

Received on 27.06.2016  
Accepted on 08.07.2016

**Authors Affiliation**  
Associate Professor and Head,  
Department of Political Science  
Agra College, Agra (India)  
282010.

**Reprints Requests**  
**Arunoday Bajpai**, Associate  
Professor and Head, Department  
of Political Science, Agra College,  
Agra (India) 282010.  
E-mail:  
arunodaybajpai@gmail.com

## Gandhian Social Order: Utopian or Realistic?

Arunoday Bajpai

### Abstract

Gandhian ideas have universal appeal irrespective of time and place as they are based on certain eternal principles, which underline the core of evolution and organization of human social order. That is why 'Debating Gandhi' will continue to be relevant with the evolution of each stage of human order. The present Article also participates in this debate as it articulates arguments to analyze whether Gandhian Social order is utopian or realistic. Many critiques argue that Gandhian ideas are utopian as they cannot be put into practice. However, this paper argues that such critiques are not on the mark as they take a 'transient' view of reality, based on the immediate consequences. In fact, Gandhian social order is based on certain eternal principles grounded on the 'ultimate reality', which has lasting consequences. After all what is the 'realistic' way to resolve the contemporary challenges like mindless violence and conflicts around us or continuous and pervasive misuse of social resources to satisfy personal greed or other such challenges? Gandhi offers lasting solution to the ongoing challenges of mankind, whereas his critiques may beat around the bush and come out with short term and non-lasting solutions in the name of 'realism'. In the way the article also highlights the relevance of Gandhian ideas to the contemporary global challenges.

**Keywords:** Gandhian Social Order; Eternal Principles; Ultimate Reality; Transient Realism; Contemporary Global Challenges.

Two points of caution need to be mentioned before we venture to elaborate on the Gandhian Social order. First, Gandhi, like a political and social philosopher did not laid down any systematic ideology or 'ism'. Thus, what we call Gandhian Social order is nothing but his reflection on the various aspects of the world around him, rather than a systematic exposition of a philosophical doctrine. Gandhian Social order, eclectic in nature, is shaped on the basis of his reflections on the best elements of Indian culture, prevalent global ideas and tendencies and his experience of contemporary human conditions both in India and outside particularly South Africa. As late as in 1936, Gandhi himself cautioned:

'There is no such thing as 'Gandhism' and I do not want to leave any sect after me. I do not have

claimed any new principle or doctrine. I have simply tried in my own way to apply the eternal truths to our daily life and problems..... Well, all my philosophy, if it may be called by that pretentious name, is contained in what I have said. You will not call it Gandhism; there is no 'ism' about it' (Harijan: 28 March 1936).

Again, Gandhian thought is not a result of any systematic elaboration of ideas like a professional philosopher, but a result of gradual evolution over a long period. It is a set of belief and principles which have been applied differently on different social and historical settings. Thus, it is not inflexible, dogmatic or rigid. There are inconsistencies too, which are admitted by Gandhi himself as he says, 'I would like to say to the diligent reader of my writings and others

those who are interested in them that I am at all concerned with appearing to be consistent. In my search after truth I have discarded many ideas and learned many new things (Harijan: 1933)

Second, Gandhian Social order encompasses his ideas about the nature of human beings, the world and society and their interrelationship. Though these ideas are derived by Gandhi on the basis of self-realization and insight, yet he did not claim any finality about these ideas. He said:

'I have gone through deep self-introspection, search myself through and through, and examined and analyzed every psychological situation. Yet, I am far from claiming any finality or infallibility about my conclusions. One claim I do indeed make and it is this. For me they appear to be absolutely correct, and seem for the time being to be final' (Gandhi: An Autobiography: x-xi).

This is not a coincidence that Gandhi subtitled his Autobiography as 'The Story of My Experiments with Truth'. This subtitle shows that Gandhian ideas were result of gradual evolution, yet for him, these were not final. The significance of this admission was Gandhi's unflinching faith on humility and limits of human capability and also on the human courage to admit the same.

#### *Components of Gandhian Social Order*

The Gandhian Social order moves at two planes: Metaphysical and Social with individual occupying the central place in both. The sources of Gandhian Social order are both Indian and external. Among Indian sources, teachings of Hinduism and particularly its Vaishnavism, Jainism and Buddhism had deep impact on him. Hindu scriptures like Ramchritmanas (Ram Rajya), Manusmriti (Morality as the basis of all things) and Bhagvatgita (performance of duty with detachment and Upnishads (principle of enjoying the world by renouncing) mainly influenced the metaphysical basis of his Social order. Some Gujarati teachers and saints like Narsi Mehta, Narmadashankar and Raichandbhai and stories of Harishchandra, Sravan and Prahlad influenced his thinking. Among external sources, Edwin Arnold's 'The Song Celestial' and 'The Light of Asia'; 'The New Testament' (principles of goodness and righteousness); Thomas Carlyle's Heroes and Hero-Worship (bravery and austere living); John Ruskin's 'Unto This Last' (translated by Gandhi as Sarvodaya- principle of bread labour, the good of individual is contained in the good of all); Henry Thoreau's 'Civil Disobedience' ( technique of Satyagraha); Tolstoy's 'The Kingdom

of God is Within You' (morality and truthfulness) etc. Besides, his experience in South Africa, the experience of Western civilization in London and Indian conditions also shaped his view points. Thus, the Gandhian Social order bears eclectic imprints.

#### *God, World and Nature*

At metaphysical plane, Gandhi had unflinching faith in the God as an ultimate reality. He refers him as 'eternal principle'; 'the one without a second'; and the Universal Law'. The God for Gandhi is indestructible and impenetrable because he is omniscient. He cannot be described in words but he regulates the universe. As he believed in 'Advaitvad' school of Indian philosophy, Gandhi claims that the entire world and nature is ordained by him. The world and nature are not arranged in haphazard manner, but they are ordered because of eternal principle. Every living and non-living object including every individual has divine spark. From this presence of God in each human being, the ideal of human unity and human equality is deduced by Gandhi. He also equates truth with God. Earlier he used to say that 'God is truth' but later he modified to say that 'Truth is God' (Iyer, R: 2000). This change has more wide appeal as even atheists would stick to the truth. The above metaphysical position of Gandhi serves to be an integrating factor in his Social order. Mathai observes, 'Gandhi saw that the universe is a cosmos, an orderly whole and not a chaos. This unifying and sustaining principle this indefinable mysterious power that pervades everything Gandhi understood as God' (Mathai: 2000, pp 67-73).

Gandhian faith in God and should not be confused with dogmatism. On the basis of comparative study of all religions, Gandhi discovers that morality and truthfulness are the essence of all religions. For him, religion signifies the ordered governance of the world on the basis of moral principles. According to him 'morals, ethics and religions are convertible terms. A moral life without reference to religion is like a house built on sand. Religion divorced from morality is like sounding brass, good only for making noise and breaking heads' (Harijan: 3 Oct 1936). This principle of morality or spiritual spirit reverberates in the entire Social order and the social and political organization based on this Social order. It was in this moral sense that Gandhi appealed for spiritualization of politics. He said, 'There are no politics devoid of religion. Politics bereft of religion is a death trap they kill the soul; (Young India: 1934).

If the entire universe is animated by the eternal

principle or universal spirit, the nature cannot be exception to it. This is the logical outcome of Gandhi's faith in Advaitvad (non-dualism) of Indian philosophy. The identification of eternal spirit with nature imparts order and unity in nature and invokes reverence for it. Gandhi (Young India: 1929) says, 'God manifests himself in the innumerable forms in this universe and every such manifestation commands my reverence'. Mathai (2000, p.85) rightly remarks, 'One important outcome of this awareness of the immanence of God in nature and the consequent oneness of the entire existence is the attitude of the reverence for nature that Gandhi advocated'. He further says that Gandhi's ideas of simplicity, vegetarianism, nature cure etc. all are consequence following from his deep understanding of the law of nature. Gandhi's views on nature are very relevant to address the modern challenges of environmental degradation. Gandhi emphasized on the simplicity and limitation of wants because he believed that there is enough in nature to satisfy every one's need but not the greed of anyone.

The above metaphysical position and the principles derived from it are applied by Gandhi in the social plane. It shapes his views on truth and non-violence, individual and society, end and means, and the principles relevant for restructuring society, economy and polity. Together, both the metaphysical principle and their social application form the basic components of Gandhian Social order.

### *Truth*

Gandhi not only takes a broad meaning of 'Truth' but also elevates it to the level of God. The English word 'truth' does not convey the full import of the Hindi word 'Satya', which is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Sat', meaning 'that which is'. Its opposite 'Asatya' means that which does not exist. For Gandhi, truth is the bedrock of world. The ultimate victory of truth is never questioned. Truth is not merely refraining from speaking lies, but it denotes a just, moral or desirable position, which one should always strive for. The notion of truth has architectonic value in his thought system as Gandhi says, 'Truth is the sovereign principle, which includes numerous other principles. The truth is not only the truthfulness in words but truthfulness in thought also, and not only the relative truth of our conception but the absolute truth, the eternal principle that is God' (Gandhi: An Autobiography: p xi). Thus, Gandhi gives two conceptions of truth: Absolute truth, which is identified with the eternal principle and is universal and the relative truth, based on the personal conviction and is transient.

Human beings are not capable of comprehending Absolute truth because it is limitless. Gandhi did not define absolute truth. Perhaps, it is the complete identification with God, which in other worlds means 'Moksha'. Gandhi says that absolute truth is unattainable as we cannot completely transcend our desires and pleasure in our present physical form. Hence, absolute truth acts as a guiding principle to spiritual, emotional and active elements of this worldly life.

However, the un-attainability of absolute truth does not diminish its importance. Instead people should act according to relative truth. 'Relative truths are those definitive ideas that provide guidance to our thoughts and actions, yet are not static. They change and get modified to provide guidance in versatile situations (Sihra: 2006, p 47). Suman Khanna (1985, p. 41) says that relative truths are describable and definable. Relative truth is attainable by human beings in the temporal world. However, the relative truth is not detached from the absolute truth but defined by the latter. Since relative truth is guided by the absolute truth, it becomes a moral ideal for human beings. For Gandhi, devotion to this truth is the sole justification of our existence. All our activities should be centered on truth. Truth should be the very breath of our life. However, he did not make any claim to have discovered truth and non-violence as he admits, 'I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth and non-violence are as old as hills'.

### *Non-Violence*

If the realization of truth is the goal of life, the non-violence is the only means available to realize that goal. Gandhi believed in the essential purity of both ends and means. . Gandhi said, 'the means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree.— we reap exactly what we sow' (Hind Swaraj: p 56). Truth cannot be realized by violent means or force. As in case of truth, the English word 'non-violence' does not convey the full meaning of its Hindi translation, 'Ahimsa', which has been given a broad meaning by Gandhi. Non-violence has two aspects: negative and positive. Negatively, it means absence of violence and hatred towards others but positively it means love and toleration toward others. Since love involves self-sacrifice, the notion of Ahimsa involves self sacrifice and self suffering. Gandhi endorses the positive form of Ahimsa as he says, 'In its positive form, ahimsa means the largest love, the greatest charity. If I am a follower of ahimsa, I must love my enemy' (Dalton: 1996). For Gandhi ahimsa or true love is the highest principle of humankind. It is the basis of society. Murphy (1991, p.1) articulates Gandhian view,

'Gandhi believed that ahimsa is the most powerful force in existence. Had 'Himsa' (violence) been superior to Ahimsa, humankind would long ago have succeeded in destroying itself. The human race could not have progressed as far as it has, even if universal justice remains far off the horizon'. Non-violence is superior to violence as former generates love and harmony, whereas latter generates more violence and hatred. Human history attests that violence has not produced a lasting solution to any problem so far. However, the ahimsa of Gandhi is not a tool of cowardice to hide his weakness, but it is a weapon of strong and brave to be exercised as a free will. Though Gandhi rests his faith in absolute ahimsa, yet, as a realist, he makes some concession to it in the political field.

### *Satyagraha*

When we attempt to realize the truth through non-violent means, it is known as 'Satyagraha', which is a form of soul force and is characterized by self sacrifice and self-suffering so that truth may prevail. Satyagraha of Gandhi has four fundamental characteristics: First, it signifies the soul force against the conditions of injustice, oppression and exploitation. It has the potential to succeed as the opponent also has at least an element of soul, which can be appealed and changed. Second, it is based on the process of self-suffering for the sake of truth and justice. Gandhi elevates the notion of suffering not only as a self purifier but also as social goal and a measurement of national progress. He writes, 'Suffering is the mark of human tribe. It is an eternal law. — No country has ever risen without being purified through the fire of suffering — — — Progress is to be measured by the amount of suffering undergone. — — The purer is suffering the greater is the success' (Young India: 1920). Suffering produces lasting benefits as it purifies the sufferer, makes direct appeal to the soul of opponent and evokes favourable public opinion in favour of the cause the sufferer undertakes. Third, Satyagraha avoids user of physical force even a trace of hatred towards opponent. It is the wrong itself, not the wrong-doer that should be object of hate as the latter also has a divine spark or morality. If it is not so, the Satyagraha will not succeed. Gandhi further argues, 'man is not capable of knowing the absolute truth and therefore not competent to punish' (Young India: 23 March 1921). Fourth, Satyagraha or the use of soul force for the sake of truth further testifies that end and means are convertible terms. As we sow, so we reap.

Gandhi, as a practitioner of moral principles, experimented with the all forms of Satyagraha like

non-cooperation, strike, fasting, Hijrat (voluntary exile in face of helplessness) and its extreme form civil disobedience. He prescribes stringent code of conduct for Satyagrahis. The gist of this code is control of mental and physical senses and keeping away from fear and hatred. Satyagraha is a three dimensional progress in truth, love and non-violence. It demands self-sacrifice, purification, self-discipline and a firm purposefulness. It is in the arena of Satyagraha, that Gandhian theory and practice become one and inseparable. He should have faith in God and fearless. He suggested that a Satyagrahi should practice 'Brahmacharya', which in broad sense means perfect mental and physical self-discipline. Satyagraha holds a very important position as a means of social change in Gandhian Social order. It has been described as a tool of revolutionary social change as it induces inner change in the human soul, which is lasting, fundamental and permanent. It imparts moral strength to both the Satyagrahi as well as his opponent. However, later he (Gandhi, Harijan:1946) suggested that total non-violence, non-cooperation, has no place in popular Raj, whatever, its level may be. Thus he is in favour of restricted use of Satyagraha in a true democracy.

### *Individual, Society and Sarvodaya*

Any conception of Social order begins with the delineation of human nature. Conception of human self is the building block of any Social order as it elaborates on the relation of man with larger world and society. Mathai (2009, p. 96-97) notes the three western views of human nature: 1. man is basically good; 2. man is basically bad; and 3. man is basically organized and natural. Gandhi believes that human beings are essentially good because they are endowed with divine spirit. This upholds the principles of human dignity, equality and human unity. Gandhi also believes in the continuous moral upliftment of human race. This raises the possibility of change in the human soul. For Gandhi human self has two components: the lower self, identified with self interest, and the higher self, which is identified with truth. The evolution of man from lower self towards higher self is the moral development and the goal of individual. If man is essentially good and has befallen to lower self, he can be morally developed. Individual holds a central position in conception as well as putting in practice the Gandhian Social order. All human beings have divine elements as they have sparks of God. Thus, all are equal and there is no justification for any discrimination among human beings.

Thus Gandhi regards self realization or moral development as the ultimate goal of human beings, however, the urge for self-realization is to be reconciled with the service for the society. According to Gandhi, reform and regeneration of society is an integral part of regeneration of individual. He writes, 'The supreme consideration is man. The end to be sought is human happiness, combined with full mental and moral growth' (Harijan: 1942). Gandhi did not approved of unrestricted individualism as evolved in the Western political and economic thought. For Gandhi both individual and society are interdependent, and neither can grow at the cost of other. Unlike western individualists like Mills, Gandhi does not support the atomistic view of society, neither like idealists he sacrifices the freedom of individual for the sake of social collectivism. In fact, both these western views treat individual and society as two separate and opposite identities. In this view either should be given primacy over other. Gandhi takes a distinct position. For him, both society and individuals are interdependent and the progression of one is the progression of other. Since eternal spirit pervades entire universe and all individuals, there is essential harmony and unity between individuals and society.

A similar comparison between Gandhian notion of human nature and contemporary western conception of human self throws light on the unique facet of Gandhian Social order. The prevailing western conception of human nature was articulated as a result of renaissance. Man was described as endowed with the faculty of 'reason', which enabled him not only articulation of his self interests but also in the realization of the same. It should be noted that the 'reason' of post-renaissance-man was distinct from Greek notion of human wisdom. While Greek wisdom is the human faculty to distinguish between right and wrong, post-renaissance reason is a technical competence to realize the desired goals. The second question relates to the goal of human life in western conception of human self. The predominant goal of society and individual both is to seek material progress. The individual as a free agent seeks his self interest and political and economic order is restructured to facilitate the fulfillment of individual self interest. It is here that Gandhi drastically differs from the western conception of human self. For Gandhi each individual is pervaded by the divine spirit, which is the essence of human beings. Hence the moral development rather than material progress should be the goal of all human activities. Social, political and economic life should be structured according to this moral imperative. Gandhi criticized western civilization primarily because it stifles the

moral growth of human beings. This conception of human beings in terms of moral principles enables Gandhi to evolve an alternative Social order as individual is the central element of his moral vision. The consequences of this distinction are no less significant. The goal of unrestrained material progress inherently contain the seeds of competition, conflict, and tensions in human life as material progress depends on the continuous exploitation of material a resources which are limited whereas there is no limit of material progress. On the other hand, the goal of moral development is free from these pitfalls as it can be attained by all at the same time like the enjoyment of sunlight. Also, the process of moral development requires moral resources which are not limited, rather the more we utilize moral resources, the more such resources are generated. In fact, Gandhi's emphasis on moral and spiritual development bears the fruits of fundamental strains of Indian history and culture. In his book *Hind Swaraj* (1909, pp.44-45) Gandhi claims that many ancient civilizations of the world have perished in the course of history, but Indian civilization has survived only because of its emphasis on duty (dharma) and self-discipline.

The essential unity, equality and dignity of all human beings results in the equal development of all. This principle is contained in Gandhian notion of Sarvodaya. Like all his ideas, Sarvodaya too has a moral and spiritual base as Gandhi (Young India, 4 Dec 1924) claims, 'If one gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him, and if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent'. Besides Indian spiritual notions, the immediate source of Gandhi's idea of Sarvodaya was John Ruskin's book '*Unto This Last*', which was translated by Gandhi as Sarvodaya,. It contained the principle of bread labour, and the idea that the good of individual is contained in the good of all. The ideal of Sarvodaya, in practice, 'stands for the all round development of all human beings. For Sarvodaya, to be human is enough qualification for spiritual upliftment. It grants equal spiritual rights and opportunities to all, belonging to different faiths, it aims at realizing truth and non-violence in all spheres of life' (Bibudharanjan: 2012).

#### *India of My Dreams or Gandhian Swaraj*

Gandhi's mission was not just the liberation of India from colonial rule. He wanted to alter the basis of prevailing social, political and economic order and restructure the same in terms of his principles and convictions. This conception is contained his views of Swaraj (self-rule or freedom). He was not content merely with the freedom of India. It has a broad

connotation. As Anthony J. Parel (2000, pp13-18) identifies four aspects of Gandhian Swaraj- national freedom, political freedoms of individual, economic freedoms of individuals, and self rule. Thus Swaraj has to spread to all aspect of human life. Parel (2000: p18) further says, 'To pursue one aspect of freedom without simultaneously pursuing the other aspects was for Gandhi to distort the meaning of Freedom or Swaraj and to interfere with the process of human development'. Gandhi himself says (Prabhu, 1947, p.14), 'Let there be no mistake about my conception of Swaraj. It is complete economic independence of alien control and complete economic independence. So at one end you have political independence, at the other the economic. It has two other ends. One of them is moral and social, the corresponding end is Dharama, i.e. religion in the highest sense of the term. It includes Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc., but is superior to them all... Let us call this the square of Swaraj, which will be out of shape if any of its angles is untrue' Thus in order to complete the Gandhian Social order one has to understand the principle underlying the future restructuring of society as per Gandhian ideals.

R. R. Diwakar (Murphy, 1991, p. 5) identifies four basic pillars of Gandhian Social order: Truth; Non-violence; Sarvodaya; and *Styagraha*. In fact, these are architectonic concepts as many other ideals are either inherent within them or may be derived from them. These core ideals shall continue to guide the future social, economic and political order. However, Gandhi has identified some other ideals to guide the restructuring of social life in specific situations. These are Statelessness in the final stage of evolution; organization of Village Swaraj in terms of self-reliance, cooperation and interdependence; Decentralization of economic and political order; social restricting of Varna Vyavastha with removal of untouchability and equal dignity of all and exploitation of none; and restructuring of economic life on the basis of principles of non-possession (*Aparigraha*), dignity of bread labour and trusteeship.

In brief, Gandhian Social order is based on certain universal principles derived from Indian culture and inherent in the true spirit of all religions of the world. The human being, the central point of Gandhian Social order, is essentially good and endowed with moral faculties. The goal of human life is moral development, which means realization of truth or just condition through non-violent means. Gandhi believes in the continuous moral progress of human race. This is the goal which both individual and society should share and strive for it. The social,

political and economic orders should be organized as per the requirement of the goal. There is possibility of moral transformation of human soul. The real change comes not from external manipulation and control but from inner transformation of human soul. There is no contradiction between individual, world, society and nature as the same divine spirit pervades all. This results in unity, harmony and dignity of all these elements and underlines the need for self restraint on the part of individuals. Thus Gandhian Social order is inherently moral. It offers a potential alternative to prevailing Social order based on the goal of unrestrained material progress and limitless self interests of individual.

#### *Gandhian Social Order: Utopia or Reality?*

Gandhi viewed the world as a living human order characterized by a harmonious relationship among human beings, society and nature. In their ideal conditions their relationship is caused by peace and harmony. The conflict in this relationship is caused by the imperfections in human behavior. These imperfections are not permanent, hence liable to be corrected. Therefore Gandhi tries to find permanent solutions to the emerging conflicts in this order by moral upliftment of human beings. However, the moral upliftment is not an easy task, hence the charge of being Utopian. Yet he is a realist to the core as he addresses the issue of ultimate reality- the harmony and peace in the human order and not the transient reality as most of the realists espouse to. With this framework in mind this article tries to argue that Gandhian Social order is an ideal to be realized as well an ultimate reality of human order.

#### *Elements of Utopia*

Gandhian Social order is often described as utopian. There are three set of arguments which led to the charge that Gandhian ideas are bereft of reality and their realization is beyond human capability.

The first set of arguments originates from the metaphysical and ontological analysis of Gandhi, which forms the foundation of his Social order. Gandhi says that the goal of human beings is to seek truth, but he identifies truth with God, which, in turn, is an eternal principle that cannot be explained. Gandhi (*An Autobiography*: xi) claims, 'there are innumerable definitions of God Again, he identifies two selves of human beings: Higher self and Lower self, the former identified with the human soul and the latter with human body and ego. The lower self has to ascend to attain the higher self. Yet Gandhi does not find any contradiction between the two

selves as they are described as placed in a continuum. An ordinary individual may wonder as to where to draw a distinction between the two selves. Gandhi's metaphysical position may be philosophically correct but being philosophically correct and being realistic are two different things. Thus, the metaphysical roots of Gandhian thought impart a utopian element to his Social order.

The second set of arguments originates from the nature of ideal society envisaged by him and the process and means of realizing the same. The Gandhian ideal society or Ramrajya is based on moral principles and spiritual canons. The realization of such a society is not only a slow and difficult process but also beset by a number of uncertainties and conditionalities. Its most important pre-condition is the moral evolution of human beings to a higher level, which, as our experience suggests, is hard to come by. Thus the realization of Gandhian vision and ideal society is contingent on the efforts of a few morally elevated individual and goes beyond the reach of masses. This invites the charge of being ideal and Utopian and far removed from the ground realities. Similarly, his conception of non-violence, end-means relationship, self-restraint and Brahmcharya, self-sacrifice and Satyagraha, self-renunciation and trusteeship and so on can be realized only after the inner moral elevation of human beings. This may be beyond the reach of majority of human race.

The third set of arguments supporting utopian nature of Gandhian thought emerges not as from the ideas of Gandhi but from the prevailing and prevalent Social orders based on goal of material progress of mankind. This predominant viewpoint originated in post-renaissance Europe, which depicts human being as endowed with reason (meaning logical faculty rather than wisdom) that can be and should be employed in pursuit of self-interest. This self-interest is based on material attainments rather than spiritual progress. The individuals, nations, and societies have been moving ahead with this paradigm for last five hundred years. Though Gandhi revolted against this Social order, but it could not be dislodged. It still persists and sincerely adhered to by all. Why? It persists because its results are more immediate and visible and conducive to bodily comfort and material progress. Anything which is against this is considered as minority and utopian. On social and political plane, the idea of social change has been reduced to the legal and external control, which is visible and produces immediate outcomes, whereas Gandhian process of social change is based on inner transformation of human beings, hence it is not

visible, not immediate, and not certain and takes long time to be realized. Therefore, Gandhian Social order is utopian and idealistic.

#### *Gandhi: A Practical Idealist and Moral Realist*

However, there are equally strong arguments, which articulate and support realist elements in Gandhian Social order. The charge against Gandhian Social order for being utopian may be challenged on the following grounds:

First, the word 'utopia' is derived from two Greek words- 'ou' meaning 'no' and 'topos' meaning 'place'. As a synthesis of these two words, 'utopia' literally means 'no place'. However, there is another meaning of the term utopia, also derived from Greek root. Sometimes the Greek homophonic prefix 'eu' meaning 'good' is also used in place of 'ou'. In that case, the literal meaning of term 'utopia' is 'good place'. Both meanings can be harmonized as a 'good place' also a 'no place'. The term utopia was coined and popularized by Thomas Moore through his book 'Utopia', which was published in 1516. This book depicts a fictional island society in Atlantic Ocean. Thus, Gandhian Social order and the ideal society envisaged by him cannot be described as fictional or imaginary. The very subtitle title of his Autobiography 'The Story of My Experiments with Truth' suggests that his conclusions are based on his deep understanding of reality and derived on the basis of self-realization. How, which is derived through self-realization of reality can be fictional, unrealistic or imaginary. Karen Sihra (2006: 41) rightly remarks, 'His philosophy was created out of his actions in South Africa and subsequent actions in India. He did not separate ideas of theory from practice; for him theory and practice emerged out of one another. Hence viewing Gandhi solely as a philosopher or a political actor creates an unnecessary tension and dichotomy.'

Second, though Gandhi was pre-occupied with the liberation of India from British rule, but it was not final end for him. He envisaged an ideal society for India after independence, which was to be self regulated and based on cooperation and non-violence. For Gandhi the primary function of political authority is to regulate social behaviour, but morally enlightened and self regulated individuals would not require such a political authority. But as a realist he was sensitive to the limitations of human being for desired moral development. Hence, like Plato's second ideal state, he conceded that 'government cannot succeed in become entirely non-violent because it represents all the people. I do not conceive

such a golden age. But I do believe in the possibility of predominantly non-violent society (Harijan: 1939). Thus, as a practical idealist he settled for a progressively non-violent state in place of a total non-violent state. Since India was and continues to be a country of villages and agrarian economy, his insistence on 'Village Swaraj' and regeneration of village community was a practical approach to India's socio-economic development.

Though he was vehemently opposed to machine based modern civilization, he compromised to some extent in view of the imperfection in the moral development of people. NC. Mehrotra remarks, 'Being a practical idealist, Gandhi knew that modern citizens could not live without railways, steamship, and heavy industries. He permitted them to human weakness until people became perfect to live without them' (Mehrotra: 1984). Similarly his emphasis on class harmony and collaboration rather than class conflict, gradual evolution of non-violence and Satyagraha from non-cooperation in 1920s to Quit India Movement in 1940s, political and economic decentralization, removal of untouchability was among other things was motivated by practical considerations and prevailing conditions in India.

**Third**, Gandhi offered fundamental and final solution to the fundamental problems of India. Since his solution was based on the inner transformation of human beings, it has great potential for universal appeal. Human element is central element of all major problems of the globe either as a cause or as a victim or both. The moral transformation of self is a gradual and slow process and not amenable to legal or political control, to which we are attuned to. Hence, the charge of being utopian finds a ready currency and acceptability. Gandhi cannot be accused of being utopian only because he supports a long journey to achieve our goals, so long as his suggestions offer the final and lasting solutions to our problems. With the best of scientific knowledge and the best of institutional and human capability at our command, why we have persistently failed or found ourselves inadequate to solve grave global challenges like terrorism, threat to peace, environmental degradation, poverty, inequality and so on. We tend to reduce global challenges to legal, economic and technical problems and fail to treat them as 'human problems'. Gandhi's realism and foresight lies in the fact that he asserted that human problems require human solutions.

### Conclusion

The foregoing analysis leads to the conclusion that

Gandhian Social order is not utopian. The best description of his worldview is that it is based on practical idealism. It is practical because it is distilled from Gandhi's continuous experiments with the concrete conditions to test the viability of his convictions and ideas. This is evolved from real life situations and his self realization. His ideas and actions are intertwined together and gradually evolve to perfection and higher level in the spiral manner. He is idealist because he offers an alternative Social order based on moral principles, which is diagonally opposed to the prevailing worldview based on the ideal of material progress and self seeking individual. S. P. Verma (1989) concludes that he was a 'Moral Idealist'. Gandhi is not relevant to the modern world because he got independence for India but because he articulated certain universal principles under his alternative Social order, which offer a ray of hope to face the modern global challenges. His principles are not only moral but real also as they go to the root of the human problems of all ages. Or at least, it reminds us of the pitfalls and transient nature of prevailing Social order based on material progress. It is because of this reason that the Gandhian Social order has a universal and global appeal, though our material obsession may not allow us to hear it. The global society based on material progress has its limits to grow. Under increasing tensions and complexities, the need for a self-restrained moral world order may become more pronounced in future. The helplessness of global community, in face of advancing dangers of climate change or violence, is a sign of future state of things. The more the material social order unfolds its miseries and crises and the more human race is exposed to limits of its technical competence, the more Gandhi will be remembered. The utopian optimists of material progress may not admit it, but hard realities of modern day global challenges are destined to approve Gandhi's foresight. However, the revival of global interest in the Gandhian ideas in the present era of globalization (Declaration of International Non-violence Day) amidst unrestrained conflict and violence underlines not only the universal appeal of his social order but also its continuing relevance to human race.

### References

1. Bibudharanjan (2012) 'Gandhiji's Sarvodaya: Its Ethical and Metaphysical Foundation'. *World Focus* (special issue on Mahatma Gandhi and Gandhism), August, 2012, p 508.
2. Dalton, D, ed. (1996) Mahatma Gandhi: Selected



- Political Writings. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, p, 40.
3. Gandhi, M K (1927) *An Autobiography OR The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. Ahmedabad: The Navjivan Trust.
  4. Gandhi, M K (1933) *Harijan*, April 1933.
  5. Gandhi, M K (1920) *Young India*, 11 August 1920.
  6. Gandhi, M K (1921) *Young India*, 23 March 1921.
  7. Gandhi, M K (1924) *Young India*, 3 April 1924.
  8. Gandhi, M K (1924) *Young India*, 4 December 1924.
  9. Gandhi, M K (1929) *Young India*, 26 September 1929.
  10. Gandhi, M K (1936) *Harijan*, 28 March 1936.
  11. Gandhi, M K (1936) *Harijan*, 03 Oct. 1936.
  12. Gandhi, M K (1939) *Harijan*, 9 March 1939.
  13. Gandhi, M K (1942) *Harijan*, 18 January 1942.
  14. Gandhi, M K (1946) *Harijan*, 14 July 1946.
  15. Gandhi, M K (1909) *Hind Swaraj*. Ahmedabad: The Navjivan Trust (Hindi Edition:1959).
  16. Iyer, R, ed. (2000) *The Essential Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p, 35.
  17. Khanna, Suman (1985) *Gandhi and the Good life*. New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation.
  18. Mathai, M P (2000) *Mahatma Gandhi's Social order*. Available At: [www.mguthesis.im/page/?q=T%2007/43&search=&page=&rad=](http://www.mguthesis.im/page/?q=T%2007/43&search=&page=&rad=)
  19. Mehrotra, N C (1984) *Today's Isms*. Delhi: Atma Ram and Sons. p.38.
  20. Murphy, Stephen (1991) *Brief Outline of Gandhian Philosophy*. Available At: [http://www.gandhiserve.org/information/brief\\_philosophy/brief\\_philosophy.html](http://www.gandhiserve.org/information/brief_philosophy/brief_philosophy.html)
  21. Parel, Anthony J, ed. (2000) *Gandhi, Freedom and Self-Rule*. New York and Oxford: Lexington Books.
  22. Prabhu, R. K. ed. (1947) *India of my Dreams*. Ahmedabad: Navjivan Trust.
  23. Sihra, Karen (2006) 'Philosophical Contribution of Gandhi's Ideas on Non-Violence'. *Research and Practice in Social Sciences*, Vol.2 No. 01, pp 40-52.
  24. Verma, S P (1989) *Modern Indian Political Thought*. Agra: LaxmiNarainAgrawal, p.365.
-