

The Context of Religion and Secularism in Gandhian Thought

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***Abstract:** Mahatma Gandhi, the architect of Satyagraha (the practice of using truth or soul force) and non-violence in the 20th century world, was a religious humanist. Hence, there is a debate in general as to whether he was a secular thinker or if his thought was summarily confined to blind religious faith or doctrine. Gandhiji in reality was a 'Sanatani Hindu'; and he espoused the idea of 'Ramraj' as the ideal of his politico-administrative dream; but, all through his life, he never discriminated among the people on the basis of religious divisions and denominations. He considered all humans as children of God. His rational outlook was on the pedestal of his profound belief in the existence of God or the Truth. As he loved all people equally, his ideas sequentially served the purpose of secularism in all spheres of public life.*

***Key Words:** Swaraj, Satyagraha, Non-violence, Lenin, Mao-Tze-Dong, Sanatani Hindu, Satanic Civilization, Ramraj, Panchayat Raj, Trusteeship, Dharmaraj, Sarvodaya.*

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi, by all judgments, was one of the most prominent leaders who moulded the growth of new ideas and actions for the progress of the civilization of mankind in the twentieth century world. President Truman rightly considered him as a leader of international

stature¹. Mahatma Gandhi was a religious man himself and despite his talking a lot about the impossibility of separating religion from polity and politics, his concept of religion itself was a kind of religious Humanism as good as Christian Humanism of the fifteenth and sixteenth Century. An apostle of peace and non-violence in the hostile socio-political environment of the modern world, Gandhiji raised the voice of a greater humanity where religious differences should have been no cause of dissention, strife and warfare. As God was the real truth behind everyone's life and as belief in the existence of God was the central root of most of the religions of the world and as truth was nothing but God, Gandhiji based his concept of love for humanity on the unchangeable and invariable love for God. Gandhiji did find no reason why the true believers in the existence of God or the children of God, as the human beings were, just because of their calling God in different names should become wild to fight amongst themselves and pitiably for religion and in the name of God. True it is that Gandhiji was a religious man and not at all a secular man; but his concept and practice of non-violence, truth and love laid the foundation of a kind of secularism where, of course, religion was never banished from, but was certainly banished the hatred among human beings, between men and women irrespective of all divisions of caste and creed. Thus Gandhiji's concept of secular governance was based on a greater concept of love, human responsibility, truth and non-violence.

II

As an apostle of peace and non-violence, Gandhiji had no peer in the world history for many centuries; but in the twentieth century as there were many other great thinkers and activists, he only could be compared with Lenin and Mao-Tze-Dong not in terms of the nature of contributions but only in terms of the depth of the impact of their ideas and actions in history. Gandhiji re-evinced and renewed the philosophy of mercy and non-violence of Buddhism² and Jainism³ and the ideal of love as inlaid in the Bible⁴. His political ideology was a part of his philosophy; he made religion and politics inseparable. Gandhiji was not a socialist in the conventional sense; he propounded the doctrine of 'Ramraj' based on his idea of truth in practice. If we explain the idea of the Ramraj whose economic ground was the trusteeship of property in the hands of the rich, it appears that originally Gandhiji emphasized the Kingdom

of grace on earth. Whatever he told was connected with one invariable idea i.e. ‘soul force’ and eternal truth. In the modern world Gandhiji was perhaps the first man to politicize the concept of non-violence and eternal truth in order to change society and the state. Though Gandhiji was influenced by Buddhism and Jainism, he did not accede to the anti-metaphysical philosophy of Buddhism. Buddha was silent about the existence of God⁵, whereas Gandhiji had a living faith in God⁶. He all through his life remained a ‘Sanatani Hindu’. He wrote, “I call myself a Sanatani Hindu, because:

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| 1. I believe in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas and all that goes by the name of Hindu scriptures, and therefore in avataras and rebirth. |
| 2. I believe in the Varnashrama Dharma, in a sense my opinion is strictly Vedic, but not in its present popular and crude sense. |
| 3. I believe in the protection of the cow in its much larger sense than the popular. |
| 4. I do not disbelieve in idol worship” ⁷ |

God, to Gandhiji, was the absolute God, the law giver and eternal truth. Later in life he became so convinced that he took God as nothing but truth⁸. Gandhiji believed that God was the originator of all principles of law and hence everyone, according to that law, was bound to receive the result of his deeds. Impure means” he said, “result in an impure ends⁹”. With this concept he developed two complementary ideas—truth and non-violence and from these sprang the idea of civil disobedience. Here it has to be clarified that though Gandhiji derived the idea of non-violence (Ahimsa) from Buddhism and Jainism, for the application of this idea in politics and for the development of the idea of civil-disobedience he was much influenced by three eminent western thinkers namely Ruskin¹⁰, David Thoreau¹¹ and Leo Tolstoy¹². Ruskin’s idea of good work and sacrifice, Thoreau’s view on civil disobedience and passive resistance and Tolstoy’s ideas of non-violence and the ‘kingdom of heaven’ influenced Gandhiji to be more convinced in his already cherished ideas of non-violence and

civil- disobedience. Gandhiji held “truth is the law of our being”¹³. To him, the truth was absolute and not dynamic and consequently changeless¹⁴.

Gandhiji urged all to live a life to realize the truth. Here he made no difference between the personal and political life in the context of living up the truth. To him, life was an integrated whole. On the way of living a truthful life he derived deductively ‘non-violence’ as a creed and ‘Satyagraha’ (practice of truth) as a changeless behaviour. The non-violence-creed Gandhiji applied to politics against the British for the freedom of India. Faith in non-violence was his first and the most dependable ideal¹⁵.

Gandhian politics thus became a metaphysical one. Since the truth and non-violence were complementary to each other, he used the creed of non-violence as a moral force to change the minds of evil doers. Gandhiji had a concept that no man was basically an evil doer. In consonance with the eternal principle everyone was bound to feel the throb of the truth within. Only moral force or soul force of ‘Ahimsa’ or non-violence or the practice of the truth could help others in arousing the inner soul-force or the call of the truth. Gandhiji used to call this inner-feeling as inner-voice. He was not a rationalist or a follower of reason in conventional sense, but claimed that his life was after the inner-voice of the truth within, the unbounded ocean of conscience. He valued the heart more than the brain. The credit of Gandhiji was that he employed his ideas of passive resistance to attain India’s freedom. He persuaded others to do what he himself did through group-prayers in his ‘ashrams’ in Sabarmati and Wardha. The objective of his political life was to make all people conscious of the truth and the untruth in the form of the following contrast¹⁶:

Truth	Untruth
Light	Darkness
Life	Death
Goodness	Evil
Existence	Non-existence
Love	Hatred.

Gandhiji was of the conviction that he could win over to his side the good will of the British by the practice of the truth and non-violence and by prayers for all humanity and thereby could change their minds. With this objective he applied the moral force of non-violence and passive resistance against the Colonial Government of Britain in India. He treated the British with love, and asked the Indians to do the same. He told that in general history had been the story of every interruption caused by the application of physical force which he called 'brute-force' as well as of 'Love-force' of peaceful play of love in humanity throughout the ages¹⁷. With this study of history, Gandhiji came to pass that 'brute-force' solved no problem, but incurred more and more sufferings, and he suggested to win the evil with the soul-force and not to resist it with physical force of violence¹⁸. Thus his passive resistance was 'a method of securing rights by personal suffering', and it was the negation of resistance by arms¹⁹. To fight a tyrannical government the use of violence had been foreign to Gandhiji. He said, "If by using violence I force the government to repeal the law, I am employing what may be termed body-force. If I do not obey the law and accept the penalty for its breach, I use soul force"²⁰. Gandhiji's policy was to pursue non-violence even facing the bayonet and bullet. It was a creed not to physically attack the law-makers but to sacrifice life in passive resistance. It was just non-co-operation with the Government or to deny the rule through civil disobedience and not to force the Government with arms. He said, "When we do not like certain laws we do not break the heads of law-givers but we suffer and do not submit to the laws"²¹. He said, "to use brute-force, to use gunpowder is contrary to passive resistance, for it means that we want our opponent to do by force that which we desire but he does not"²². Gandhiji maintained that the creed of non-violence or passive resistance was not a weapon of the weak. He said, "Extremists are considered to be advocates of brute force... wherein is courage required - in blowing others to pieces from behind cannon, or with a smiling face to approach cannon and be blown to pieces? ...Believe me that a man devoid of courage and man-hood can never be a passive resister"²³. In Indian politics Gandhiji used the policy of non-violent non-co-operation in 1920 and the policy of civil disobedience in 1930 against the British Government.

III

Gandhiji was not a socialist in the conventional sense; and his socio-economic system was different from the socialist socio-economic systems of the modern European thinkers including Karl Marx. To him Marxist socialism was God-less and terrestrial, therefore, antithetical to the spiritual ideal and goal of human life. Gandhiji did not vindicate any revolution of the so-called proletariat or have-nots against the rich, the bourgeois or the exploiters. He was repugnant to violent revolution that brought no peace but bloodshed. Gandhiji espoused a theory of socio-economic compromise and adjustment between the haves and the have-nots for peace in India. What he told on this aspect was to challenge the infusion of socialistic ideas in the country. He advocated changing the minds of the capitalists for the cause of the labourers, and of the landlords for the cause of the poor and helpless peasants. It was a doctrine to maintain status-quo only with the change of minds. His kingdom of heaven on earth was thus an idea preconditioning the change of minds and supposed that all people were to become good-hearted. Gandhiji emphasized traditionalism, naturalism, manual work, handicraft, no-big-industry, trusteeship of wealth to achieve the ideal of Ramraj. The concept of Ramraj was to be actualized in post-independence India. Ramraj, therefore, was, to Gandhiji, an ideal state of 'Swaraj'. The main administrative structure of the concept of Ramraj was Panchayat Raj. He said, "Here Ram means a Panchayat (the Council of five) - A state built upon public opinion is the Ramraj for that area". He held the view that a compromise between the rich and the poor, between the capitalists and the labourers between the landlords and the peasant was possible. If that could have been attained, it would be the attainment of common public opinion to adjustment devoid of struggle. On this unanimous opinion, according to Gandhiji, Ramraj was possible. With this concept Gandhiji disapproved of proletarian dictatorship of the communists and also of parliamentary democracy. Taking the British Parliament as an instance of democratic process, Gandhiji vehemently criticized the nature of constitutionalism. His contention was that the Parliament could attain no finality in judgment; no permanent good could be served. Gandhiji's criticism appeared from his understanding that, to him, no action should be done on exigency or pragmatism. He did it on his concept of eternal truth. In fact, in parliamentary democracy, as reflected in the parliament, the majority party does not remain without change, and decisions there are taken on the basis of changing needs. But this did not appeal to

Gandhiji. Commenting on the parliamentary works he said, “It is not possible to recall a single instance in which finality can be predicted for its work when the greatest questions are debated, its members have been seen to stretch themselves and to doze. Sometimes the members talk away until the listeners are disgusted. Members vote for their party without a thought. Their so called discipline binds them to it; parliament is simply a costly toy of the Nation”²⁵. Again he said, “Parliament is without a real master. Under the Prime Minister, its movement is not steady but it is buffeted about like of prostitute”²⁶. Going further Gandhiji opined, “Parliaments are really emblems of slavery”²⁷. Gandhiji did not consider democracy to serve any good in India. In the last stage of his life he suggested the disbanding of the Congress party after the attainment of freedom and turning it into a social service organization²⁸. Gandhiji’s concept of Ramraj thus was not in consonance with the system of parliamentary democracy. It was conspicuously different from any western concept either democracy or socialism. In fact Gandhian politics was to observe a high divinity even in the state-craft. As he viewed the human life as an integrated whole, his politics was also not different from the real goal and the way of his religious life. His ideal state, as he viewed, was to actualize true religion and the absolute truth. But though Gandhiji himself was a ‘Sanatani Hindu’ and his utterances were never less than religious sermons, his religion had a universal appeal for greater humanism and that in a way laid the foundation of a social philosophy of secularism with no exclusiveness with religion.

Gandhiji advocated decentralization of power to the local Panchayats in the villages. As we shall explain later, he was against modernism, urbanization and industrialization; he called for going back to the serenity of the village life. The decentralization of power he urged for ‘Sarvodaya’, the good of all and for all without discrimination, a concept visualizing all round wellness for all irrespective of any class, rich or poor, majority or minority. The state of Sarvodaya was a state of moral anarchism or the inner rule of man over himself. This concept in its perfect stage denied the utility of the state to carry any further function²⁹. But until that level was attained, Gandhiji confirmed the necessity of the existence of the state.

In explaining Ramraj Gandhiji said, “The effort to bring into operation what is possible is Satyagraha. Satya is just. A just administration is Satyayuga, Swaraj, Dharmaraj, Ramraj, or people’s Government. In such a Government, the ruler will be the protector,

trustee and friend of the people....There would be due sense of proportion between his palace and the peasant's hut. The poor will get the food they need. The ruler will not relish the proverbial fifty-six dishes but will be satisfied with six. If the poor takes his food in earthen or wooden utensils; the ruler may take it in those of brass"³⁰. In this state of economic affair Gandhiji's suggestion was that the poor should not be jealous of the rich, because discrimination was mainly due to their own shortcomings; and hence he denounced revolution against the ruling trustees but only compromise for reforms. He said, "The poor man must know that to a great extent poverty is due to his own faults and shortcomings. So while the poor man must strive to improve his condition let him not hate the ruler and wish his destruction. He must wish for the ruler's reform. He must not want ruler-ship for himself, but remain content by earning his own wants"³¹. It is clear from the statement that Gandhiji considered the trustees and rulers as permanent, and the ruled poor people as ever ruled. It is further clear that Gandhiji agreed with the divine right of the rulers and the duty of the ruled not to hate the rulers; because he considered the poor incapable of having self-guidance and the wisdom to rule. He said, "The poor are always in search of a guide; they know their own pains, but not the remedy"³². He saw no further duty of the poor except serving the people"³³. Gandhiji anticipated the rich to become trustees of their hoarded wealth for the poor. The rich, he supposed, to undergo simple way of life and voluntary poverty for the good of the rest"³⁴. The state of moral anarchism and the voluntary renouncement of private property would, as Gandhiji expected, come gradually. He said, "In the meantime, if the ruler and the moneyed class understand the spirit of the age, they will relinquish their private ownership of wealth and the ability to produce wealth and voluntarily make themselves trustees of the same; they would use that wealth for themselves only in a limited manner and to the extent of their wants"³⁵. But Gandhiji acceded to the possibility of all non-violent protests against the rich if they declined to be trustees. In case of such a situation Gandhiji said, "If they do not become trustees of their own accord, force of circumstances will compel the reform unless they count utter destruction. When Panchayat raj is established, public opinion will do what violence can never do. The present power of the zamindars, the capitalists and the rajas can hold sway So long as the common people do not realize their own strength. If the people non-cooperate with the evil Zamindari or capitalism, it must die of inanition"³⁶.

At times and again Gandhiji suffered from contradiction as to whether to stick to the ideal of Swaraj or to adopt parliamentary Swaraj. His suggestion was to disband the Congress Party right after the attainment of independence, but even previous to this he had said that he was individually working for the self-rule pictured in the ideal of Swaraj or Ramraj; but for the people of India he was for the attainment of Parliamentary Swaraj in accordance with the wishes of the Indian people³⁷. Though Gandhiji told this, he practically then and later again relapsed to his own view of Ramraj or Hind Swaraj i.e. moral anarchism.

Though there was variation about his ideal of the state, Gandhiji retained his battle constantly against modernism, urbanization, machine-based industrialization and scientific development for material comfort, because all these, to him, were anti-religious and against morality³⁸. The main reason of Gandhiji's being against the industrial civilization of Europe and the process of modernization was that, according to him, these developments helped the growth of capitalism and the amassing of great wealth in one side and impoverisation on the other³⁹. Moreover, this modern civilization including all facilities and amenities provided by railways, trams, cars, airships, printing press and other machineries developed materialism at the cost of spiritual faith and dependence on God. According to Gandhiji, all these developments gradually were diminishing morality. He said, "This civilization is irreligion, and it has taken such a hold on the people in Europe that those who are in it appear to be half-mad"⁴⁰. So he called this 'Satanic Civilization'⁴¹. In the midst of the growth of modern civilization and scientific development, Gandhiji feared that through kindred development India might become irreligious. He said, "Religion is dear to me and my first complaint is that India is becoming irreligious"⁴². So Gandhiji advocated reentrance into village bower and banishing modernization, machinery and science. Gandhiji vehemently criticized the cultivation of the science of allopathic medicine and surgery. He considered the profession of the allopathic doctor as a grave immorality. As for the hospitals he said, "Hospitals are institutions for propagating sin, men take less care of their bodies and immorality increases. European doctors are the worst of all... They practise vivisection. No religion sanctions this"⁴³. Thus Gandhiji propagated against modernism and scientism, but supposed ruralism. He stood on the way of material civilization. By the term civilization he only meant "good conduct"⁴⁴. He was of the opinion that true happiness consisted in the pursuit of non-violence and good truthful conduct. Against urbanization he said, "They (ancient Indians) further

reasoned that large cities were a snare and a useless encumbrance and that people would not be happy in them, that there would be gangs of thieves and robbers, prostitution and vice flourishing in them and that poor men would be robbed by rich men. They were, therefore, satisfied with small villages. They saw that kings and their swords were inferior to the sword of the ethics, and they, therefore, held the sovereigns of the earth to be inferior to the Rishis and the Fakirs⁴⁵. With this explanation Gandhiji called the modern European civilization as God-less and the ancient Indian civilization as based on belief in God. On this understanding Gandhiji hoped that India could be a teacher of true civilization to the immoral western industrial civilization. Gandhiji considered the modern trend of culture as that of the 'Kaliyuga' and he asked to go back to that of the 'Satyayuga', to a stage of culture in the green village arbours in the midst of utmost natural freedom⁴⁶. He emphasised handicraft and Charkha (spinning wheel) for the growth of cottage industry in the villages. He thought that through handicraft the industrial demand of simple village life could be met with.

Since Gandhiji was a religious man in private and public life, he visualized the scheme of national and social education just on the line of ethics and religion. For the making of true man he liked the initiation of education of its kind from the very primary level. For the education of children he categorized two sets of education-'Dharma' (spiritual knowledge) and 'Artha' (temporal knowledge) successively. He preferred mothers to act as teachers than professional ones at the primary level to impart children's education. Regarding the mother-teacher he said, "...she will first teach them Ramayan, the name of Lord God. He has many names and it does not matter by which name he is called. The next in order after Dharma is Artha i.e. the temporal knowledge"⁴⁷, Gandhiji held the view that India could not progress without religious education. But he discriminated the types of education for different denominations. He said, "There can not be the same type of education for all- Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Christians etc. For example, we can not put forward the same arguments in regard to cow-protection to the Muslims as we can to the Hindus. And yet we have to educate both about the evils of strife between the Hindus and Muslims. Each community has its own peculiar characteristics; each suffers from the existence of sub castes. Let none think that there are no sub-castes among Muslims and Christians"⁴⁸. Regarding the discrimination of religious education Gandhiji suggested, "Hindu children should now be taught Sanskrit, and Muslim children Arabic"⁴⁹. For the learning of English and Hindi, he said, "English should be

taught only as one of several languages. As Hindi is the National Language, English is to be used in dealing with other nations and international commerce”⁵⁰. Gandhiji advocated separate education for the Harijans (the low-caste people whom he called by that name). In the scheme of Harijan education, he chalked out the learning of cleanliness, applied hygiene, sanitation and needle-work. They also might know through conversation simple knowledge of history, geography and arithmetic⁵¹. Like the discrimination of religious education, Gandhiji also discriminated the types of women's education from that of men. He considered women as the mothers of the race. He also prohibited earning by women. His view is worth quoting in original, “woman like man needs education” but “not that a woman should get the same kind of education as is given to a man...Men and Women are equal in status, but they are not the same in physical or mental makeup...Man rules the outer circle of the life of a married pair. Therefore, he must have the greater knowledge of all those activities of life which constitute his sphere. The woman on the other hand, is dominant in the inner or domestic circle of their life. She must have special knowledge of the management of the home, care of children, their education etc”⁵². Gandhiji justified this discrimination with the argument that the difference between man and woman was natural, and that was ordained from above⁵³. About the earning of livelihood he said, “...a woman should not have to earn her living. A society in which women have to work as telegraph clerks, typists or compositors is, I think, not well organized. It is a symptom of moral and economic bankruptcy and is an indication that they i.e. the people belonging to that society, have begun to live on their capital”⁵⁴.

IV

Appraisal of Gandhian Thought in Terms of Secularism

The above exploration in Gandhism in quest of secularism has made it clear that Gandhiji was basically a religious man and he considered religion as a part and parcel of every individual's life. It is understood that Mahatma Gandhi certainly was the best lover of peace in the twentieth century world. Sincere and simple in his stand, he guided the Indian politics in the light of his ideas. For the peace-less world he left the gospel of peace, truth, love and non-violence. The utility of his ideas will be serving the humanity in times to come. But Gandhiji, after all, was a man and “to err is human”. Gandhism, therefore, was not beyond

some impracticability in the changing world. The core of Gandhism was truth. He claimed the truth to be universal and absolute, but he could not define what the truth was, and on which category his known truth could be absolute. The claim to know the absolute truth presupposes that the knower himself is the absolute. But Gandhiji was a wise man and candid lover of humanity and none other anymore. So his known truth could not be absolute and eternal. The concept of non-violence was also not clear; because violence and non-violence appear completely relative as Man's perceptible truth is relative. To suppose that everyone in society will follow non-violence is to pre-cognize that all men are born and brought up in the same environment devoid of diversity in character and mental make-up. Gandhiji could not make the path of practising non-violence conspicuous. To practise it was very difficult. Questions incurred further questions. In fact what is non-violence from one angle is violence from another angle. It is regrettable that Gandhiji himself could not practise it without causing harm to others in one way or another. That Gandhiji helped the imperialist British against the Boer in South Africa was in no way conforming to non-violence. By helping the British he actively supported the violence of the British upon the Boers⁵⁵. His support to the British during the World War I was also against the principle of non-violence for the British did not shun violence in their effort of war. Thus it seems that the practice of non-violence against the British occasionally amounted to a kind of compromise with the British imperial policy.

Gandhiji's 'Soul-force' to change the hearts of the British did not succeed apparently. The main weakness of non-violence principle was that the British did not get changed within their hearts to transfer power to the Indian people. Winston Churchill in 1942 satirically declared, "Bell, book and candle shall not drive me back, when gold and silver call me to come on"⁵⁶. The British Empire in India was built through warfare; it was also lost when the British considered their army, the navy and the air force disloyal, disintegrated and burdensome. The trickled blood of thousands of martyrs in the gallows, in prisons and in encounters was not in vain. If the soul-force would have been so effective to make the British morally conscious to leave India, then only the Satyagraha Movement in 1920 could make the British quit India. Then only the Declaration of Independence by the Americans⁵⁷ against the British Empire in April, 1775, could have made the British morally conscious to leave the colonies in the New World, and no Washington and no help from Marquis de Lafayette

would be required in the battle fields against the British armies. The British did not lose their national interest in the Indian empire to honour Gandhism. The great Gandhi could morally change the heart of another great Gandhi or a Christ by applying his soul-force, certainly not the British who unlike Gandhiji depended on military force, diplomacy, industrialism and temporal scientific realism. So the naked facts of history took place other-wise. Not that the non-violent movement was ineffective. But the result was not as expected, and obviously no change of the British hearts followed. Consequently frustration often engulfed the hope of the nationalists. It followed that, "Mahatma Gandhi is insisting on non-violence; the people of the country have been obeying him devotedly in spite of lathi-charges, arson, bayonet charges and firing...Is this all the change of heart for which Mahatmaji fasted and prayed? There has been a change indeed; but what a change? The people are realizing day by day and more and more what British rule means in India"⁵⁸. Out of frustration many top Gandhian leaders like Dr. K. M. Munshi and Dr. Satyapal departed from his rank⁵⁹.

The whole procedure of practising non-violence got embroiled in confusion in the years of the Indian Freedom Movement. Though Gandhiji declared that non-violence was a creed, but later in life he was bound to agree that even his close followers used it merely as a policy. No answer was available whether non-violence was complementary to the truth of life⁶⁰. Moreover, this policy, perhaps, was only against the British. Gandhi did not think of the possibility of non-violent administration and defence in free India. He never liked the Indians in the British army to disobey and to be disloyal to the British Government. The connotation was that only a blind obedience even to a tyrant and despot, according to Gandhi, was the creed of a soldier. Regarding the Indians in the British army he said, "A soldier who disobeys an order to fire breaks the oath which he has taken, and renders himself guilty of criminal disobedience. I can not ask officials and soldiers to disobey; for when I am in power, I shall in all likelihood make use of those same officials and those same soldiers. If I taught them to disobey, I should be afraid that they might do the same when I am in power"⁶¹. Thus Gandhiji denied the truth that the soldiers were, above all, human beings having conscience of right and wrong, just and unjust. For the sake of humanity, soldiers have every right to revolt against the despotic authority for the cause of the exploited people, for the good of the nation. It can not be denied that much harm took place in history for the blind obedience of soldiers to the generals and to the government. The massacre of Jallianwalabag in 1919 could

have been prevented if the soldiers had disobeyed General Dyer's order. Much slaughter was avoided and many revolutions including the Russian Revolution in 1917 were hastened by the soldiers' breaking of oath to the despotic rulers. If Gandhiji thought the breaking of oath was a criminal disobedience, then how and why he led the no-tax and no-rent movement, because, the peasants, according to law, right or wrong, were bound to pay tax? He did it to protest against the Government, then why did he not allow the soldiers to protest against the Government simply disobeying orders? Moreover, it is not clear what sort of use the non-violent Gandhiji would have of the armed soldiers had he been in power? Thus it seems that there was much confusion about the procedure of practising non-violence. The main fact is that non-violence and violence are completely relative and not absolute. What is good from one side may turn dangerous for another side, for in the changing world nothing is absolute, not even the policy of violence or non-violence. As a matter of fact, the spontaneous defence and freedom movement of the Indian people against the British advanced through violence and non-violence both. The revolutionary nationalists followed the policy of direct challenge. Even the Gandhian movements though started with non-violence pledge, ended through violence. The Non-Cooperation Movement of 1920 ended in Chouri-Choura violence; the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930 also was, on the eve of being ended, undergoing the same violent experience⁶². About the Quit India Movement, Gandhiji himself in a letter to Lord Linlithgow expressed that the movement reflected violence of the Indian people against British violence⁶³.

Though Gandhiji's idea of Ramraj actually was nothing to do with Hinduism, but the name 'Ram' aroused suspicion among the Indian Muslims. Gandhiji's loin-cloth-appearance, daily prayer, habit of not to drink the milk of cow further put the communal leaders to a misunderstanding that Gandhiji was going to make a Hindu India of the British India. Since Gandhiji did not separate religion from politics and became a guide on the either way, doubt about him gave rise to disbelief. It is clear from a humble suggestion made to Gandhiji. It goes, "It pains me, as it may pain some if not all of your audience, the number of inconsistencies found in your day to day bearing. It is neither logic nor diplomacy. On the other hand it has encouraged rank communalism of the League type (Muslim League)...your preaching of Ramraj brought communalistic vision to the Leaguers who dreaded that you were out to establish Hindu Raj.....Politics versus Religion, you please either be a religious

teacher or a political guru (preceptor). You can not be both...”⁶⁴. A strong protest was raised against the doctrine of Ramraj by the Muslim Leaguers⁶⁵.

The Gandhian scheme of education, over emphasis on the Ramayana and the discrimination of education according to religious identity of the Hindus and the Muslims separately, more or less, added fuel to the fire of communalism. Compulsory religious education and the learning of respective religious traditions in Sanskrit for the Hindus and in Arabic for the Muslims sank the hope of secularism. The well known Wardha Education Scheme as was inclusive of Gandhian education system, the Muslim League completely rejected it⁶⁶. Md. Ali Jinnah had a personal feud with Gandhiji for the latter's religious demonstration in politics and education. Jinnah reacted furiously to the Wardha, Education scheme and considered Gandhism as a danger to the Muslims. “Mr. Gandhi”, he said “I have no hesitation in saying that it is Mr. Gandhi who is destroying the ideal with which the Congress was started. He is the man responsible for turning the Congress into an instrument for the revival of Hinduism. His ideal is to revive the Hindu religion and establish Hindu-Raj in this country, and he is utilizing the Congress to further this object... This Hindu outlook is daily interfering with the normal life of the Muslim. The Musalmans are being forced to accept Hindu ideals in their daily lives”⁶⁷. The perusal of this statement brings home that Jinnah only considered Gandhiji in the Congress responsible for reviving Hinduism. Whether or not Gandhism was for Hinduism is difficult to say, but Md. Ali Jinnah thought it to have been. Though we should admit that Gandhiji became a martyr for the sake of communal unity⁶⁸, but his doctrine, perhaps, unknowingly provoked the Muslim League. It was a tragedy indeed. Gandhiji's process of making a difference between man and woman in the domain of education was not in keeping with the progressive and changing world. It deprived women of their economic earning and freedom in education.

Gandhiji's antipathy to modern science and industrial development did not have sufficient logic in the perspective of modern outlook. That with the help of cottage industry and handicraft of Charkha or spinning wheel he tried to rejuvenate rural India would have left India to a deplorable backwardness. On the contrary, this kind of ruralization would be impossible in the environment of the changing and developing world; and India alone could not provide to lag behind other countries in science and technology; though what Gandhiji told might have been true in the context of the tug of war between human greed and

renunciation on the way of realizing the unknown meaning of life lying hidden in the depth of human existence. Gandhiji could not check the industrial tide of the time. As a matter of fact, in spite of Gandhian ruralization process in the course of the Charkha movement, industrialization, and urbanization went on harmonizing the course of modern development in India. His understanding that, ancient India did not develop science and urban areas can not be corroborated with the evidences and facts of history. India was, in fact, more advanced in science and technology and in urbanization as well than most other countries of the world. The evidences of pre-Harappan, Harappan and post-Harappan civilizations and the scientific developments in India from the third century B.C. to the fifth century A.D. bear all testimonies against the views of Gandhiji. But there should be no scepticism about Gandhiji's sincerity, urge for truth, simplicity and sacrifice. His Ramraj, though anachronistic, sought a new way of peaceful life for the humanity in the midst of industrial craziness, heartlessness, naked competition and mechanical love. He tried to give the world an alternative way of life certainly not of ancient barbarism but of tranquil machine-less modernity with the soul-force ahead.

The idea that with the Panchayat Raj and handicraft he could meet the challenge of hoarding of wealth by the moneyed class was not justified with proper means. The fact was rather unfortunately on the contrary that Gandhiji had always cordial relationship with men like Mr. Birla and Jamnalal Bajaj who were taking enterprise for big industries. Md. Ali Jinnah pointed out that it was a contradiction of Gandhian Congress policy⁶⁹.

Another irksome mission of Gandhism was to bring about a compromise between the haves and the have-nots. Conflict of interests between them was a reality. On the other, the doctrine of voluntary poverty of the rich and their trusteeship for the poor proved, beyond doubt, to be a utopia. Gandhiji, of course, did not understand how the moneyed class exploited his doctrine in their favour. Since he was innocent, he took the rich very simply to be his followers. But as things went otherwise, it brought a tragedy of Gandhism to Gandhiji. Gandhiji's friend Romain Rolland also cherished much optimism to see the success of a movement of the labouring people against native capitalism under Gandhiji's leadership. In 1932 he wrote, "Now since his deepest sympathies lie with the millions of disinherited and oppressed, I am more or less certain that if he lives ten more years, he will put himself at the head of the whole movement supporting their claims in India against native capitalism and

the bourgeoisie”⁷⁰. But the pity of Rolland's judgement about Gandhiji was that he never started such a movement even in the next 14 years of his life. The labouring people remained where they had been before. No movement for their cause saw light under Gandhiji.

Conclusion:

In the compendium above we have more or less given a bird's eye-view of what is known world-wide as Gandhism; and what kind of opinion about secular way of life and statecraft was held by Gandhiji has conspicuously come into light. Now in the end of our discussion we may have a review of the same in order to feel his thought in the field properly. It is a foregone conclusion that Gandhiji was a religious man, thinker and politician; and in consideration of his firm stand on faith, belief and activity, he cannot be called a secular politician or thinker in conventional sense. We cannot compare him with any Western thinker of secularism; he seems to have been the heir of Christian humanism, Buddhist non-violence and Vaishnavite love for all humanity devoid of any discrimination that could bring about any division of mankind. He was a Hindu; but his Hinduism was universal in nature, broad in outlook and tolerant in practice. The central objective of his religion was to establish a sphere of mutual and peaceful co-existence for people belonging to all denominations. He asked people to practise in the best possible way to respect all religions in the name of God and truth. His ideas of non-violence, in fact and in practice, put deterrence to outbreaks of violence and bloodshed for the sake of faiths in the borderlines of all religions and religious peoples. If all the people of a state or of the world practised non-violence, there then would have remained no fear of terror; and then even without the proclamation of secularism, any state could enjoy peaceful atmosphere; and thus the very objective of secularism could automatically be attained. Gandhian secularism was, in fact, a part of an alternative polity where spiritual realization on the practice of non-violence, mutual respect and understanding among the people of different religions was considered to be in the core for the establishment of a durable cultural ambience for a better human civilization.

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