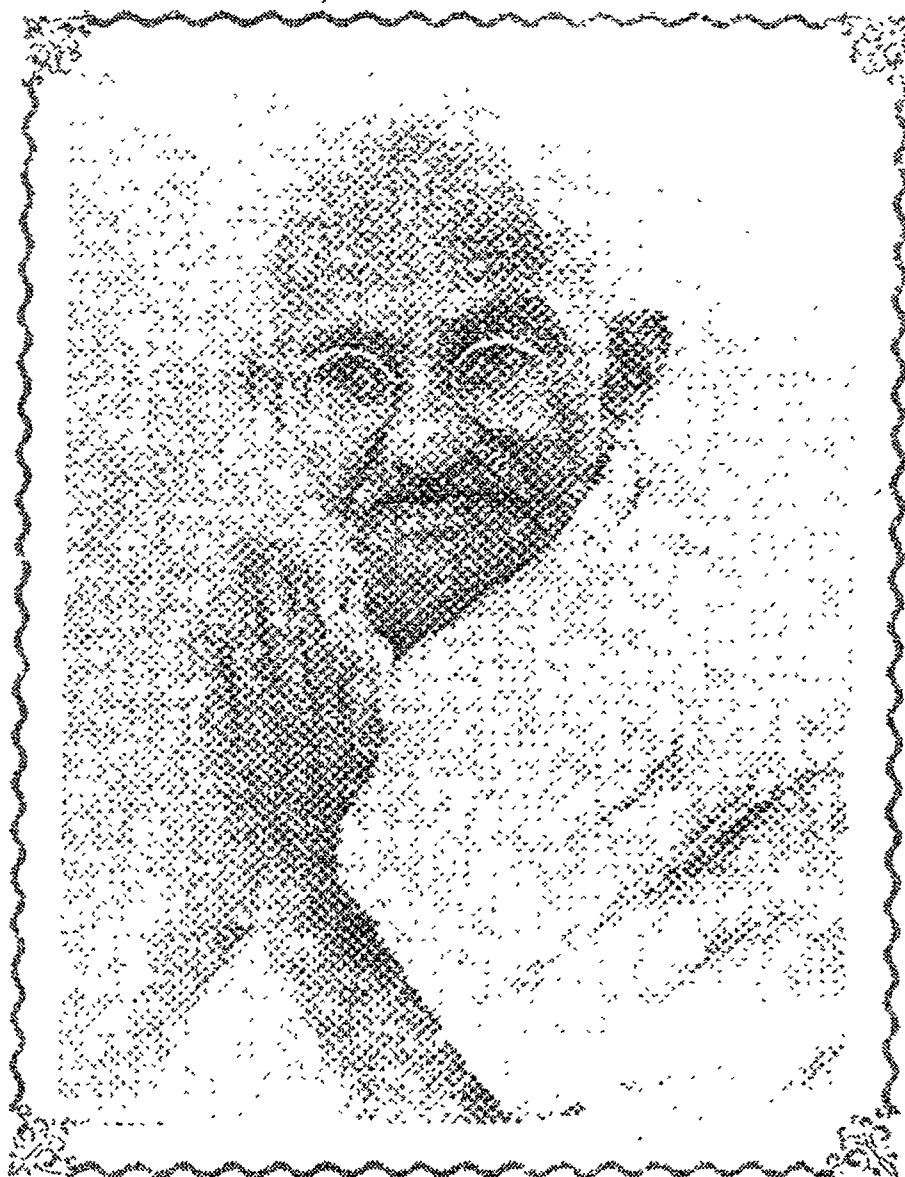


Chapter IV

GANDHI AND HIS IDEOLOGY OF SARVODAYA

સાદરે આપના મનને સમર્પિત



સમસ્ત સાર્વજનિક સંસ્થાઓને સમર્પિત

Mahatma Gandhi is such a global personality to warrant any introduction. There has been a growing body of literature called *Gandhiana* ever since his death. However, keeping with the thrust of the present thesis, this chapter covers the following sections:

I Gandhi: His ideology.

II Gandhi: His approach to the tribals

The first section looks at the following:

1. Gandhi and Gandhism
2. Modernity as conceived by Gandhi' and contemporary thinkers.
3. Challenges of the 21st century and Gandhi
 - 3.1 Consumerism and declining indigenous cultures.
 - 3.2 Globalisation and its impacts over India.
4. Gandhi solution to the challenges of twenty first century.
 - 4.1 Gandhian Economics
 - 4.2 Value based education.
 - 4.3 Constructive Programmes.

Gandhi and his Ideology:

In his childhood, the Mohandas Karamchand turned out to be an obedient son and honest among children of his age group. He was fairly influenced by the stories of Shravan Kumar, Bhakt Prahlad, and king Harishchandra. The three mythological characters became his ideal to follow in life. He moved to England for higher studies in law and here he was influenced by host of western thinkers and theological intellectuals such as Edward Carpenter and Henry Salt.¹ His interactions with intellectuals made him understand and further his

¹ Of Edward Carpenter and Henry Salt Gandhi read *Civilization: Its cause and Cure* and *Journal of Vegetarian Society* respectively as cited in Ramchandra Guha, *Environmentalism and Global History*, New Delhi, OUP, 2000, pp 20.

interests in different religious and their respective philosophies. Thus, he thoroughly studied *Gita*. After his return to India from England he went to South Africa where his journey as a mass activist and leader began. Even over half a century after his death in 1948, his thoughts and ideas continue inspiring the young. About the continuing tradition of Gandhi a veteran Gandhian Nirmala Deshpande says:

All over the world there are small groups and Communities who are practising Gandhi's ideology silently. It is gradually growing into a force which could bring a positive change not only in our country but in the entire world.²

Gandhism:

The historical relevance of Gandhi might be debatable but it is hardly questionable. Gandhi and his several techniques and thoughts actually led to several debates and some of them turned out to be bitter controversies. In the course of the Indian Nationalist Movement he readily conceded, what the great critics of Gandhi never denied in his lifetime was the authentic validity of his fundamental principles in his milieu. If the question of relevance of Gandhi is to be renewed in the present circumstances it is worthwhile to examine it in the specific context of the contemporary relevance of Gandhi's life and works. It is precisely this criterion that renders the reference to 'Gandhism' relevant in this connection. The distinction between Gandhi and Gandhism, for the present purpose, is more ideological than historical. Gandhism does not mean in any sense a narrow cult or a rigid doctrine. When we deal with the central message of Gandhi and its significance to our times we take recourse to the term 'Gandhism' for the sake of greater clarity and coherence. Whether Gandhism as is known to us as system of thought or it was the implication of such a system is again a different question.

² 'Gandhian Programme and Rural Development in Practise', A symposium held by the Centre for Gandhian Studies, Sardar Patel University, 21st March 2002, *Indian Express*, 22 March 2002.

It is suffice for the current investigation to treat Gandhism as inherently containing essential elements of Gandhian thought.³

The source of this Gandhism is essentially the extensive literature that Gandhi has left in his life time. Ever since the assassination of Gandhi, his literature has steadily grown in unparallel manner. While all this source material on the thought of Gandhi is now easily accessible, it is indeed ironical that there is but scant attention to Gandhi's work in our public life. Gandhi's views are generally taken for granted. This is especially deplorable as we are in possession today of a most formidable collection of Gandhi's writing.⁴ It is interesting to note that Gandhi does not put a premium on consistency under all conditions. He did admit of inconsistency in his numerous writings as he says at one place:

I would like to say to the diligent reader of my writings and to others who are interested in them that I am not at all concerned with appearing to be consistent. In my search after truth, I have discarded many ideas and learnt many new things. Old as I am in age, I have no feeling that I have ceased to grow inwardly or that my growth will stop. What I am concerned with is my readiness to obey the call of truth, my God, from moment to moment, and therefore, when anybody finds my inconsistency between any two writings of mine, if he has still faith in my sanity, he would do well to choose the later of the two on the same subject."⁵

The dynamic nature of Gandhi's thought can be explained by the historical criterion; he has anything but static in his thinking. Gandhi was constantly growing in his life. This was naturally reflected in his

³ Suryakant Parikh, "An Approach to Gandhism", *International Seminar on Gandhi and Twenty first Century*, Jan. 30th to Feb 4th 1998, New Delhi-Wardha, p. 2

⁴ Ibid., p.1

⁵ *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, (Hereafter CWMG)* Vol. XVII, 1965, p. 69

personality and thought which was constantly developing in his writings. The question of consistency in Gandhi has remained unattended so far, though he himself has thrown sufficient light on it. He explained that life was truth, non-violence, and reason, but not reason alone for he believed that faith only begins where reason stops.⁶ Gandhi provides interpretation of our life from the standpoint of truth and non-violence which were the eternal principles of life for him. He could claim that there is an underlying consistency running through his seeming inconsistency as in nature there is a principle of unity amidst the seeming diversity.⁷

Gandhi always kept truth and non-violence above reason. However, it is clear that Gandhi must have felt a great strain and stress due to the fact that most of the people, even his closest ones, were unable to keep pace with him and failed to understand his personal way of fusing reason with faith.⁸ Jawaharlal Nehru's thought was useful in Gandhi's as is available in his commitment to civilisation, ethos and institution of India or say between his profoundest and purest *Sanatani* Hindu approach to the global and Indian reality on the one hand and to the idea of a secular Indian State on the other.⁹ Gandhi says reason is the poor thing in the midst of the temptation; faith alone can save us.¹⁰ About *Gandhism* Gandhi wrote:

You have your own original way of living at things and the knack to deal with them. May be, these along with your intimacy with

⁶ Rajiv Vora, 'Gandhi So-Called Inconsistencies: An Analysis with Reference to Non-Violence, Reason, and Faith', *Gandhi Marg*, Vol. XV, No. 2, Jul-Sep 1993, p. 137.

⁷ Ibid. p. 138

⁸ "Gandhi believed that rationalism is developed on the rejection of God and of the presence of the divine or the cosmic intervention in the worldly reality. Thus, the science and cultures shaped by the nationalist world view of the 'post-renaissance' period could not produce anything but blind materialism." *CWMG*, Vol. XVII, op. cit. p. 156

⁹ Rajiv Vora, op. cit., p. 146.

¹⁰ "Reason appears to be on the side of those of those who indulge in drinking and free love. The fact is that reason is a blurred on such occasions. It follows the instincts." He believed so much in faith so much that he wrote: "millions of human beings are living there more or less orderly lives because of there childlike faith in the maker of us all." *CWMG*, Ibid. 195

me will cause uneasiness to some. They will perhaps say that you are not true Gandhian. But then do not get perturbed.... In fact there is no such thing as Gandhism. I have not said the same old thing afresh and reminded them to the present world. Even supposing there is something like Gandhism, there is only one Gandhiite and that is Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.¹¹

The essential elements Gandhism contain were those thoughts of Gandhi that have a perennial significance. That Gandhi should have dealt with the peripheral as well as the permanent problems was inherent in his historical role. He was not only a liberator of India but also a prophet with a universal message. If we consider several ideas of Gandhi, we may be able to discern some of them like truth and non-violence which are meant to be of universal application. There are also some other ideas in Gandhian thought as a corollary to the central concept of truth and non-violence permeate to the political, economic and social spheres of life. Closely related to them are some other categories in Gandhian thought like rural reconstruction and agrarian reforms. Apparently such schemes are derived by Gandhi with a view to solving the specific problems of the Indian society at a given solution.

According to Gandhi every human interest must have a support of religion, and, politics to be a valuable pursuit is no exception to it. Gandhi did not regard political power as an end in itself. It was only a means to ensure better conditions for people in every department of life. Gandhi infuses morality and spiritualism not only in politics but also in economics.¹² Gandhi emphasizes on ethics in the pursuance of economic interests and makes ethics and economics almost

¹¹ Chandrakant Upadhaya, *Manibhai Desai: An Ascetic Incarnate*. New Delhi, Dayalji Ashram Vidyarthi Parivar, 1994, pp. 65 and *CWMG*, Ibid. 166

¹² Surendra Verma, 'The Tripartite Model of Values and Gandhi.' *Gandhi Marg*, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, Jul-Sep 1996, p. 211.

interchangeable. He did not draw a sharp or rather any distinction between economics and ethics. Economics that hurts the moral well being of an individual or a nation is immoral and therefore sinful.¹³ We may appropriately recall a famous saying of Gandhi himself on the relevance of Gandhism. He once said; "Gandhi may die, but Gandhism will live forever."¹⁴

Modernity in view of Gandhi and his Contemporary Thinkers:

One of the most famous writings of Gandhi is *Hind-Swaraj* written in 1909. While returning from England to South Africa Gandhi wrote this phenomenal book in which he expressed his opinions on modernization and all its ill results. Such of Gandhi's views, to a great extent, were influenced by the opinions and writings of John Ruskin, Leo Tolstoy, and Rousseau and through other writings and his own thoughts. Gandhi brought the conclusion that "distinguishing characteristics of modern civilization is an indefinite multiplication of wants, to satisfy which one had to forage far and wide for raw materials and commodities." Gandhi believed that by contrast pre-industrial civilizations were marked by an imperative restriction upon and a strict regulating of these wants. In uncharacteristically intemperate tones he spoke whole heartedly detesting this mad desire to destroy distance and time to increase appetites and go to the ends of the earth in satisfaction. If modern civilization stands for all this he called it satanic.¹⁵

Rousseau, Marx, and Gandhi are well known as critics of modern capitalism but Marx's position is difficult from those of Rousseau and Gandhi. Marx realizes the progressive role of the capitalism in the

¹³ *CWMG*, Vol. LVII and Bharatan Kumarappa, *Rebuilding Our Villages*, 1952, p. 5

¹⁴ Surendra Verma, op. cit., p. 9 'Here Gandhism meant a way of simplest living of fundamental Economics.'

¹⁵ M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, Ahmedabad, Navjivan, 1909, Reprint 1969, p. 60.

historical development. He is critical of its exploitative character and he aims to replace the bourgeois society by a 'mass-society'. For Marx, man is mainly an 'economic' being. Therefore, he wants to change the economic structure, the base of the society. In the socialist system Marx retains the technology and advancement of Capitalism.¹⁶ Whereas despite different perspectives, background, and theoretical frameworks, Rousseau and Gandhi have striking similarities in their diagnosis of evils of modern 'immoral society' and they plead for the same solution.¹⁷ In their criticisms, Rousseau and Gandhi argue that scientific progress is contradictory to nature. The society depending on science and technology is farthest from nature. After the commanding heights of nature's progress, ecological balance has been disturbed and nature has been enslaved to some extent. Both anticipate evil consequences of the scientific concern and exhort others to learn a lesson that "nature would have preserved from science."¹⁸

Challenges of Twenty-first century and Mahatma Gandhi:

The increasing reliance on personal and structural violence to solve our problems and the accelerating environmental degradation pose the greatest challenge to human society in the twenty-first century. Gandhi's values, ideas, and action strategies do offer an adequate

¹⁶ K. P. Mishra, 'Gandhi and Rousseau and Critics of Modern Civilisation: A Comparative Perspective', *Gandhi Marg*, Vol. 27, No. 2, Jul-Sep 2002, p. 162.

¹⁷ "Rousseau and Gandhi have almost similar views regarding human nature. With the former, man is sympathetic by nature to his fellowmen, although he has self-interest or self-love. But the true essence of man is sympathy towards other men and Rousseau maintains that self interest is a hindrance in the way of moral progress of man. He clearly points out that man is a "mixture of good and evil and the difference is only one of degree." He opines that, "he is essentially a social being." Rousseau strongly believes in man's capacity for the highest moral development and he suggests that the lower nature of man can be controlled by means of a conscious ethical discipline. He does not favour the repression of human instincts but he advocates for regulation of these instincts with the help of soul force. Gandhi realized that a man can develop his moral capacity, only by renouncing material comforts or bodily pleasures. The ultimate destiny of the man is the realization of the truth in life and for this purpose the lower nature of man needs to be controlled by non-indulgence." Ibid. p 164.

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 167

response and alternative to these challenges. Gandhi was a crusader for truth and non-violence, and a social reformer par-excellence. He said:

My mission is to convert every Indian, every Englishman, and finally the world for regulating mutual relations and my mission is not merely the freedom of Indian. Through the realization of freedom of India, I hope to realize and carry the mission of brotherhood of man.”

Gandhi's non-violence is a positive transient concept embodying the components of compassion, altruism and love. There is perhaps no other hope for the strife-torn world, not only in twenty-first but for all centuries to come, but accept the Gandhian paradigm for establishing a qualitative better sustainable social order nationally and globally. It has been suggested that it is imperative and urgent that we increasingly make use of Gandhian ideas and action strategies for a global non-violent awakening and consequent qualitative social transformation and dignified human survival.¹⁹

Consumerism:

Wants are based on human beings but when they are not connected with activity they become superfluous. The phenomena of consumption divorced from productive activity may be defined as consumerism. The development of modern technology, the spread of popular culture, the emergent uni-polar world, the growing American intervention in the global geopolitics, the relentless expansion of American capitalism compounded by the increasing failure of the traditional societies to withstand the onslaught of the alien culture across the globe. Though there is no doubt that this is largely the result of a conscious American policy to which the countries of south and now

¹⁹ T. K. N. Unnithan, 'Human Society in the Twenty-first Century: A Gandhian Alternative' *International Seminar*, op. cit., p. 1

the communist bloc too have fallen prey to.²⁰ Almost imperceptibly the cultures of the metros have spilled over to the small town, which is now challenging its dominance in every walk of life. The role of the cinema and more importantly the television revolution cannot be overlooked in the growth of the small towns. From the towns the distance of the villages was never far. With the urban markets fast reaching a saturation point a race to capture the rural market has begun.²¹

In contrast access to credit for the poor, both small farmers and landless labourers, as also for the women artisans and entrepreneurs amongst the poorer sections is not adequately available. With the result there are two Indians, one of large metropolitan cities, high rise buildings, plush houses, sleek cars and all the material comforts, and in the shadow of these luxuries lay the other India of illiteracy, squalor, high infant mortality and female infanticide.²² In the words of Narayan Desai: "At present within Indian Union two countries one India the other 'Bharat' exists? The former belongs to rich and suave, they use maximum resources of the country, the latter belongs to the unprivileged classes of the society who are being unjustly exploited by the former."²³

Due to this growing consumerism suddenly pessimism has grown about the future of the present economic system. Many challenges are

²⁰ "There are new terminologies in circulation today reflecting the big changes in our social ethos. 'Yuppies' belonged to the late seventies and early eighties, and words like 'dinks' (double income no child couple) and 'dikts' (double income two kids couple), and there is 'student imp' (minimal income with parents support) all these three belong to the nineties and all of them are big spenders in 'the great Indian consumer bazaar.'" S. Umadevi, 'Gandhi and Consumerism', *Journal of Peace and Gandhian Studies*, Vol. I, No. 2, Jan-Mar 1996, pp. 30-31.

²¹ This market strategy has certain extreme adverse effects on the indigenous cultures. Toilet soap king Adi Godrej says: "the rural market is vibrant, discerning, and at the current rate of growth, it will soon outstrip the urban market. The rural market is not sleeping anymore". Suddenly as if urban India has become alive to the existence of its seven lakh villages, market strategies are being rewarded and reoriented to woo the rural buyers.

²² S. Umadevi, Op. cit., p. 31.

²³ The interview of Narayan Desai at Vedchhi, district Surat taken on 14/02/2002.

looming large on the frontiers of global economy. The challenge came from the operative system as well as conceptual framework. At the threshold of the new century, economic performance of mainstream economy exposed some serious contradictions, which never came to the surface before. The contradictions are found in the methods of production and market mechanism. In the present market mechanism it is difficult to establish an analytically meaningful correlation between production and demand because here production is governed by technological precondition where demand is created artificially; neither production nor demand is based on rationality. The message of limits to growth is yet to reach the people. The concept of growth appears dangerously ambiguous when it puts emphasis on ever increasing production. Lack of rationality regarding production and blind market mechanism combined to create an unprecedented depression in the world in our present time. Too much emphasis on production has created a series of crisis and shrinkage of market. The result is: the system has reached the verge of collapse.²⁴

The concept of industrialization is based on the acceptance of separation between agriculture and industry. In the developed countries roughly five percent of population is engaged in agriculture. Lower percentage of population in agriculture is taken as indicator of progress. This is arbitrarily accepted. Its acceptance is not based on rationality. For industrialisation creates an unprecedented flight of people from village to city which makes urban setting increasingly congested. A feeling has been created that shift of population is good; it brings structural change.²⁵

²⁴ Ranjit Chaudhari, 'The crisis of Growth: AQ Gandhian Alternative', *International Seminar*....op cit., p 1

²⁵ Ramchandra Guha, op. cit, p. 22.

Globalisation and its Impacts over India:

India is a huge market and foreign investors are tapping it. They are investing in only those sectors which can yield them high profits like consumer goods. They are investing in sectors like space, power, roads, irrigation, etc. in which we need assistance.²⁶ The irony of the situation is that our elite have become the chief spokesmen of this system because they are the main beneficiaries. Our elite are going the Latin American way turning against those very people who sustain their property. The elites have lined into the western style of living which compelled them to resort to crude exploitation and exhibit the most arrogant selfishness. Prof. J. D. Sethi has termed this phenomenon as 'International Economic Darwinism' which is a set of relations between nations and people on the principle of survival of the fittest.²⁷ With understanding of the consumerism, its ill effects and its creeping tentacles in India, the value of the Gandhian Talisman become more and more important which says: "Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you have seen and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it lead to swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions?"

Gandhi's' Solution:

Gandhi's best known aphorism is "*the world has enough for everybody's need but not for a single man's greed*". Based on the above quote, Gandhi suggested certain initial steps to be followed by every individual which could solve the challenges twenty-first century are: voluntary simplicity that minimized wants, using recycled resources, revival of rural India for there are natural limits to industrialization,

²⁶ Jai Narain, "New Economic Policy: Myth and Reality", *Journal of Peace and Gandhian Studies*, op. cit. p. 40

²⁷ Michael True, 'Swaraj and Sanity', *Journal of Peace and Gandhian Studies*, op. cit. p. 49

warned use of chemical manure, 'trading in soil fertility for the for the sake of quick returns would prove to be a disastrous short sighted philosophy.'²⁸ Endowed with penetrating perspective and insight into the future, Gandhi commented on the neurosis of industrialization and said:

This industrial civilization is a disease because it is all evil. Let us not be deceived by catchwords and phrases. I have no quarrel with steamships or telegraphs...they are in no way indispensable for the permanent welfare of the human race.²⁹

Economic welfare is only a part of total welfare and, that too, the economic welfare which conflicts with total welfare is not truly welfare either. Many a times man is prepared to give up some of his material well being for the sake of his higher well being; may be he has a goal to achieve or due to his love for other fellow beings.³⁰ Following the principles of ancient Indian culture of abstaining luxuries, according to Gandhi, "A votary of *ahimsa* cannot subscribe to the utilitarian formula of the greatest good of greatest number. He will strive for the greatest good of all, inevitably includes the good of the greatest number and therefore him and the utilitarian will in many points in their career. But there does come a time when they must part company and even work in opposite directions. The utilitarian to be logical will never sacrifice himself. The absolutist will even sacrifice himself."³¹ Thus, Gandhi wrote:

Whilst I am a passionate devotee of simplicity in life, I have also discovered that it is worthless unless the echo of simplicity of

²⁸ Ramchandra Guha, op. cit, p. 22

²⁹ M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, op. cit.

³⁰ Shyam Ratna Gupta, 'A Gandhian Alternative to the Evils of Capitalism and Consumerism', *Journal of Peace and Gandhian Studies*, op. cit. p 16

³¹ S. Umadevi, op. cit, p 22

heart, where the two cannot correspond, there is always either gross self-deception or hypocrisy.³²

Gandhi had warned at the very outset of the twentieth century: "If India copies England, it is my firm conviction that she will be ruined. Though it is not due to peculiar fault of English people, but the condition is due to modern civilization. It is a civilization only in name; under it the nation of Europe are becoming degraded and ruined day by day." "What is morally wrong can never be socially or politically right."³³ Though Gandhi is essentially a spiritualist, aspiring for the realization of God, his God was truth and his search for truth touched all spheres of life, affecting the individual and society? In his own words:

to see the all universal and all pervading spirit of truth face to face one must love meanest of creations as oneself, and a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. That is why my devotion to truth has drawn me into the field of politics, insistence on truth and non-violence in all dealings including the freedom struggle, and the concept of satyagriha merit the deep study of those aspiring for a new social order.

He aimed at an egalitarian society, not through state compulsion, but by the voluntary efforts of all. This calls for the adoption of appropriate technology, suited for a need deduced life within the framework of a cost reduced economy.³⁴ Gandhi had all along stressed the importance and sanctity of manual labour. For him labour is the law of nature and its violation is the pivotal cause of problems we face now. Intelligent manual labour is essentially for the proper development of the mind. Hand culture is indispensable for mind culture. This fact is

³² Ibid. p. 23; Also see *CWMG* Vol.

³³ M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, op. cit, p 59

³⁴ K. Janardan Pillai, 'Holistic Vision of Gandhi vs Consumerism', *Journal of Peace and Gandhian Studies*, op. cit. pp 49-50.

now supported by modern psychology. This was one of the motivating ideas of basic education promulgated by Gandhi.³⁵ Gandhi's contribution is a fine synthesis of higher values of human life in the path of evolution, Huxley's 'Psycho-Social Evolution', and practical solution to the day-to-day problems of humanity. If the path shown by him is followed, we can escape the danger of the excess utilisation of the nature, negative utilization of the scientific advancement, and misuse of political power, reliance of violence and exploitation of the many by a small minority. The welfare of all can thus be realized.³⁶

Gandhi's objective was to establish a society based on truth, non-violence, and justice. According to Gandhi the aim of the education is to produce a holistic human being with high character, courage, strength, virtue, and ability to forget oneself for the good of others. He emphasized that good education is that which draws out and stimulates the spiritual, intellectual and physical faculties of the children. The most important aim of education is to help every individual to become self supporting in later life. Education should be craft-centred and productive. Pupil should be trained to use their hands and not merely develop their intellect. Gandhi's basic education afforded the primacy to handicrafts such as agriculture, spinning, weaving woodwork, metal work, and the like. He also emphasized that every child should be given religious instructions which should include the essential techniques of all great religions of the world.³⁷ In his last will, Gandhi wrote: "I have given many things to India. But this system of education together with its technique is, I feel, the best of them. I do not think I will have any thing better to offer to the country."³⁸

³⁵ Ibid. p 51

³⁶ M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, op. cit, p 63.

³⁷ Satyabrata Chowdhary, 'Perspectives of the Education in the World Today', *International Seminar*, p 2.

³⁸ Gandhi on Education *CWMG*, Vol.

Gandhi gave due importance to the individual. Western society also puts emphasis on individual rights which Gandhi thought was very valuable. His idea of human society was based on the premises that individual *swaraj* was the highest goal. Gandhi's social thinking was based on an ethical vision at the centre.³⁹

Gandhi and Khadi:

The question of *khadi* market was not significant to Gandhi. In the sense that *khadi* was conceived with a much more ambitious object, i.e. to make villages starvation-proof. He believed that:

This is impossible unless villages will wear khadi themselves, sending only surplus to the cities. The khadi is sold at place of its production and used by the manufacturers themselves.⁴⁰

Gandhi insisted on the 'primitive method' of production in the village industry and justified the return because there is no other way of giving employment to the millions of villagers who live in idleness.⁴¹

Gandhian Constructive Programmes:

Nelson Mandela's prophetic words that 'the twenty-first century belongs to Gandhi' appear more than to be a ripple among today's intelligentsia. The international community is increasingly turning to Gandhi who was a phenomenon of the twentieth century. There is greater awareness of the Gandhian model of development, especially in the non-western world and almost everywhere, political pundits, economic experts, and even religious leaders are analyzing the Gandhian model and constructive programmes. The Gandhian constructive programme '*sarvodaya*' is the movement of the people, by

³⁹ Ranjit Chaudhari, 'Gandhi and Value Education', op. cit, p. 47.

⁴⁰ M. K. Gandhi, *Khadi Why and How?* Ahmedabad: Navjivan, 1935, p. 85.

⁴¹ M. K. Gandhi, *Khadi and Spinning in Villages*, Ahmedabad: Navjivan, 1969, Reprint, p. 138.

the people, for the people.⁴² The constructive programme is central to the understanding of Gandhi's concept of *Swaraj*, which was for him a step towards the goal of *Ramraj*.⁴³ In short, constructive programme seems to be a revolutionary programme which has the potential to change the course of life.

Principles of Constructive Programme:

1. It is performed on its own accord. It is purely a moral action which strengthens morality in man.
2. Cooperation and mutual aid are the importance of constructive work; voluntaries and sharing are the core of constructive activities.
3. Self-reliance and self-help is another important principle of constructive programme.
4. The principle constructive programme is building from below.
5. Constructive programme is the concrete expression of the spirit of non-violence.
6. Decentralisation is another important principle of constructive programme.⁴⁴

In the items of Constructive Programmes he listed thirteen programmes which were: communal unity, removal of untouchability, prohibition, *khadi*, village industries, village sanitation, *nai-talim* or basic-education, adult education, uplift of women education, uplift of women, education in health and hygiene, promoting provincial languages, and promotion of economic equality. In 1945 Gandhi added five more points: *kisan*, Labourer, adivasis, lepers, and students. After Gandhi's death the following items were added to by his followers to

⁴² S. Narayanswamy, 'Constructive Programme Towards Twenty First Century', *International Seminar*

⁴³ *Ramraj* is the kingdom of God where national resources are distributed equally among all the citizens.

⁴⁴ M. K. Gandhi, *Constructive Programmes*, Ahmedabad, Navjivan, 1949, p 3

strengthen the movement; cow protection, nature cure, *bhoodan*, *gramdan* and *shanti sena*. Gandhi's Constructive Programme was the blue print for social insurgence, the espousal of secularism, the craft based, skill- oriented, value-creating *nai-talim* (new education), the trusteeship concept, decentralising planning, local self-government, village self-sufficiency, all of which were all-embracing frame of the non-violent revolution aimed at a new social order.⁴⁵

Gandhi attached greatest importance to his economic agenda and particularly to *khadi*. Gandhi viewed economic problems in terms of moral wellbeing of man. His economic outlook is determined by the ideas of non-possession, non-stealing, bread labour, and *swadeshi*. Following Gandhi, there should be no doubt that the future of India is intrinsically connected with the future of its villages. There are ever increasing problems. With courage, conviction, and abiding faith in the teaching of Gandhi the adherents have to tackle the problems of poverty, ignorance, malnutrition, unsanitary conditions, population explosion, and the caste system. In every village there need to be a body of servants of the nations engaged in constructive work to achieve, social, moral, and economic freedom.

II - Gandhi and His Approach to Tribals:

This part of the chapter has been sub-divided into the following heads:-

1. Gandhi's first tryst with the tribals
2. Gandhi and Tribal Societies
3. Gandhi and *Gram-Swaraj*
 - (a) Gandhian Economics
 - (b) Gandhi and Village Life
 - (c) '*Sarvodaya*' the greatest good of all.

⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 3

(d) '*Gram-Swaraj*' and the importance of the agriculture.

Gandhi's introduction with aborigines occurred in South Africa where he witnessed the people of 'Zulu' tribe and described them as innocent and ignorant people.⁴⁶ After his return to India in 1915 he came across Indian tribes during his *Satyagriha* of Champaran in 1916. his tryst with tribes of India did not make him consider these communities as separate from other marginalised people called *shudras*.⁴⁷ He advised his followers among Congressmen to work for the empowerment of tribal and *Harijan* after he had withdrawn his nation wide non-cooperation movement (1922). During the colonial era, Gandhi's major task remained the struggle against the British rule. He believed that *Swaraj*, the self-rule, will have its rule in *Gram-swaraj* (self-reliant villages) as in the villages of India resided almost ninety percent of the population and the majority of this population was constituted by the depressed classes.⁴⁸ Throughout the struggle against the British rulers, Gandhi maintained a Constructive Programme of social service for village upliftment by which he intended to empower villagers so that they could participate in the nationalist struggle.

His intention was to improve the condition of all. The idea of independence and the service to the fellowmen is expressed by him in the concept of '*sarvodaya*' or 'Good of all'. This principle of *sarvodaya* rejects the utilitarian principle of the 'greatest good of greatest number', because the utilitarian will not admit any self-sacrifice or renunciation. It may, however, justify the domination of majority rights for the sake of

⁴⁶ M. K. Gandhi, *My Experiments with Truth: An Autobiography*, New Delhi, Sasta Sahitya Mandal, Reprint 1990, pp 206-207.

⁴⁷ Gandhi considered the deplorable condition of both the communities to be same. Ibid. p 208

⁴⁸ Arun Gandhi (ed.), "Gandhian Approach to Rural Development" *Seminar Proceedings held at Lonavala*, 12th to 14th Nov. 1984, Chap. 2

an abstractly conceived majority. For this reason, Gandhi adopted the term *sarvodaya* which means literally 'the rise of all'.⁴⁹

The rise here meant the welfare of the most depressed persons in the society along with the privileged communities. The welfare of the depressed communities, viz dalits and tribal remains a priority under *sarvodaya*. Thus the term is often referred as *antodaya* i.e. 'rise to the last men'. Throughout the freedom struggle, the followers of Mahatma Gandhi, as he himself was, were involved in the social activities which he declared in the Sarvodaya. In the pre-Independence era, Gandhi's followers could be roughly split into two camps: the constructive workers & the political activists. However, both the groups' participated in each others' work occasionally. After the assassination of Gandhi, many of his followers who were not political activists left for the villages to take up the constructive work. These persons utilized their potent energies for building self sufficient village communities and for serving the downtrodden sections of the society.⁵⁰

The basic principles of *Gram-Swaraj* as laid down by Gandhi are: supremacy of man, the utilisation of whole manpower of India, bread, labour, equality, trusteeship, decentralisation, *swadeshi*, self-sufficiency, cooperation, *satyagriha*, village governance by *Panchayat*, and *Nai-Talim*. The basic *swaraj* is *gram-swaraj*, which means self-rule, self-control, self-restraint, control of mind, and discipline within by each and every individual.⁵¹

⁴⁹ M. K. Gandhi, *Sarvodaya: Its Principles and Programmes*, Ahmedabad, Navjivan, 1951; Also see, Indira Rothermund, 'Satyagrahi Socialism and Conflict' in Subrata Mukerjee and Sushila Ramaswamy (ed.), *Facets of Mahatma Gandhi: Economic and Social Principles*, Delhi, OUP, 1977, p 89.

⁵⁰ Paul Clements, *Lens into the Gandhian Movements: Five Village Development Organisations in North- East India*, Bombay, Prembhai Press, 1988, pp. 10-11

⁵¹ Ibid. pp. 45-46.

The central problem of Indian economy as Gandhi saw was persistent unemployment in the villages. Therefore, India's development according to Gandhi had to be rooted in its agricultural community oriented endeavours while adhering to non-violence, truth, and love. Gandhi believed that welfare of India and the world is only possible through the revival of the villages. Gandhi's religiously shaped views on agricultural development demonstrate that agriculture for Gandhi was a moral activity shaped by conduct and duty, both to oneself and the community. It was a means for an oppressed people to behave non-violently towards all and to prepare themselves for *swaraj* based on self reliance, true self-rule, pursuit of God, and communal harmony. In addition, Gandhi emphasised that civilization like the struggle for *Swaraj* and the undertaking of an agricultural occupation was a moral project. Its principle features were the creation of institutions and structures in which not only human beings' basic material needs were met, but also where individuals were felt with a sense of their spiritual and social obligation. Gandhi envisaged agriculture as the ideal form of social and economic activity where in the spiritual aims of *swaraj* could be fused together with the ethical, economic, and the political components of '*satyagriha*' and *swadeshi* to create a truly free society.⁵²

In Hind Swaraj to a question if Gandhi thought there was any thing wrong to atrocities on Indian population by the *Thugs*, *Pindaris* and *Bhils*, he replied:

If you will think for a while then you will realize that the atrocities put by them were much less. If it had been so terrorizing then the whole population would have died. However, the peace prevailing at present is just for namesake. In fact, with this kind of peace, we have become eunuchs and cowards. British have changed the nature of *Bhils* and *Pindaris*; we must not think that if something

⁵² Ibid. pp. 39

worst happens to us then we must acquire patience to bear it. Otherwise someone else saves us from that worst situation then it is like a stain on our character. Rather being coward or weak I will prefer to die with bow and arrow of Bhils.⁵³

To Macaulay's castigation that Indians were eunuchs Gandhi asserted that Indians were never eunuchs. We must understand the region where hill men live. There are also tigers and wolves and if these people are coward then it is not at all possible for these people to live. Gandhi addressed his countrymen:

And to you people, those who wish to have Swaraj, I want to make you cautious that *Bhil*, *Pindari* and Thug they are all our brethern. To win them is my and your job. Till you will be scared of your brethren, you will not be able to attain your goal.⁵⁴

The real service to the Bhils would be to make them fearless and remove their despair. Tribals in India as elsewhere in the world are as much a part of the country as the remaining population and every effort was to be made to include them in the development plan so that they may enter the mainstream of national life.

Gandhi did not acquire his ideas and knowledge only from books. Much of his knowledge was the result of direct contact with life and the practical experience it offered. He therefore placed his ideas before the public not in the language of the learned but in that of the average intelligent man and woman. He was the man of masses and spoke to them in their own simple language they understood.⁵⁵ Gandhi evolved immense empathy for Harijans and adivasis. He initiated several

⁵³ M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, III Ed. 1989, p. 41.

⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 50

⁵⁵ S. Narayan, *Perspectives on Tribal Development: Gandhian Approach to Plan Development*, New Delhi, Commonwealth Pub. 1997, p. 3

programmes for the development of these historically disadvantaged groups of the country; he argued that if these groups remained neglected even in Independent India we would fail miserably to build a nation to mobilise 'People'.

Gandhi's approach to tribal development was based on indigenisation. He was of the view that the tribal should be encouraged on the pattern of the general village development. Their economy was the economy of the peasantry. The Gandhians focussed on the literacy programme as the main criterion for development of underprivileged people. Thakkar Bapa and their followers through a network of voluntary agencies developed a strategy of social and technological welfare.

How to approach and understand the mind of such a simple tribal are the real problem and quite a difficult one at that? The difficulties are multiplied by our own social structures when we try to, and actually do, and impose these on them. So the first thing we should do in approaching and understanding the tribal with open mind, we should not, for instance, interfere in the world around them, which finds expressions in their myths and symbols. We should be more sympathetic in considering these myths and symbols, for it is quite likely that if we find the tribal mind out of step without our times it may be listening to some other times.⁵⁶

Gandhi's opinion of tribal welfare was mainly an outcome of his constant association with Amritlal Vitthalbhai Thakkar, popularly known as Thakkar Bapa.⁵⁷ It was due to their joint efforts that Gandhi included tribes in their Eighteen Constructive Programme, mentioned

⁵⁶ S. W. Bakhle, 'The Tribal Mind' in S. G. Deogaonkar, op. cit, pp. 18

⁵⁷ Detailed account about A. V. Thakkar's Life will be given in the following chapter.

in the earlier part of this chapter, and formulated nationwide strategy for their welfare. It was due to Bapa's constant information and appeals that Gandhi pursued the cause of the tribes. On Bapa's complaint that Constructive-Programme neglected mention of Adivasis, he wrote:

The Complaint is just; many other causes are included in the constructive Programme by implication. But that could not and should not satisfy such a humanitarian as Thakkar BapaThe Adivasis should have found a special place in constructive Programme. Non-mention was an oversight. Anyone who hopes to construct Swaraj on the foundation of non-violence cannot afford to neglect even the least of India's son. Adivasis are too numerous to be counted among the least.⁵⁸

Referring to their poor condition he wrote: "The adibasis are the original inhabitants whose material position is perhaps no better than that of Harijans and who have long been victims of neglect on the part of the so called high classes."⁵⁹

To A. V. Thakkar, the main handicaps the tribes suffer from are poverty, ill health, inaccessibility of the regions inhabited by them, defects of the administration and lack of leadership and illiteracy. Arguing against the 'policy of assimilation'⁶⁰ Thakkar Bapa believed that the aborigines should not be approached by administration, the police and the army followed by a teacher and a preacher. They should be

⁵⁸ Bina Sengar, 'Gandhian Approach to Tribals', *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, 62 Session, Bhopal, 2001, pp 629-630

⁵⁹ M. K. Gandhi, 'Adibasis', *Harijan*, Jun 15, 1942, Vol. IX, No. 5

⁶⁰ "Policy of Assimilation" refers to gradual inclusion of tribal in national sphere giving them equal working opportunity as the other citizens. It contradicts the *Policy of Isolation* which believes in keeping tribal isolated in their territories without any kind of outside intervention. The former policy was advocated by Gandhi, Thakkar Bapa and other nationalist leaders where as the later policy was advocated by Verrier Elwin, anthropologists and British administrators. After Independence, the Government of India approved a middle path in the policy for tribal". See Sumit Guha, *Environment and Ethnicity in India, 1200-1991*, Cambridge: CUP, 2000, pp 182-198.

approached by a wise leadership that will not make plans without the understanding of the problems and facts that govern their different, difficult and peculiar situations.

Thakkar Bapa and Gandhi advocated and emphasised the welfare of tribal in terms of socio-economic upliftment without any harm to their culture, tradition and religion. They believed in their social progress. Their traditional ideas should not be disturbed hastily; perseverance and patient propaganda must be the only weapons of social welfare worker to fight the superstitious ideas of the 'adivasis'.⁶¹

The glimpses of Gandhian approach about tribes can be had in the thought of both Gandhi and A. V. Thakkar:

The primitives (adivasis) should be approached on the basis of non-violence, accepting the principles of a democratic society and the fundamental equality and unity of man, in a spirit of love, service, and humanity. It must not be a process of social domination and political imposition, but a process of common effort and understanding. The so-called primitives should retain the naturalness, health, and physical beauty of primitive life, and environment, and they should take to civilisation without its neurosis...to seek prosperity and success of a few through the exploitation of the many.⁶²

With the above views, Gandhi supported work among tribals. He initiated the programmes which were based on agricultural and cottage industry. He also laid ample stress on *khadi* that produced favourable results and many tribals took to this skill in several parts of India. The

⁶¹ A. V. Thakkar, op. cit. p 365.

⁶² B. H. Mehta, 'The problems of Aboriginies' in Jagadisan T. N., and Shyamlal, op. cit. p 244

following stanza of a tribal song reflects their association with weaving of *khadi*:

Charkha biur biur te
Swarajam Agukeda
Gandhim Agukeda⁶³

Gandhian Economics advocated the generation of employment leading to self-sufficiency through setting up of cottage industries in the tribal areas. The stress on cottage industries is quite pragmatic because it requires least capital investment and meets the market demand which is often local in nature. Major economic activities of tribal happen to be agriculture and animal husbandry. Gandhi favoured adoption of improved methods of agriculture by the tribal to overcome the conditions of famine. He advocated the training of the tribal in this respect both Gandhi and Bapa were against the traditional 'slash and burn' form of agriculture among the tribal communities of India.⁶⁴

Another aspect of tribal life which is often debated is anti-liquor campaign of Gandhians among the tribals. Gandhi strongly condemned the practice and the pernicious affect it had on the tribal societies. At the same time he did not condemn the medicinal use of toddy saying that the prohibition will certainly not affect the sale of toddy for bonafide and medicinal use.⁶⁵ "I am in favour of gradual introduction of prohibition even amongst the aborigines as I fully believe that

⁶³ The above lines of Munda language means as follows: 'By spinning on the spinning wheel /You got Swaraj /O Gandhi you got it'. See K. S. Singh, "The Mahatma and the Adivasis" in L. P. Vidyarthi, B. R. Srivastava and B. N. Sahay, ed. *Gandhi and Social Sciences*, New Delhi, Book-Hive, 1970, pp 125-126.

⁶⁴ Verrier Elwin has discussed the subject of shifting cultivation, in his book *Baigas*. I cannot agree that podu is a religious necessity to some of the tribes, though certainly that sentiment may be borne in mind when we deal with the problem.' A. V. Thakkar, op. cit., p 365

⁶⁵ M. K. Gandhi, 'The Use and Abuse of Toddy', *Harijan*, 09/10/1937, Vol-V, No. 5



prohibition of liquor and intoxicating drugs confirm a great and everlasting benefit on the people.”⁶⁶

The prohibition is one of the means to alleviate indebtedness among tribes for their socio-economic upliftment. Most of the tribal customs involved drinking and meat-eating. But to keep up with the old habits the tribal communities started buying distilled liquor either from the licensed village shops or Parsi distillers.⁶⁷ Buying liquor meant incurring debts for which they approached the usurers. Alcoholism has been viewed as responsible in making tribal people lethargic and uninterested in constructive activities.⁶⁸

Gandhian ashrams located in the tribal areas popularised teetotalism through folk-songs. Picketing and other activities like dairy cooperatives, handicrafts, bank cooperation and other small organisations based on trusteeship were started.⁶⁹ The youth of Gandhi's era who followed his ideas and those influenced by Gandhi often asked him how to materialize the ideas he preached for the welfare of the mankind. By infusing ideas of change, Gandhi motivated young ones to move to villages and settle down in institutions like *ashrams*. They trained the young ones in *ashram* schools and performed social reforms in the villages around their *ashram* settlements as guided by Mahatma Gandhi. Such *ashrams* were the settlements made near the villages with the simplest life-style based on

⁶⁶ A. V. Thakkar, op. cit. p 368.

⁶⁷ K. G. Mashruwala, 'Among the Aborigines', *Young India*, July 25, 1926; 'Mahua and Palm trees are two important sources to make toddy drinks among tribals. But preparing liquor through these medicines was declared illegal by the Indian colonial state.' See, David Hardiman, 'From Custom to Crime: The Politics of Drinking in Colonial South Gujarat' in Ranjit Guha (ed.) *Subaltern Studies*, Vol. III Delhi, OUP, 1983.

⁶⁸ Jhaverbhai Patel and Allubhai Shah, *An Experiment in Antodaya*, Surat, Sarvodaya Ayojan Kendra, p 17.

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 16

the most basic things available around. There the volunteers settled down and initiated work of education as directed by Mahatma Gandhi.⁷⁰

Thus inspired by the ideals of Mahatma, a band of volunteers started moving from big cities like Mumbai to small towns like Valod to dedicate their lives in the welfare of tribals of Gujarat. The tradition continued even after Independence and many remarkable institutions were established by such workers in the eastern tribal belt of Gujarat from remote Banaskantha district in the north to Valsad in the south of Gujarat. Gandhi believed that once the social evils in the tribal societies were removed, the gradual empowerment of tribes and their assimilation in the national stream through generation of able leadership would not be a difficult job. Through the means of *Sarvodaya*, he guided his followers to improve the social status of tribals providing them with better means of livelihood and generating self-reliance among them through education. According to this strategy, the paternalistic attitude of service through volunteers of mainstream agencies would continue till the rise of genuine leadership among the tribals. Once the self-reliance is inculcated among the tribals it makes the tribal leadership responsible to take up and accomplish the task of welfare among their respective communities. Gandhians working among the tribes do not try to seek great political advantages themselves but strive to produce leadership and qualitative standard of living among tribals through continuation of their welfare activities.

⁷⁰ CWMG, Vol. IX, p. 138