

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

#### 5.0 Conclusion

"You must not lose faith in humanity. Humanity is an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty." Mahatma Gandhi.<sup>369</sup>

Throughout his life, Mahatma Gandhi has given much of himself to his people and nation. Regardless of his success or failure as a politician, social reformer, father of the nation and any other roles he was perceived to play, Mahatma Gandhi was a great person. He can rightfully be called one because of his sincerity to make himself, India and the world a much better person and place. His faith, though simple, does provide a beacon of hope for a better future in an increasingly violent world full of uncertainties.

Material progress has not brought happiness and joy to the humanity as it was once believed. Even though in certain countries, material needs are more than adequately fulfilled, crimes still abound, people are unhappy and social ills are still prevalent. Of course, material needs are still the basic requirements for people to feel secure and happy before any other needs. There may be still grains of common sense in this man's ideas.

Before even we have come to realize that we are at the brink of destroying ourselves, Gandhi had already warned us of the hidden dangers within a world based on material greed. Our emphasis on material gain through the

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<sup>369</sup> <http://www.great-quotes.com>. (accessed 8 March 2004).

capitalist system blinds us to our human values. Even more, it blinds us to the suffering of others who need to sacrifice so that some of us would have more than others.<sup>370</sup> Truly, the world provides enough for our needs but not our greed.

Therefore, in this study, attempts were made to identify the relevancy of his social ideas and the viability of these ideas used in the modern civilisation and world. An irony is that India, Gandhi's hope of showing the world a better alternative turns more and more into a modern state without its moderating influence of rationality with the rise of Hindu fundamentalism and other religious conflicts.

Gandhi believed that unless and until the rhetoric of violence stopped and all people were treated with love, compassion, and dignity, the social ills that permeate our society would not be eliminated.<sup>371</sup>

Arnold Toynbee once paid tribute to the Indian civilisation when he mentioned that India's special contribution was her large-heartedness and broad-mindedness.<sup>372</sup> He believed that India's attitude towards life and its approach in handling human affairs through non-violence may set a precedence to the standard of how human affairs are to be handled, not only in India but in the world.<sup>373</sup>

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<sup>370</sup> Gandhi, Mohandas Kamarchand. *Hind Swaraj*, 2003, [http://sources.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hind\\_Swaraj\\_-\\_M.\\_K.\\_Gandhi](http://sources.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hind_Swaraj_-_M._K._Gandhi). (accessed 8 March 2004).

<sup>371</sup> Prabhu, "Gandhi visionary for a globalized world.", 3.

<sup>372</sup> Arnold Toynbee, *One World and India*, (New Delhi: New Age Printing Press, 1960), 3.

<sup>373</sup> Toynbee, *One World and India*, 41.

Toynbee stated again how much impressed he was with the Indian's people freedom from rancour especially how they had negotiated freedom from Untied Kingdom.<sup>374</sup> Sadly, India itself has turned its back on Gandhi and his ideas, deeming them as backwards and ridiculous. Indira Gandhi, Nehru's daughter order the first atomic bomb to be denoted in 1974 and then in 1998, India denoted again five thermonuclear explosions at the desert sites of Pokhran.<sup>375</sup> The violent and turbulent relationship of India and Pakistan showed no sign of abating any time soon. This is an irony as more and more of the world outside is beginning to take to heart the sayings of Mahatma Gandhi.

According to one of Gandhi's professed follower, Ram Dass, Gandhi's call of a civilisation is the art of voluntary renunciation.<sup>376</sup> He claimed that we didn't understand the meaning behind Gandhi's words. When we voluntarily renounce certain wants that we may not need, we are indirectly allowing others to fulfill their basic needs. Ram Dass says, "Our small renunciation would allow other people to live and have a better standard of life. It wouldn't wipe out our affluence at all to feed and clothe and house everybody in the world, and it would take such pressure off all of us."<sup>377</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>375</sup> Wolpert, *Gandhi's Passion: The life and legacy of Mahatma Gandhi*, 261.

<sup>376</sup> Ingram, *In the Footsteps of Gandhi*, 182.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid.

## 5.1 Gandhi's major social ideas

Gandhi himself had said that his ideas are not new ones but “as old as the hills itself.”<sup>378</sup> For ideas to last as long as that, it must have meant to remain as a natural part of our laws just as the physical law of gravity, so must too the ethical principles that govern life.<sup>379</sup> Though he himself had stated that the social ideas he propounded were ancient, but they have been given a new lease of life from him and a different perspective.

### 5.1.1 *Satyagraha*

*Satyagraha* is the core of Gandhi's social ideas, in that one must hold fast to truth.<sup>380</sup> From here, one derives much power to change the world. Though most of the time, the term *satyagraha* has never been used explicitly, nor has the users identify themselves with this term. A lot of the demonstrations carried out in the world have unconsciously uses *satyagraha* as a part of their training.

The whole hippies era in the sixties were actually inspired by Gandhi's teachings of non-violence and love, though most would not have recognized it as such. Peace demonstrations against the Vietnam War had played a role in increasing awareness of the injustice and stupidity of the war waged by the United States, though how much it contributed to the stop of the war remains to be seen.

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<sup>378</sup> Gandhi, *All Men are Brothers*.

<sup>379</sup> Gandhi, *Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 454.

<sup>380</sup> *Ibid.*, 284



Demonstrations became a kind of strategy for those who hold certain principles for certain things. Strikes became a common theme for them. This was not the case before Gandhi. Though they may not have embraced non-violence in totality, the weak no longer feel that they are powerless to do anything as Gandhi showed them that there are ways to get things done when there is a sufficient number of them. There isn't any violent revolution when it comes to their beliefs. It is probably Gandhi who showed them the first instance of peaceful strikes that actually help to change major decisions around the world.

Soul-force or the strength to hold on to the truth is one of the corner stone of any religion or spiritual ideal in this world to find the ultimate reality. If one truly is looking for the ultimate principles in which life is based on, one has to base it on ultimate truth.

Gandhi's unique contribution towards soul-force is his ability to practice it in a practical sphere namely in the socio-political arena. He was able to not only practice individual *satyagraha*, he was able to generate mass *satyagraha* that was a show of moral strength of a civilisation unsurpassed or untried by any other civilisation in the world. Indeed, this is a testimony of the depth of the spiritual core of the Indian civilisation itself. Without this deep inner core of spiritual strength of this civilisation, millions of Gandhi would not have been able to persuade millions to make sacrifices for certain objectives.

Toynbee once said the way Gandhi liberated India from United Kingdom through *satyagraha* not only does India a great service but also the colonists because of the grace it has conferred on them.<sup>381</sup> As such a good relationship can then perpetuate through no ill feelings between these two nations.

Toynbee stated again Gandhi helped India by elevating its people to keep its struggle to a spiritual level that can only help to develop themselves much further.<sup>382</sup>

Gandhi's concept of *satyagraha* denied the concept of Darwinian's theory of the survival of the fittest. It also turns down Hobbes' theory that the human life is a "struggle of all against all". Instead it believed that with mutual cooperation, progress and development of human interaction, society and civilisation will be made possible.<sup>383</sup>

### 5.1.2 *Sarvodaya*

Though Mahatma Gandhi did not seem to be the run of mill revolutionary, he was indeed one. His social revolution was to be two sided: one will be *satyagraha* (civil resistance) and the other *sarvodaya* (essence of social reform).<sup>384</sup>

*Sarvodaya* has also been practiced by these demonstrators who see that the world is not only for a privileged few, but they have to play their part to

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<sup>381</sup> Toynbee, *One World and India*, 53.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid., 53 –54.

<sup>383</sup> Midatala Rani. "Sarvodaya as Development Strategy.", 212.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid., 217.

ensure that a balance is reached and that we do not destroy the earth in a fit of greed.

His socialism was above all a moral socialism based on his doctrine of non-violence and truth. He made an impassioned moral appeal for a new and more perfect expression of the Indian people's thirst for social justice, unity, brotherly love, and comradeship in work and peace, and for dignity of manhood. His aim was not to intensify, but to reconcile conflicts, antagonisms, and enmity of every type, and he naturally addressed appeals and explanations to all social classes and strata including the rising bourgeois and the decaying feudal, landed interests.<sup>385</sup>

The Gandhian revolution is a permanent non-violent revolution.<sup>386</sup> In his *sarvodaya* ideal of good society, Gandhi opposed the tendency towards universal urbanisation and the widening gap between urban and rural structures by advancing the idea of self-governing, self-sufficient village republics.<sup>387</sup>

The growth of *sarvodaya* socialism would thus be marked by a profound restructuring of the cities and their relationship to the rural areas reflecting the need to harmonize the imperatives of decentralized economic growth with human needs.<sup>388</sup>

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<sup>385</sup> Kunal Roy Chowdhuri. "Gandhi's Theory of *Sarvodaya* Socialism.", 63.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid., 64

<sup>387</sup> Ibid., 71

<sup>388</sup> Ibid.

*Sarvodaya* society's attempts to eliminate the town-countryside contradiction would revolve round the reshaping of the regional distribution of economic activity by developing small-scale industries in small towns and on the villages while preventing population movements into large cities.<sup>389</sup>

Gandhi regards social progress as a continuum and not as a discrete process, we have only three pictures of the social order from him: (1) the existing social order, or rather orders, representing value systems of traditional Western Democracy, Communism and Fascism, (2) the second-order ideal representing a form of libertarian socialism, and (3) the first-order ideal of anarchism.<sup>390</sup>

For him, changes must be practiced using both sides of the coin, namely the individual and the society. The individual practices *satyagraha* and the society practices *sarvodaya*. Through these two techniques, change would be natural and not through external factors but internal change, a much more deeper change.<sup>391</sup>

For *sarvodaya* to work, Gandhi suggested three phases of change. The first change should start with the people's thought structure, the second change would be their way of life. After successfully changing these, there should

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<sup>389</sup> Ibid.

<sup>390</sup> Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya, *Social and Political Thought of Gandhi*, 104.

<sup>391</sup> Midatala Rani. "*Sarvodaya* as Development Strategy.", 211.

be changes in their various relationships in life. All these changes will revolutionize an individual.<sup>392</sup>

Gandhi's method of social change is a combination of 'pacifism' and 'social revolution'. The ideas of both are merge to produce the 'nonviolent revolution'.<sup>393</sup> For Gandhi, his concept of *sarvodaya* is used to uplift all human and not just the greatest number of people and nor did he wanted to judge the development of the society through the Gross National Product.<sup>394</sup>

### 5.1.3 Trusteeship

Though governments are not ready and perhaps will never been ready to relinquish their power and authority, trusteeship does exist at organizational level at certain parts of the world. In general, trusteeship existed a lot of time in participatory welfare organizations, whereby the money earned is generally hold in trust for the people they are working for. In this case, it is clear that trusteeship does exist at certain level.

Where trusteeship is practiced, it is clear the people who have been helped are eager to help back again. Before Gandhi rediscovered trusteeship, social controls are internalized, people are naturally good and only take what are needed, this is found in certain tribes of Eskimos and Australian aborigines.<sup>395</sup> Competitiveness is not the only percept to get ahead in the world.

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<sup>392</sup> Ibid.

<sup>393</sup> Ibid., 211-212.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid., 212.

<sup>395</sup> Houston Smith, *The Religions of Man*, 149.

Economic competitiveness in the modern civilisation has perpetuated injustice in many parts of the world, most notably the Third World. Hampered by their inability to use their own natural resources, they sell them and buy products made by these very same resources at twice or even thrice the price.<sup>396</sup> No wonder these nations keep getting more and more into debt.

The wealth of the world should be seen the First World as a trust and not as their property if one wants to continue to maintain. One should not follow Darwin's call of the survival of the fittest. If this is the case, then eventually all would die out from competing with one another.

Gandhi disliked the state for two arguments: i) the state represents an authority that poses a threat to the liberty of the individual who is above all institutions, and (ii) the state represents violence in an organized form.<sup>397</sup>

While anarchists like Proudhon, Max Stirner, Bakunin and the early Kropotkin would use revolutionary violence to put an end to the organized violence, Gandhi insists on non-violent resistance as the only means of ending the tyranny of the state, and a purely non-violent society based on voluntary organization as the substitute for the state.<sup>398</sup>

What would be the ideal social order like in an anarchistic society? Gandhi has no clear and articulate answer to this question. He was uninterested in

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<sup>396</sup> Ingram, *In the Footsteps of Gandhi*, 130.

<sup>397</sup> Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya, *Social and Political Thought of Gandhi*, 106.

<sup>398</sup> Ibid.

the preparation of concrete blueprints for the future, because he had always maintained that the future and could only follow from the means adopted at present, and that a purely mental construction about the future had no significance whatever.<sup>399</sup>

#### 5.1.4 Decentralisation

In terms of decentralisation, it is interesting to note that in many organizations in the world, rapidly lateral framework is more acceptable than hierarchical framework. Slowly, people are beginning to see that interdependence tend to work much better than just independence. Although it may be too much to say that Gandhi influenced organizational charts of companies, it can only be fair to say that Gandhi had thought of a great idea way before his time. For that he should be given due credit to see the uses of decentralisation. Modifications however to his framework should be done as Gandhi tend to be too idealistic in his framework.

Though none has specifically followed his perception of decentralisation. One cannot deny that decentralisation has be the buzzword in the corporate world particularly when it was noted that a enormous unit tends to be slow and tedious in making changes. Units work on their own projects and then report back to the base.<sup>400</sup>

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<sup>399</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>400</sup> Susan Albers Mohrman, Jay R. Galbraith, Edward E. Lawler & Associates. *Tomorrow's Organization: Crafting Winning Capabilities in a Dynamic World*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), Flap Copy.

Socialism was based on economic equality among humans. *Grama Rajya* (people's rule – a welfare state) cannot be established under the inequalities that existed in India.<sup>401</sup>

Its socialist theory can only be put in practice whereby people voluntarily give up their excess needs so that everyone would get his/her share. Money that was spent should instead be spent to eliminate poverty at home.<sup>402</sup>

## **5.2 Viability of Gandhi's Social Ideas**

Gandhi was at heart a social reformer. His quest into the political realm was another extension in which he hopes to effect the changes more effectively. His social ideas, as discussed, were idealistic in its outlook and needs total dedication and sacrifice from its practitioners.

Our discussion of Gandhi's social ideas with its application to the social ills within India was to gauge the influence made. Perhaps it was not the failure of the ideas itself but the failure of people to live up to these ideals and practice these ideas.

### **5.2.1 Caste System**

At the heart of Hinduism, it is the caste system or *varnashramadharma* as used by the Hindus. The caste system is part of their belief system that one's

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<sup>401</sup> G. Pankajam, "Towards a Nonviolent Social Theory." *Gandhi Magazine* 19, no. 3 (1997): 363.

<sup>402</sup> Ibid.



deeds now are repaid by one deeds before. Eradication of caste system would be impossible without a massive revamp of the Hindu religion.

Gandhi's social ideas of the caste system whereby if it could be ideally practiced in that human are all equal are unfortunately not matched by most people.

### **5.2.2 Communal Tension**

At the core of the communal tension within India is the question of the Indian identity. If the Indian identify is to be identified exclusively with Hinduism, it is no wonder the minorities within India is nervous with the implications. With the BJP at the helm of the government, one cannot help wondering communal tensions are being worked up at a worst rate than ever across the country.

### **5.2.3 Poverty**

Poverty is a man-made vice, born out of man's greed and unwillingness to share with his brothers and sisters of his wealth. Poverty to be eradicated using decentralisation and trusteeship may work if the right people are at helm. There are people who are will to be trustees of the world and help.

### **5.2.4 Gender Inequality**

Women's rapid emancipation has reached a long way since Gandhi's time. Inequality between men and women was drastically reduced especially for

the educated classes. However, gender inequality still persists in tandem with the poverty-stricken group.

### 5.3 Gandhi's influence on Indian civilisation and world civilisation

Gandhi's position within the Indian civilisation is assured in that he was seen as the liberator of the nation from the British and the father of the nation. Other than that, his more important ideas and philosophy seem to be receiving less and less attention from the Indian government.

Instead Gandhi's thoughts began to make sense to a world horrified by our actions in destruction. It has come to a stage whereby his words were seen as alternatives against globalization and consumerism.<sup>403</sup>

Gandhi has shown a way to maintain the wholeness of life and sanctity of natural order by his commitment to truth, *satyagraha*, nonviolent resistance and an alternative lifestyle.<sup>404</sup>

In Gandhi's essence of teaching, the self is diminished. It enables us to live a whole life, taking into consideration not only material progress but also emotional and spiritual progress with ourselves and others in our societies.<sup>405</sup>

Thus, to change the world, Gandhi required a comprehensive agenda involving education, adequate economic, social and political structures,

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<sup>403</sup> Sulak Sivaraksa, "Applying Gandhi for Alternative to Consumerism.", 391.

<sup>404</sup> Sulak Sivaraksa, "Applying Gandhi for Alternative to Consumerism.", 397.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid., 398.

appropriate lifestyles, all these with strong underlying principles. Any social organization without ethics would disintegrate and Gandhi was never so much needed for the future as of now.<sup>406</sup>

Though it is not appropriate to claim that all civilisations in the world are now a part of the modern civilisation, it would be suitable to state that most civilisations in the world dance in tune with some of the principles of the modern civilisation at a varying degree. Some of course follow the whole music, some a few notes and others barely one or two at all.

Problems that come with modernity – overheated economics, overindustrialization, environmental pollution, our ability for sustainable production, social ills are growing in spite of our material progress.<sup>407</sup> This points out Gandhi may be right about the necessity of restraining our needs and following ethics in our lives.

Increasingly, the world is rapidly becoming more disillusioned of its future with the dark clouds of war and impending nuclear holocaust hanging over. This is compounded again by the way the world's environment has been treated. Concerns of human survival have not been so great as of now.

More and more people are turning into other channels to grapple with the increasing greed and materialism of the modern civilisation. Some have

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<sup>406</sup> Sondhi, Madhuri. "Gandhi and Malik: Nonviolence and Abstention as Ethical Strategies for a Peaceful World." *Comparative Civilisations Review*, No.45, (Fall 2001): 91.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid., 92.

turned to religions for solace, others to New Age cults and beliefs, still others dreamed on, without much knowledge of what is yet to come.

However, none can avoid the economical aspect preached by the modern civilisation. Consumerism was a byword of the civilisation, constantly needing to find raw materials and new markets for its good. Consumerism with all its implications draws a false picture of abundance to the world. Enchanted by its promise, nations follow without seriously thinking of the implications of our greed has depleted very dangerously the natural resources around the world.

Some resources are renewable but not all. Worried by the trend that people are rushing into. Much has been written of Gandhi's idea of a civilisation. According to R.P.Misra, Gandhi stated three fundamental principles needed to ensure human survival and development.

They are:

1. Peaceful evolutionary from within alone can help people harness their inherent Potentials. Violent revolutions are counterproductive.
2. Truly modern civilisation will be based on voluntary poverty , minimization of the wants which will jeopardize the future of man; and
3. The means and ends must be fair simultaneously. And only a non-violent culture of sharing. The industrial Civilisation of the West, will never bring about lasting peace in individuals, communities, societies, nations and the world.<sup>408</sup>

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<sup>408</sup> R.P. Misra, "The Gandhian Alternative Civilization." *Gandhian in Actions*. (1994): 108.

Supporters of Gandhi and Vinoba are optimistic as they see the message and ideas are to be used for ages. The process of the acceptance of these ideas will come but the process will be slow with a continuation of grassroots work.<sup>409</sup> Through the increase of social movements using Gandhian methods and the problems besetting the Western civilisation, a shift is moving towards a Gandhian outlook.<sup>410</sup> It is truly an irony that more research foundations, groups and centers intensively studying and analyzing Gandhian thought in other countries than in India.<sup>411</sup>

The world has a reason to be optimistic if it is still willing to listen to the voice of wisdom and prudence found in Gandhi's sayings and ideas. His social ideas have never been just limited to India. India is merely his testing ground and that he had hoped the world can learned from this can be seen through this saying:

My mission is not merely brotherhood of Indian humanity. My mission is not merely freedom of India, though today it undoubtedly engrosses practically the whole of my life and the whole of my time. But through realization of freedom of India I hope to realize and carry on the mission of the brotherhood of men.<sup>412</sup>

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<sup>409</sup> Weber, Thomas. *Gandhism, Optimism and the gandhians*, ed. Anthony Copley and George Paxton. (Chennai:, Indo-British Historical Society, 1997)

<sup>410</sup> Weber, *Gandhism, Optimism and the gandhians*.

<sup>411</sup> S. Narayanasamy. "Constructive Programme Towards the Twenty-first Century." *Gandhi Magazine* 19, no.3 (1997): 341-351, 342.

<sup>412</sup> Gandhi, *All Men are Brothers*, 119.