CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0   Introduction

Humans cannot live on their own without others for support not because of any desire but out of necessity.[1]   Out of this necessity, society is created through mutual cooperation.   With mutual cooperation, social contract, implicit and explicit, exists.   In the beginning, many of the world's societies were controlled through the assumptions that a few exclusive ones are given the divine power over the majority.[2]   Gradually, societies went through upheavals and changes to the structure began with the revolutions in France, then United States and subsequently the idea of humans being equal was spread in the West.[3]

This has brought about many changes within the Western societies themselves.   Though these changes have been wrought for hundreds of years in the West, it has only recently reached Asia in the 20th century with the wave of colonization.   With the new ideology learned, social ideas began to take hold in intellectuals and began to gradually spread throughout society.

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[1] Ibnu Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah : An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal (New York: Pantheol Books, 1958), 89.
[2] Richard Hooker. *Divine Right of Kings*.
  http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/GLOSSARY/DIVRIGHT.HTM
[3] Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. *Equality*. http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/equality

Thus began the birth of social constructionism. Social constructionism holds the theories that human beings are actively creating and maintaining society.[4]

With this ideology, ideas to change society began to overflow. According to Karl Marx, the most effective social change must be revolutionary in nature and be based on the economy system itself.[5] Gandhi himself was a revolutionary but he called himself a peaceful revolutionary. Gandhi was also part of the wave of students who studied the Western ideologies and philosophies in the 19th century and returned with much of its idealism.

Gandhi's social ideas, basically ideas to change society for the better, are very much based on his education and knowledge of the Western philosophies and knowledge. Gandhi however managed to merge his Indian ideologies and Western ideologies to come up with something uniquely his own. Before we touch on Gandhi's social ideas, Mohandas Kamarchand Gandhi, as a person must be studied to apprehend how these social ideas were developed.

1.1   Objectives of the Study

This study attempts to identify major social thoughts and ideas made or introduced by Mahatma Gandhi. It tries to justify the importance of these social ideas by weighing it by its merits and comparing to other major social thoughts. This study also intends to analyze the practicability of these social

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[4] Gordan Marshall, ed., *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology.* 2[nd]ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 9.
[5] Marshall, *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology,* 64.

ideas within society and civilisation. It also tries to analyze the extent the influence of these social ideas in the Indian society and world civilisation.

1.2   Literature Review

Mahatma Gandhi's impact cannot only be narrowed down to his political contributions in freeing India from British colonization. In fact, his contributions towards society itself constituted more of his greater concern than ever the political arena. Gandhi himself had once said that he only took up political empowerment because he saw it as a necessity to pave way for his social reforms. This paper intends to delve into various literatures on Gandhi's social ideas and thoughts, the influence of Gandhi's thoughts on India and on civilisation on a whole.

Literature on Gandhian legacy tends to be divided into two categories: the first, being Gandhian ideas are destructive, holding back developments and the second that his ideas must be adhered at all cost for a better future.[6] When India stepped into the 20th century, it was a step taken with full optimism that democracy and capitalism are going solve most of the social ills that society is facing now. Sadly, as demonstrated, purely materialistic development even with emphasis on human rights, it falls below expectations. Because of that, Gandhi's ideas that focus on human spirit and values might bring back meaning that we have lost in our modern civilisation.

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[6] Thomas Weber, "Gandhi is Dead, Long Live Gandhi: The Post-Gandhi Gandhian Movement in India," *Gandhi Magazine* 18, no.2 (1996): 161.

In the very beginning, Gandhi's first stir to help society generally in the public field can be traced back to his sojourn in South Africa. Here, one of his basic ideas of his social movements were formulated called *satyagraha*. Thus, *satyagraha* as a social idea must be discussed as the cornerstone of this study. According to Sudarshan Kapur, in his article *"Satyagraha and Sarvodaya after Gandhi"*, *satyagraha* was discussed as one of the most significant legacy left behind by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and this concept was then taken up by his heirs, Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narayan, though they differ on the approach.[7]

According to Weber in his article *"Gandhi is Dead, Long Live Gandhi: The Post-Gandhi Gandhian Movement in India"*, in Vinoba's hands, *satyagraha* is used within the grassroots whereby Jayaprakash seeked to use in a mass scale.[8] *Satyagraha* is not an easy concept to follow even for the most dedicated of Gandhians. Weber once stated that Gandhi's *satyagraha* is a dialectical process and its creativity is needed to ensure its strength.[9] Without their charismatic leader, Gandhi, *satyagraha* appears to lose much of its creative strength needed to generate social change.

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[7] Sudarshan Kapur. "*Satyagraha* and *Sarvodaya* after Gandhi," *Gandhi Magazine* 16, no.4 (1995): 409.
[8] Weber, "Gandhi is Dead, Long Live Gandhi: The Post-Gandhi Gandhian Movement in India," 166.
[9] Ibid., 167.

Unlike parliamentary and revolutionary struggles, *satyagraha* requires every Indian to suffer and make sacrifices for his country.[10] In this case, Jayantanuja in his book, *"Social and Political Thought of Gandhi"*, argued that *satyagraha* also requires the power of the state to ensure its complete implementation.[11] This indicates *satyagraha* may be a good social idea to initiate and highlight injustice but requires state power for long-term effects.

On the other hand, critics have stated that *satyagraha* requires an almost superhuman discipline with saintly self-sacrificing goals to be ever achieved. Even for a practical idealist like Gandhi, this is asking for a lot. Because of that, the Gandhian followers weren't able to foster dynamism that in turn was needed to foster true *satyagraha*. The truth is that *satyagraha* was a near imperfect goal to reach for most people.

Without *satyagraha*, *sarvodaya* is impossible. The attainment of *sarvodaya* depends on the attainment of non-violence.[12] According to Kunal Roy Chowdhuri in his article, *"Gandhi's Theory of Sarvodaya Socialism"*, Gandhi's idea of *sarvodaya* socialism was a moral socialism based on non-violence and truth.[13] *Sarvodaya* was Gandhi's answer to dramatic changes in the very foundations and structure of society itself. The Gandhian revolution is a permanent non-violent revolution because he had wanted to change the

[10] S. Narayanasamy. "Constructive Programme Towards the Twenty-first Century." *Gandhi Magazine* 19, no.3 (1997): 343.
[11] Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya, *Social and Political Thought of Gandhi*, (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1969), 217.
[12] Mohandas Kamarchand Gandhi, *The Essential Writings of Gandhi,* ed. Raghavan Iyer. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), 384.
[13] Kunal Roy Chowdhuri. "Gandhi's Theory of *Sarvodaya* Socialism.", *Gandhi Magazine* 15, no.1 (1993): 63.

social and political movement on a non-capitalist movement towards a *sarvodaya* socialist society.[14]   There was plenty of people willing to try out *sarvodaya* socialism but the government less than enthusiastic treatment towards it with the lack of support from society make it less then applicable.

Thus, from *satyagraha*, Gandhi began to expand into *sarvodaya*. This is *satyagraha* in a grander scale, taken up society. Many scholars see Gandhi as an anarchist as he called for a stateless society based on *sarvodaya socialism*.[15]   In addition, Gandhian method of the exposition of the *sarvodaya* system was fragmentary and piecemeal. There is thus a wide scope of varied approaches and explanations on the nature of *sarvodaya* socialism.[16] As such, there was no one method as to how *sarvodaya* can be effectively launched to change society.

Sarvodaya is another Gandhian idea taken up by his disciple Vinoba Bhave. *Sarvodaya* (welfare of all) seeds were sown by Vinoba Bhave who create *Sarva Seva Sangh* to carry out the Gandhi programmes in March 1948.[17] Most Indians however were not enthusiastic of this social idea because in its early infancy, it is tied to the communist movement.[18] However, *sarvodaya* was then effectively demonstrated through the *Bhoodan* (land gift) led by

[14] Ibid., 64.
[15] Chowdhuri. "Gandhi's Theory of *Sarvodaya* Socialism," 72.
[16] Ibid., 76.
[17] Kapur, "*Satyagraha* and *Sarvodaya* after Gandhi." , 411.
[18] Ibid., 412.

Vinoba Bhave.[19] However, after Vinoba Bhave, *sarvodaya* carried out in a grand scale was never used again in India.

Sarvodaya may never be a national force again although Shepard did believe that it is still a vital force within the community in his book "*Gandhi Today: A Report on Mahatma Gandhi's Successors*" with the passing of Vinoba and Jayaprakash (JP).[20]

Although Weber is quite right in pointing out the Gandhian movements are using *sarvodaya* well without their charismatic leader and that s*arvodaya* seems to be fading into a mere social institution in their homeland without much ability to implement its concept. However, social restructuring is a long and slow process whereby a few centuries might be needed to see the importance and relevance to the Indian civilisation. *Sarvodaya* may live to see another day. Shepard in his article, "*The King Of Kindness*" however is not as pessimistic as Weber in saying perhaps Gandhi's social ideas is fading away. In his book, he listed down a few movements that have been inspired by Gandhi's ideas and show their ability to be his heir.[21]

Shepard also shows other examples such as the *Shakti Sena* group who acts as Gandhian Peace Army.[22] Their duty is to ensure peace is retained and they have actually worked to bring about peace between the warring

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[19] Ibid., 413.
[20] Weber, "Gandhi is Dead, Long Live Gandhi: The Post-Gandhi Gandhian Movement in India." , 163.
[21] Shepard, M. *The king of kindness.* http://www.markshep.com/nonviolence/GT_Vinoba.htm
[22] Ibid.

communities of Hindu and Muslim. In fact, Shepard noted that sometimes things they have done bring no news because no news is good news.

Other than this, Shepard stated that there is also the *Chipko* Movement that has saved much of the forests through a hug a tree program.[23] The movement intends to help the people of the mountain to wrest control of the mountains from the government so that they can manage their own resources well and benefited from there. However, the *Chipko* Movement is basically to empower the people of the mountain and this is decentralisation as visualised by Gandhi even in its infant stage.

S.Kulandaisamy in his article *"The Concept of Power to the People"* mentioned that decentralisation is a major part of *sarvodaya* and was discussed as a system called *Gram Panchayat*. This system is a system evolved for dealing justice to all and providing protection and education to all. Everyone agreed to the decisions of the council and it's regarded as decentralized social order within a village and eventually in a nation.[24] Though much has been talked about decentralisation of the Indian government, studies showed that centralized government is holding more and more power.[25]

The objection Gandhi's decentralisation idea is that he did not actually outline a clear progress on how a nation is to disband into decentralised

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[23] Shepard, M. *The Chipko movement.* http://www.markshep.com/nonviolence/GT_chipko.htm
[76] S.Kulandaisamy. "The Concept of "Power to the People," *Gandhi Magazine* 18, no.3 (1996): 351.
[25] Ibid, 351.

villages.[26] Although Gandhi offered a blueprint of what his decentralized village will look like, there was no clear guideline. Besides, this would call for willingness from the authorities in power to actually implement it first and even in India itself, it has never been carried out in a national scale.

J.C. Kumarappa, a Gandhian disciple wrote in his book, "*The Economy of Permanence*" (1944) that economic decentralisation should start with the farmer first, with his self-sufficiency that spreads to the whole country.[27] Furthermore, Kumarappa had wanted to test Gandhian economics on several villages on agriculture, animal husbandry, village industries, basic education, basic uplift of *Harijans* and women, village self-government, and communal harmony.[28] However, Nehru's plans prevailed and the gap between the rich and poor, the urban and the rural, the educated and illiterate has widened. Decentralisation is seen as an impossible task especially in the light of how nation-states are the primary social structure of the Western civilisation in determining the context of a nation.

Trusteeship was also generally discussed too with *sarvodaya* socialism. According to S. Narayanasamy, in his article "*Constructive Programme Towards the Twenty-first Century*", Gandhi's theory of trusteeship was to pave the way for a more equal distribution among society members without violence called upon by the communist revolutions in Russia and China.[29]

[26] Joseph Prabhu, "Some Challenges Facing Multiculturalism in a Globalized World," *ReVision* 24, no. 1, (2001): 30-39.
[27] B.R. Nanda. "The Master and the Disciples." *Gandhi Magazine* 15, no.2 (1993): 170.
[28] Nanda, "The Master and the Disciples.", 171.
[29] S. Narayanasamy. "Constructive Programme Towards the Twenty-first Century.", 348.

There were several arguments against trusteeship. One of them is that trusteeship is merely a cover to protect the rich and appealing to their sense of generosity to give and it is not really equal distribution of goods as perceived.[30] The second objection is that the objective condition of production will continue remaining as it was under capitalism.[31]

In brief, Gandhi's social ideas are related to one another with *satyagraha* needed before *sarvodaya* can be realized. With the realization of *sarvodaya*, decentralisation and trusteeship can be uphold. These social ideas are the basic foundation of Gandhi's vision for both the development of the individual and also the society.

In looking into Gandhi's importance and relevance to the human civilisation as a whole. We must not forget that it has been 54 years since he died. Until today, he is still a hotly debated topic. It is even more so because now we are ready to see him as a man rather than a saint. In the coming of the Western colonization into the East with Britain in India, Malaya, Burma, Dutch in Indonesia, U.S.A. in Philippines, much has been trumpeted about the goodness of their social systems that made the Western civilisation so great. This is in particular referring to science and modernity.

The essence of modernity brought by the Western civilisation indicates progress whereby human has now successfully stripped our world of its

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[30] Mahadeva Prasad. *Social Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi.* (Gorakhpur: Vishwavidayala Prakashan, 1958), 195.
[31] Ibid., 200.

mystics and secrets and bare upon knowledge from science. At that time, we did not see the overall problems brought forth by modernization as warned by Gandhi and other intellectuals of other civilisations like Sha'riati.

Prabhu writing from a perspective on the effects of the so-called modernization pointed that our world is dangerously close at depleting ourselves with our so-called modernity that creates among all other things a consumer society.[32] This society operates on the belief that the more materials one have individually, the better off the person is. Prabhu said is the disservice of modern civilisation. Not only that, it develops in human not of the nobility in him but the beast in him, encouraging competition, selfishness and materialism.[33]

As a remedy to this, Prabhu suggested that Gandhi or more precisely his social ideas have very important roles to play in changing the human civilisation to a better one in terms of moral and humanity.[34]

On one hand, Madhuri in her article on *"Gandhi and Mallik: Nonviolence and Abstention as ethical strategies for a peaceful world"* speaks more of Gandhi's approach in the view getting more world peace that seems to be further and further away from the minds of the world's leaders at the moment.[35] With more weapons of destruction in our hands, our annihilation

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[32] Prabhu, "Some Challenges Facing Multiculturalism in a Globalized World," 30-39.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Madhuri Sondhi, "Gandhi and Mallik: Nonviolence and Abstention as ethical strategies for a peaceful world," *Comparative Civilisations Review, No.45, Fall 2001.* 84-105.

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seems to be very easy and we desperately need world peace more than anything. With that, she cited one of the examples in Gandhi.

Madhuri used examples of Martin Luther King and Lech Walesa in using Gandhi's non-violence method in reaching their objectives as significant proof that Gandhi's social ideas are not meant for India only but for the human civilisation.[36]

Stanley Wolpert in his book, *"Gandhi's Passion: The life and legacy of Mahatma Gandhi"* once said that Gandhi is a unique contribution to our world with our growing insensitivity and pain towards violence, Gandhi's ideas help to serve as a guide to the 20th century.[37]

When we look into Gandhi's social ideas and philosophy in his motherland today, we would be shocked at the gap between his ideals of a nation with India today. India today has nuclear weapons tested in 1998. Its government is moving further and further away from the non-violence so beloved of Gandhi with the communal violence in India growing more and more rabid. This is accelerated by the Kashmiri issue involving both India and Pakistan. This further spurred both sides to rush for the latest and best armaments. Now, more than ever, Gandhi and his social ideas are more relevant not only to India but to the entire world.

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[36] Ibid.
[37] Stanley Wolpert. *Gandhi's Passion: The life and legacy of Mahatma Gandhi.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 265.

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1.3   Methodology of study

This study mainly uses resources from the University Malaya's Main Library. A large part of its research are generated from books, journals and articles obtained from within. Primary sources are generally taken from Mahatma Gandhi's own writings primarily from his *Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. Other than that, collection of his writings from *All Men are Brothers: Life & Thoughts of Mahatma Gandh as told in his own word* and *The Essential Writings of Gandhi*. In addition, Gandhi's social ideas from the *Harijan*, a newspaper published with ideas and thoughts are also referred to during the research. Furthermore, primary sources are also taken from Internet such http://web.mahatma.org.in (The Official Mahatma Gandhi eArchive) , http:// www.gandhiserve.org (Mahatma Gandhi : Research & Media Service) and www.mkgandhi.org (The Complete Site of Mahatma Gandhi).

Secondary resources on Gandhi are also referred to and used. There is no lack of materials written on Mahatma Gandhi. Namely, one of the most useful secondary sources comes from journals named *Gandhi Magazine*. Other secondary resources come from books, journals, articles and others. Databases provided by University Malaya's library such as *Bibliography of Asian Studies (BAS)*, *Cambridge Journals Online* and *INFOTRAC Expanded Academic ASAP International* are vastly useful in accessing for journals needed.