

## Chapter-5

### **Idea of Community and Civil Society in Indian Context**

The goal of political modernity in Europe has been the construction of social culture of possessive individualism and the centralized state vested with the monopoly of coercive powers. The centralized state is necessary to manage conflicts between egoistic individuals. Individuals are conceived as selfish and egoistic. Interests of different individuals are different and satisfaction of one's interests would deprive others the same. Due to scarcity of available resources to meet the needs, there would be continuous conflict between different individuals. Hence, a state is required to manage warring individuals and groups within society with the powers to establish law and order. Such a state also needs to establish civic culture to make possible ordered social transactions without the state's necessity to intervene in society in every instance. Civic culture is a necessary pre-requisite for a coherence of meaning among individuals in their transactions outside the state. Civic culture consists of social mores and according to which individuals cope with conflict endemic to modern societies. It is also the task of the state to create and sustain such a culture through various institutions.

The production of such a culture as goal of all modern societies has been subjected to scrutiny within European critical traditions like Marxism, post-modernism etc. However outside the European context, it was Gandhi who made a sustained critique of building such civic culture and state. Gandhi is also the staunchest critic of such a culture of European political modernity in general. Criticizing such a situation Gandhi explained it to a friend like this:

*“Enquiring of every country you find them affected without exception by unrest of a deep-seated character. In America, it is class warfare; in England it is labour unrest, in Russia, Bolshevism, and in India, it is an all round unrest due to repression, famine and other causes. This situation which now faces the western*

*nations was inevitable; for western civilization based on the basic principle of brute force as a guiding motive, could have ultimately led only to mutual destruction.”<sup>1</sup>*

For Gandhi, the basis of a civilization should not be brute force. In the west morality and politics have been divorced; politics has developed as a separate domain of activity distinct from economic and social. These domains have been academicised as if they were separate from politics. Politics as a vocation is understood as distinct from morality as practical activity. Politics is viewed as an activity uninformed by ethical considerations. That is, politics is normally viewed as competition for power; the means followed in seeking for power is not of an issue. Whatever may be the means, reaching the end is of utmost priority. Morality is divorced from politics and morality is delinked from religion. For Gandhi, this is the source of major crisis for western nations. In pursuit of power, the ethical and practical implications of their actions have not been given due consideration, which led to enormous costs internally and externally. This is not an accidental feature of Western European modernity, but central to its construction. Gandhi saw the grave crisis of western civilization in delinking religion, morality and politics. For him, morality separated from religion is immorality and sin; religion practiced without ethical considerations is irreligion, and politics pursued without moral considerations is of no relevance. For him, ethical principles should inform all human activities. Religion is a source which provides ethical motivations to all human actions.

Hence, Gandhi’s guiding concern in his entire writings and lifelong action had been to sustain a social order in which religion, morality and politics are not totally compartmentalized. Such a separation leads to violence at the centre of social organism. Such a separation has been possible due to emergence and penetration of modern scientific epistemology. Modern science brought a distinction between subject and object into European culture. Subject as a knower is supposed to be dispassionate. Subject would attempt knowing the world without prejudice or bias. Thus the knowing subject is detached while the object is perceived purely as empirical in the sense that it lacks any meaning. It is an object without any accompanying moral significance.

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<sup>1</sup>Pantham Thomas, "Gandhi, Nehru and Modernity" in Baxi, Upendra & Parekh Bhikhu (ed); *Crisis and Change in Contemporary India*, New Delhi. Sage Publications, 1995. P-102 Quoted from collected works 15, P.381.

“The political theory and political institutions of European post-enlightenment modernity are founded on a cognitive structure of binary oppositions between subject and object, self and other, reason and tradition, truth and illusion, good and evil, speech and writing, presence and absence, logical and ambiguous, normal and criminal etc.”<sup>2</sup> .

In each of the binary oppositions, the former terms represent the privileged while the latter represent the weak. The former term stands for enlightenment, progress, reason, modernity etc., while the latter term stands for ignorance, unreason etc. The sharp separation between the subject and the object inaugurates several other binaries. These binaries led to the emergence of a notion of science whose essence is that nature and society are inert objects. They are not suffused with any religious or social meaning. Their behavior can be known certainly which can be formulated in the scientific laws. The knowledge of laws can be used to control or manipulate nature and social worlds. The object of knowledge is to control the objects for the sake of efficiency and improvement. Gandhi is a critic of this conception of knowledge. He does not view that the purpose of knowledge is to manipulate the world. He does not endorse such a conception of the world. He attempted a fundamental criticism of rationalist epistemology. He did not think from within European enlightenment model of knowledge. He conceived continuity between self, world, knowledge and liberation. For Gandhi, knowledge is not just an epistemic category, but a moral one. Knowledge and practice cannot be thought of as two separate activities with distinct separating lines. Miri elegantly articulated Gandhi’s idea of knowing as epistemic and moral practice. “Our existence is spiritually grounded, that spirituality and morality must necessarily inform each other that man’s true fulfillment lies in moral spiritual self knowledge and action that necessarily flows from such self knowledge.”<sup>3</sup>

For Gandhi, the function of knowledge is not to manipulate social world. For him, knowledge and practice go together. Morality and spirituality are closely connected. Spiritual practice is the ground of morality. Spiritual practice does not mean withdrawal from sansarik world. It involves deeper engagement with everyday world. As the spiritual practice goes deeper, one realizes the responsibility towards

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* P.101

<sup>3</sup> Miri Mrinal, *Identity moral life*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press (hereafter OUP), 2003 P. 122

others. In the process of spiritual practice, one attains self knowledge. This transcends the familiar subject–object dichotomy of western epistemology. Spiritual practice is also a process of knowing oneself; it is both moral and epistemic. In other words, Gandhi did not think in terms of a schism on separation between subject and object. He did not imagine two separate entities; one realizes the artificiality of schism in the process of attaining self knowledge<sup>4</sup>. This kind of understanding arrives at a radical alternative to western, rationalist epistemology. Thus, Gandhi can be read to arrive at an alternative to European Enlightenment modernity in science, politics and morals as well.

Gandhi's central concern had been to criticize modern civilization. He criticized modern civilization for two reasons. The first one is its conception of science which views subject and object as two totally different entities which resulted in radical disenchantment. It produces knowledge in the image of the self and nature and introduced violence into self and other relationship. It produced knowledge in the image of the self and described the other as weak, inefficient, backward etc. Secondly modern civilization has brought into existence a separation between religion and morality. This separation created a field of brute force where ethical principles become in operative. In other words, ethical principles cannot be applied to practical fields of life because of the notion that the practical affairs operate independently of ethical principle. Thus, moral reflection, the ability of a person to influence other morally has become the characteristic of the past societies. Modern societies are societies in the sense that different professions are pursued for the sake of advantage they bring. Individual exists in order to bring advantage for himself. Thus, individuals are means to fulfill an objective externally imposed on them. Thus, society is a collection of individuals coming together to pursue mutual advantage. Gandhi's central concern had been to resist attempts to build a society whose members work towards mutual advantage. For him, the aim of a human is to seek truth. Modern societies allow the pursuit of greed and pleasure, but not truth. Modern societies do not create conducive conditions for the pursuit of truth. His main objective has been to sustain a social order in which individuals can morally influence others or ethical principles are applied in all fields of practical action.

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p.125.

This chapter argues that the traditional social order which has been in existence for centuries has been organized to realize the true nature of human being. It has been ordered according to truth as absolute and truth as relative to each person. The traditional social order has been organized as moral government of the universe according to the absolute truth. It also offers scope for each individual to realize truth as he sees it. It is ordered according to the principle of Dharma. The society so organized allows for pursuit of truth by each individual and collective as a whole. In other words, it allows for moral conduct of the humans, while modern society functions in the language of benefit. It argues that Gandhi's attempt has been to sustain an order in which moral conduct becomes possible because such societies only allow for pursuit of truth. Civil society involves various efforts in addressing social and political questions of the time. Gandhi approached them in unique manner. This chapter also interprets how those efforts and their specific nature is essential to sustain a traditional social order organized according to truth. Gandhi's public movement aimed at overcoming colonial stereotypes of Indian society. Basically colonialism looked at Indian society as a collection of warring castes and communities; whereas Gandhi infused fresh way of looking at one self and one's society. This is crucial to the idea of civil society because he invented new epistemic practice which transcends division between self and the other. Gandhi's political practice aimed at transcending the divisions imposed by colonial perspective with truth, as at its core colonialism violates the truth.

### **Gandhi's Critique of Modern Civilization**

Gandhi rejected modern civilization as it had been emerging in India under colonial rule. His critique is staunchly moral in its condemnation of emerging new professions and the ethical vacuity of that culture. He criticized modern civilization "because it neglected the soul, privileged the body, misunderstood the nature and limits of reason and had no appreciation of individual swabhava"<sup>5</sup>. It is essential to articulate his critique of modernity because it constitutes the core of his lifelong pursuits, aiming at

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<sup>5</sup> Parekh Bhikhu, *Gandhi: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, OUP.1997. P. 79.

sustaining a social order which is not mechanical. For him, the difference in kind of social order is between one devoted to pursuit of greed or profit, the other is organized for the pursuit of spiritual needs or restraint of desires. This distinction is significant to think about civilizational values of Indian society. This must be retained and sustained in order to stand firm to the onslaught of colonialism in destroying and deforming one's culture. Thus, critique of modernity is central to his political pursuits and his imagination of alternative ideals. This has bearing on the nature of civic community as Gandhi visualized and integral to his political struggles and ideals he proposed. Hence, articulation of critique of modern civilization is integral to his views on civic community and political struggles. His critique of modernity pervades through all aspects of his thinking.

Gandhi made a critique of modern civilization on three planes: colonialism, emergence of mass society and rationalist materialism<sup>6</sup>. Colonialism, for him, does not morally mean political rule by alien people. It includes a deeply rooted crave for imitating the culture of the west devoted to illusory pursuit of bodily desires, accumulation of wealth and power divorced from ethics.

India failed to defend herself in the face of British conquest "not because Indian society lacked the necessary cultural attributes that it was unable to face up to the power of the English... For Gandhi it is precisely because Indians were seduced by the glitter of the modern civilization that they become a subject people. And what keeps them in subjection is the acceptance by leading sections of Indians of the supposed benefits of civilization"<sup>7</sup>. Thus, India was conquered by the British not because of their superior armed power, but because of Indian's penchant for the glitter of modern civilization. It was Indian subjects who became active partners in the civilizing mission of the west. They wanted colonial culture to be sustained because they were cured by it. Gandhi articulating himself in the voice of the editor, writes in *Hind Swaraj*, "you want the tiger's nature, but not the tiger, that is to say you would

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<sup>6</sup> Rudolf.C. articulated Critique of Modern Civilization of Gandhi on three issues; Colonial Imperialism. Industrial Capitalism and Rationalist Imperialism. I have altered the terming of issues slightly to shift the analytical focus toward moral critique of emergence of new type of self than merely on structures or concentrated ideological trends, Heredia, Rudolf.C, " Interpreting Gandhi's Hind Swaraj," *Economic and Political weekly*, vol 34, No. 24

<sup>7</sup> Chatterjee Partha, "Gandhi and Critique of Civil society" in Guha Ranajit (ed): *Subaltern Studies- iii*. New Delhi, OUP. P. 107.

make India English; and when it becomes English, it will be called not Hindustan but Englishtan".<sup>8</sup>.

Thus, it was a crave for the glitter of the modern civilization that sustained British rule. Gandhi critically questions what form of organization would come in place if the British leave this country. Indians would want state and its mechanism of force and evil. They would want army, bureaucracy etc. Gandhi asks even if British leave, Indians would like to retain same forms of public power that colonialism had at its home and the one it is trying to institutionalize in the colony. Thus, it becomes part of the consciousness of the colonial subjects that they should also establish and be ruled by the similar structure of colonial power. Thus, colonialism intrudes and shapes the culture of the native people.

Colonialism introduced new logic into politics, the logic of brute force. British came and conquered India by brute force in the sense of superior military power armed with sophisticated weaponry. There are many who thought that British rule in India could be overthrown by force i.e., by inducing fear in the minds of the rulers. It could be achieved by random attacks on Britishers or an organized armed upheaval against the British. They saw this as the most practically effective measures of overthrowing British rule in India. In other words, colonialism an heir to European Enlightenment in some measure- introduced the language of power. It is a new way of seeing. It destroys the traditional kind of seeing each other. The traditional way of seeing recognizes the other as a person or spirit with distinct character and form. In this framework, each person knows the other as spirit. Colonialism destroyed this idea of interpersonal understanding constituted in culture. It introduces new way of seeing. Each person sees the other as a thing, an instrument, and an object capable of meeting his egoistic desires or as means. Each person sees other as instrument to one's objectives. In the first kind of seeing the other is an end in itself. One responds to other as a human. This is the foundation of a traditional order based on Dharma. In the latter instance, the sphere of public action is premised on instrumental rationality. That is about calculating benefits that accrue from taking a specific course of action. Colonialism is premised on latter kind of logic and perpetuates this kind of logic there

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<sup>8</sup> Parel Anthony. Ed, *M.K. Gandhi – Hiind Swaraj and Other Writings*, New Delhi, Cambridge University Press, 1997 (hereafter Gandhi M.K, *Hind Swaraj*)

by altering the ontic grounding of self and the other permanently. Colonialism altered perceptions of mutual seeing, which is a fundamental violence at an epistemic and ontic level.

In the process of colonial expansion it introduced logic of power into mutual seeing. Colonialism conquered India by physical force similarly like western theories of power and politics. Colonial civil society is founded on fear and mutual advantage. Colonial state established its rule by force. In course of time, it tried altering the perceptions of the local elite. They have also cultivated the ideas of western politics. They thought that defeating the British was easily achievable by the force of weaponry. Thus, the idea of public contestation is premised around the idea of force.

Gandhi contested this idea, uncovered the layers of moral complexity involved in various kinds of contestations and emphasized on the purity of means as an essential tool to sustain a traditional social order. One stream of nationalist movement places emphasis on reaching the goal irrespective of the means pursued, violent or non-violent. This stream shares the same framework with colonialism in viewing political power as the ultimate goal of any human group or, more particularly nation. Gandhi never prescribed securing and sustaining power as ultimate goal. For him the goal of an individual life lies in consistently performing morally right actions. Hence, he did not agree with those who advocate violent means to reach political ends.

Gandhi uncovers the layers of moral conceptions invoked in contestations of various sorts and shows how the theory of brute force as political strategy amounts to immorality of great depths.

The familiar argument was that British used the force, so, should we do the same.

“It is perfectly true that they used brute force, and that it is possible for us to do likewise, but by using similar means, we can get only the same thing that they got”. It implies whatever has been achieved by force, it cannot have popular legitimacy. British rule did not carry public legitimacy. If the state power is captured in India by force by overthrowing British power, it wouldn’t carry public legitimacy. Before capturing state power, it is important to secure public support. But Gandhi wasn’t talking about public support mobilized through illusions of modern machines



of propaganda. Modern political machines like political parties create mass illusions to secure and retain public support. This is similar to what colonial power does or logic of power unleashed by colonial power. Once certain logic of propaganda takes root in public mind, political parties have a strong need to meet the expectations or what is called structure of public interests. Gandhi does not feed into such a discourse of playing into pre-determined structure of public interests. The idea of pre-determined public interests precludes the possibility of 'transforming hearts'. This is crucial to Gandhian discourse for denying logic of colonial power. The idea of a public in which individual can constantly influence each other through moral action is the crux of Gandhian idea of public action. This goes beyond the idea of interest formations in the milieu of colonial state. He is looking for an alternative beyond the logic of colonial state power.

The logic of change of heart is to change the heart of others with your understanding, and love<sup>9</sup> of it involves accepting others. The 'change of heart' does not happen merely through a process of reasoning Satyagrahi mode of action should melt the heart as well.

*“Two kinds of force can back petitions. We will hurt you if you do not give. This is one kind of force. It is the force of arms, whose evil results..... The second kind of force can thus be stated. If you do not concede our demand, we will be no longer your petitioners. You can govern us only so long as we remain the governed. We shall no longer have any dealings with you. The force implied in this may be described as love-force, soul-force or more popularly but less accurately passive resistance”<sup>10</sup>.*

The first one is a colonial logic of power while rationalists of some hues share the same logic, but Gandhi differs from them. The logic is to point out the lack of reciprocity in a relationship and attempt to induce the change of heart. Thus, he articulates an idea of society in which different agents accept and recognize the responsibility towards each other. They are bound together an acceptance of responsibility. The agents of such a society recognize each other as mutually responsible. The second kind of force appeals to reason and heart. The logic of reason appeals to colonial government about its injustices. But mere appeal to reason alone

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<sup>9</sup> The details of logic of satyagraha action would be discussed at a different place in this chapter in detail.

<sup>10</sup> Gandhi M.K, *Hind Swaraj*, P.85

makes a moral community possible. But the public movement should be able to appeal to heart as well without the change of heart; mere appeal to reason wouldn't help in making a moral community possible.

Thus, colonialism creates a culture of politics in which the central motive of society is to pursue power. Gandhi has invented the logic of public political process which defies the colonial framework. Thus, his critique of modern politics in its colonial phase is important to imagine as an alternative ideal of community.

### **Critique of industrial society and professions**

The emerging form of European society, capitalism, is morally vacuous. Firstly the telos of human life have been redirected radically. The purpose of human life is redefined as pursuit of advantage. The self is re-imagined as being directed at itself (moral egoism). It is not directed towards others. The purpose of life of each person is aggrandizement of one's personal desires. Human self takes pleasure in satisfaction of its own desires. As a consequence, it enters into a conflictual reaction with other selves pursuing similar goals. It produces a conflict ridden interior. The exterior is framed in terms of rationally arrived abstract laws disconnected with narrative structure of self of each individual person. There is a disconnect between interior and morality of the exterior. This produces one kind of tension. "In Gandhi's view, violence "oozed from every pore" of modern society and fear was the dominant emotion"<sup>11</sup>.

Secondly, modern civilization gave raise to new idea called professions. The idea of profession did not exist in pre-modern times. In pre-modern professions, there is an organic connection between the goods of the self and the human activity; the self is involved in human self does not have goals outside the activity that it is pursuing. The entire being of the self is deeply permeated by its primary activity. Social and political life is organized in sync with the authentic activities of the self. In this kind of organization of life, there is no disharmony between the self, society and polity.

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<sup>11</sup> .Puri Bind, *Gandhi and the moral life*, New Delhi, Mittal Publications, 2004.P.97

In modern times, the spheres of professions and professional ethic have come into existence. The idea of professional ethic is distinct from personal ethic. Each profession evolves a highly regimented set of impersonal rules to regulate the behaviors of the class of profession in question. These impersonal rules become necessary because the goal of the self and its professional garb have no organic connection. The goals of the self are private to the individual while the goals of the profession are specific to organizations they work for. Thus, the professions and the organic life contexts of the individuals are kept apart. The specific ethic of the activity is delinked from the nature of individuals as social beings and as citizens in political terms. This offers space for the nation state to manage various aspects of human life and in defining the objectives of various fields in accordance with the requirements of the nation state. Thus professionalization of various aspects of human life helps nation state in organizing social life in accordance with its goals.

There is a second aspect to it. This is concerning the question of using knowledge for the purposes of governing various fields of human life. For instance, lawyers, doctors etc., Gandhi has analyzed these professions in *Hind Swaraj*<sup>12</sup>. These are the professions that came into existence in modern times. Traditionally both the domains - law and medicines - are continuous with the everyday life contexts. Law and medicine are not separated from the life contexts of the individuals. These activities are being conducted within the social and natural environments of one's life contexts. Legal disputes are resolved within the community under the guidance of the elders. Cure is to a large extent used to take place within the natural and cultural environments.

In modern times, knowledge is separated from social practice. There has been traditional knowledge's available in different aspects governing human life. This knowledge is in continuation with what people share. There is no schism between popular knowledge and the knowledge of the practitioners. With modern times the relation between knowledge and people are reconstituted, popular knowledge has been discredited either as superstition or as figment of imagination. Abstract knowledge governing the various aspects of social life has come into existence. This knowledge is unfamiliar to people. Then experts came in and expertise is the specific

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<sup>12</sup> · Gandhi M.K. *Hind Swaraj*.

feature of modern culture. Experts are the yielders of knowledge. In the process of using knowledge available, they are creating a hierarchy between experts and non-experts. Experts are shaping society and are strengthening their own position as knowledge yielders. Gandhi critically questions the consequence of expertise in various fields. This, he articulates very clearly in the context of doctors and lawyers.

Gandhi's main criticism of experts is that it reduces the capacity of self-reliance and moral strength. Due to the presence of doctors, individuals become more and more dependent on medicine than building resistance within one self. Similarly, with lawyers, disputes between people grow in numbers and intensity. It makes them weak in the sense of their ability to resolve disputes among themselves come down. Thus with modern professions, people's moral strength and their capacity for self reliance comes down.

Firstly, the profession of law itself is not conducive to resolution of disputes. Lawyers create further disputes. They would not allow disputes to settle down.

“It is within my knowledge that they are glad when men have disputes. Petty pleaders actually manufacture them. Their touts, like so many leeches, suck the blood of the poor people”<sup>13</sup>.

The culture of the profession of modern law does not allow justice to be reached. It promotes endless litigation and the parties in the dispute have little understanding of the laws that they are subjected to.

Secondly, Gandhi argues that the profession of law perpetuates British administration in India. If there were no Indian lawyers, there wouldn't have been the possibility of executing law according to English jurisprudence; it would have come down to the level of the people in India. When the law could not be executed, then the British administration wouldn't have been possible. Hence, legal profession contributes to the perpetuation of British rule in India.

“The English could not do without Indian judges and Indian pleaders. If pleaders were to abandon their profession and consider it just as degrading as prostitution, English rule would breakup in a day”<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> · Gandhi M.K. *Hind Swaraj*. P.57

Thirdly, resolution of disputes through English law would reduce self-reliance and make people morally weak.

“They became more unmanly and cowardly when they resorted to the courts of law. ... Is it any the less so if I ask a third party to decide between you and me? Surely, the decision of a third party is not always right. The parties alone know who is right”<sup>15</sup>.

What is right is known to the parties involved in the dispute in a better manner than to an abstract institution which arises out of abstract laws. A community knows a person, better than an institution that arises out of abstract rules. The disputes are not resolved by themselves. They have to obey judgment that has been offered to them, and whose basis that the parties concerned is not aware of. Thus, the law as a profession undermines the moral self-reliance in resolving disputes by the community itself and it makes the members to dependent on an alien agency, the knowledge of the functioning of which they are not aware of. This process of adjudication in English makes humans dependent on alien institutions that did not arise out of life contexts of individuals. It makes them morally effeminate and weak, thereby affecting negatively their capacity for self-reliance.

Similarly, the medical profession affects capacity for self-reliance of individuals. Medical profession is pursued for the sake of profit or greed. Though its actual aim has been pursuit of bodily well being, doctors treat their patients with profit in their mind. The purpose of medical profession itself is violated because its main aim is to rid body of its diseases. It is pursued with the aim of profit motive given the overall structure of economy in which it is pursued.

“It is certainly not taken up for the purpose of serving humanity. We become doctors so that we may obtain honours and riches”<sup>16</sup>.

Thus the basic aim of the medical profession is violated because the motivation of the practitioners is encapsulated in the structure of intentions of greedy, possessiveness, egoistic individualism of capitalist economy. The greed has taken over deeply personal aspects like bodily health.

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<sup>14</sup> . Gandhi M.K. *Hind Swaraj* P. 59

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*. P. 64

Medical profession encourage vice. It undermines the capacities of the body for self-recovery. “Had the doctor not intervened, nature would have done its work, and I would have acquired mastery over myself, would have been freed from vice”<sup>17</sup>.

“The doctor intervened and helped me to indulge myself. My body thereby certainly felt more at ease, but my mind became weakened. A continuance of a course of a medicine must, therefore, result in loss of control over the mind”<sup>18</sup>.

Here, Gandhi is articulating a conception of body and health which is quite contrary to western medicine. For him, western medicine unleashes a logic which undermines body’s capacity for self recovery. A dose of medicine in case of illness would help body to recover from illness, but it would undermine mind’s capacity for self-control. Medical intervention disrupts the natural processes of body’s illness and recovery from it. It becomes dependent on medicine. As one indulges in vice, he tends to afflicted by disease. Medicine cures illness it doesn’t require him to be in self-control to avoid illness further. As medicine readily cures illness, it doesn’t becomes necessary for one to stay away from vice. Thus, Medicine perpetuates viciousness.

“That the body could be thus handed over; and the patient need to know and indeed could not understand details of the ailment and procedure. Thus henceforth he bore no responsibility. Thanks to the training and institutional structure of medical science, the experts needed this unchallenged monopoly over the body in order to be effective”<sup>19</sup>.

Thus medicine as knowledge, gains total control over human body. Human person loses control over body and has been subjected to control of impersonal force of knowledge. Thus human body is brought under the control of agencies of knowledge-making who, in turn, might have to yield to the pressures of the nation-state through its public health policy. Thus, human person loses control over its body and it has been brought under the control of the nation state.

Further, the Gandhi’s critique of railways, as an instance of modern civilization is the more debated issue. It has been understood that railways as a means of mass transport contributed to the growth of nationalism in India by making

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* P. 63.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>19</sup> Puri, Bindhi, *Gandhi and the Moral life*, Delhi Mittal Publication,2004\_P.96

interaction between various castes, religions, ethnic groups etc. But, Gandhi squarely criticizes this view. Gandhi puts forth his view that India had been one nation ever since the ages, and only with the emergence of railways the new distinctions of caste and religion were invented. Prior to the introduction of railways, all the Indians used to travel by less speedy modes of transport and they would intermingle with each other in the course of their journey across places. Thus, the speedy mode of transport brought these distinctions into open and became cause of division within the nation.

The railways became means of transport of evil. It provided avenues for evil man to move rapidly and satisfy their desires even in distant places. It makes possible spread of consumerism and thereby weakening the moral resolve of the persons.

For Gandhi, speed and modern civilization are synonymous. Speed destroys the stable moral character of the individuals that is essential for right conduct. There has been nature imposed limits to what is possible. If humans try to go beyond nature imposed limits, it leads to moral corruption.

“... In my conceit, I pretend to have discovered that I must with my body serve every individual in the universe. In thus attempting the impossible, man comes in contact with different natures, different religions and is utterly confounded”<sup>20</sup>.

Gandhi argues that there are nature imposed limits. Those limits are within implicit purpose. The purpose is to create and sustain a form of life in which individual do not have to deviate from the path of right conduct. Humans living within a limited area or connected to his surroundings have the possibility of leading a virtuous life. This is so, because strong moral character emanates from deep connection that humans establish with others and the surroundings. The speed of locomotion destroys that deep connection which is source of virtuous moral conduct. Lack of deep connection between humans acts as a conducive factor to the growth of evil. It also creates a background for unbridled growth of desires which the psychological basis of thinking out of moral fiber. Thus railways act as a disintegrating force for a form of life that sustains right conduct.

Thus the emergence of modern professions led to loss of moral self reliance and control over one's body and moral creativity. These professions come into

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* P.51

existence and thrive on the fact that there has emerged objective practical knowledge's disentangled from actual life contexts. This objective knowledge creates spaces of impersonal kind. Such spaces let nation-state spread its ideological net and set up itself firmly there. These spaces create openness necessary for emergence of civil society from the shackles of feudal control. Gandhi compares such spaces to upas tree, highly poisonous one or source of immorality. Here lies the course of Gandhi's critique of civilization and consequently his critique of civil society. He posits an idea of social order which makes possible the virtuous moral conduct.

### **Rationalism**

Gandhi is a critique of rationalism. He did recognize the significance of reason in human life, but he did not endorse rationalism. Gandhi believed that rationalism was a false doctrine. Certain areas of human experience like religion transcended reason and require faith. Other areas of human experience like morality and politics, reason's ability was limited and need to be guided by wisdom, tradition, conscience, intuition and moral insight. Reason is always subverted by superior argument. It cannot form the credible basis of human life. Rationalism gives raise to intolerance; it privileges only scientific knowledge while ignoring other human faculties and other forms of knowledge. Thus, rationalism has a strong anti-pluralist bias and a streak of intolerance.<sup>21</sup>

Rationalism violates specificity of each human individual. It suppresses the specificity of each individual human and it sets up similar ideals for all humans. It ignores the unique Swabhava and vastly different ways in which they defined and led good life. Thus rationalism produces homogenous individuals<sup>22</sup>.

Gandhi, as has been mentioned is not against reason by himself, but he would suggest setting limits to reason. "Gandhi would test his faith with his reason but he

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<sup>21</sup> Parekh Bhikhu, *Gandhi: A Short Introduction*, New York, OUP, 2001, P.84.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* P.85



would not allow reason to destroy his faith”<sup>23</sup>. There are many areas of human life which cannot be covered by reason alone. Gandhi says, he does not want faith to be destroyed by reason. Rationalism becomes even more destructive due to its materialism, which negates the spiritual or transcendental.

For Gandhi “truth was much more than could be grasped by the reason or science. For him there was a reality beyond that perceived by the senses”<sup>24</sup>. There is a world beyond this which is amenable to senses. Some theorized it as ideas informing reality, while others saw it as transcendental realm informing everyday reality. This transcendental world helps in reaching out to beyond, which gives freedom and hope. If the world is fully determined by rationalism there would be no scope for freedom of human action.<sup>25</sup>

Thus Gandhi understood that reason can be meaningfully applied to a small portion of reality, and there are many portions of reality which are not amenable to reason. There are areas like religion and morality in which faith, conscience etc., could be playing major role. Secondly rationalism is a blunt materialism, in the sense that it does not account for the existence of the transcendental which is source of freedom and hope. Gandhi takes the other extreme on this issue. He would assign a very crucial place to the spiritual/religious in human affairs, as it would determine the moral. A civilization not grounded in spiritual cannot be moral. For him moral would require firm grounding in the spiritual.

Thus Gandhi’s critique of modern civilization can be summed up as follows: greed and competition generates restrained tension within society. Second, the modern professions would create a situation in which people would lose actual control of their own affairs and it would be handed over to experts. Thirdly, its suppression of the experience of the transcendent deprives self of strong rooting, which would make it virtuous. Thus, Gandhi criticizes modern civilization and proposes an alternative true civilization organized according to the principle of swaraj.

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<sup>23</sup> .Heredia, Redolf. C, “Interpreting Gandhi’s Hind Swaraj”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol, 34, No. 24, Jun-12-18, 1999. P.1497

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*. P.1497

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*

### **Religion Morality and Politics: Mutual Relationship.**

At the centre of his critique of modern civilization, Gandhi could clearly diagnose a major flaw in it: irreligion. Western civilization, with the advent of modernity, took pride in separation of religion from morality and politics. It tried this separation especially during a moment when it had to fight against the authority of the church. That is separation of secular, this worldly affair from the transcendent or the ideas of God. It is, apparently, to liberate the world of everydayness from the injunctions of the God or from the morality being determined by religion. This separation has been achieved by many traditions within philosophy. This is being called Anthropocentrism. It implies, there was a denial of a trans-human anchor for grounding the search for reality and truth. Such a search focused on man himself yielding what Iris Murdoch calls “broken totality”. That ‘man’ was interpreted and understood purely in body-centered materialistic terms. His goals were also those of material well-being. Thus, virtue as an intrinsic value in itself was lost. The goal of a virtuous life as fulfilling in itself could not make prudential or rational sense and was therefore not rational. There was denial of a higher purpose in life. The meaning of life was gradually the satisfaction of ordinary needs”<sup>26</sup>.

Gandhi precisely identifies this conception as giving rise to immorality. Individuals are considered as separate from each other. They are understood to be located in competitive relationship with each other. It is understood that individual’s ultimate appeal is to reason as a guide to one’s action. But he doesn’t appeal to anything that lies beyond one’s senses. Gandhi precisely sees this as a problem. One’s sense of right and justice should emanate from what lies beyond our sense and apparent. Gandhi does not dispense the idea of God from the human world. But he makes this idea as central to one’s action in the human world, which essentially makes it moral. Hence the idea of transcendental as integral to one’s action in the world is crucial to Gandhi’s idea of personal action. Gandhi does not view human action as mechanical and narrowly rational in sense of calculating benefits and costs.

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<sup>26</sup> Puri, Bindu, p.80

He takes moral action as informed by the transcendental. An action is moral and constantly being improved by inner voice of conscience. The inner voice of conscience Gandhi calls it as God. It constantly helps one to transcend one's egoistic desires and its projected desires. That is how spiritual, moral and the political are mutually informed and inform one's action in the world in the light of voice of the God. This idea is very crucial to any conceptualization of Gandhian ideas for constructing modern political concepts. There is an idea of social order rationally conceptualized which consists of various elements within which it would balance the 'order' by mechanical actions of elements constituting it. Gandhi did not think it terms of any such order. Gandhi considers social world as being constituted by a norm of Dharma borne out of specific conception and purpose of human nature. Western civilization is organized in such a way that humans aim at aggrandizement of their desires. For Gandhi a social world is constituted in India for ages in such a way that the desire is restrained. The mechanisms which create avalanche of desire have been discouraged. It is a social world in which virtuous conduct has been given constitutive significance than satisfaction of egoistic desires.

The basis of thought and practice is the conviction that "our existence is spiritually grounded that spirituality and moral purity must necessarily inform each other, that man's true fulfillment lies in moral-spiritual self knowledge and action that necessarily flows from such self knowledge".<sup>27</sup>

"But he is no God who morally satisfies the intellect if he ever does. God to be God must rule the heart and transform it. He must express his self in every the smallest act of his votary. This can only be done through a definite realization more real than the five senses can ever produce. Sense perceptions can be, often are false and deceptive however real they may appear"<sup>28</sup>.

"As soon as we lose the moral basis we cease to be religious. There is no such thing as religion overriding morality. Man for instance cannot be untruthful, cruel and incontinent and claim to have God on his side"<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> Miri, Mrinal, P.122

<sup>28</sup> Young India , 11, Oct, 1931 as quoted in Miri

<sup>29</sup> Young India, 24 November 1921.as quoted in Miri

As Miri puts it very effectively, one's existence is spiritually grounded. It is no morally available within the grip of senses. Existence is rooted in something that lies beyond sense perception. As one practices, one tends to realize the limited perceptual vision of one's life and to change one's perceptions in the light of inner conscience or God. In course of one's practice one moves towards purity because it lies in true human nature undistorted by external goods like power and wealth to reach truth in the sense of overcoming illusory perceptions of desires and be pure. It is the ground of spirituality what lies beyond mere sense perception. As Gandhi understands morality, one cannot be religious without being moral. The idea of morality is one's truthful commitment to what one is doing.<sup>30</sup>

“To be spiritual and to be moral is to respond with utter ahimsa (nonviolence) to what requires our response”.<sup>31</sup> To respond morally is to respond with utmost care both in action and intention to all kinds of human action. To be spiritual is not to renounce sansarik world, but to participate in all human activities with utmost care. Thus morality requires validation of God as truth to all human actions. Thus morality and spirituality are inextricably interlinked.

Spiritual practice is the ground of morality. Spiritual does not mean withdrawal from sansarik world. It involves deeper engagement with everyday world. As the spiritual practice goes deeper, one realizes responsibility towards others in the process of spiritual practice, one attains self-knowledge. This transcends the familiar subject/object dichotomy of western epistemology. Spiritual practice is also a process of knowing oneself as related to other selves through manifold actions of one's life by which one attains self-knowledge. Hence the process of knowing oneself is both moral and epistemic.

Religion and politics are also interconnected. No sphere of human activity can be exempted from ethical evaluation. All human activity needs to be subjected to ethical evaluation. Each human activity should be conducted with full spiritual attention. Politics is a spiritual activity. According to Gandhi, the present age is an age of democracy in which politics occupies a major space in human affairs. It is this field

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<sup>30</sup> See Miri Mrinal, P.122

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, p.125

where the largest possibility of moral growth is ensured<sup>32</sup>. Hence it is in political realm that one can realize truth best for himself. In politics alone, overcoming of the self-projection of the ego can have the best and most for reaching results.

“To me political power is not an end but one of the means of enabling people to better their condition in every department of life”<sup>33</sup>.

“Politics pervades all our activities. I know that in this country all constructive activities are part of politics. In my view this is true politics”.<sup>34</sup> Politics is one realm of human activity where ethical principles should be applied. For that matter no realm of human activity is ethical and requires equal attention. For him politics is not competition for power. The aim of politics is doing service to others. This is an ineliminable part of spirituality. In political practice one is to go beyond one’s ego centric illusions. By going beyond one’s ego, one is going nearer to truth. Truth does not lie in competition with others’ power. But it lies in thinking beyond such competitive spirit. “The whole exercise can be one of self purification and overcoming of ego-aggrandizement by a practical ahimsa interpreted in terms of love and service, beautifully coordinating the political and religious into an enterprise of moral growth and development”<sup>35</sup>.

Thus politics has been viewed as self-realizing, self-transforming and self-transcending activity. Politics is not merely for satisfying one’s ever increasing desires. Politics is concerned with reaching truth. Gandhi could very well recognize that the other is constituted by the self. If the other is viewed as a thing or an instrument or an object, the self itself imagines itself as one trying to indulge in the desires. If the other is understood as an end in itself, then the self defines itself in relation to the other as serving the other. Gandhi’s ideas help one in understanding this complexity. Gandhi’s idea of politics are aimed at self-reform and self-transcendence, but not at self-aggrandizement of the divine. Neither of them can be imagined as mechanical politics as an activity is world-transforming and self-transcending.

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<sup>32</sup> Puri Bindhu, P.77-78

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, M.K.Gandhi speech at Gandhi Seva Sangh.

<sup>34</sup> Young India, 2, July, 1931 as quoted in *Ibid*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, P.78

Thus spirituality, morality and politics as three different activities of human life mutually inform each other. According to Gandhi, in the western tradition, the three different spheres have emerged as distinct spheres having separate logic. In a certain manner of speaking the separation between the three spheres is central to European modernity. Spirituality and morality mutually inform each other, so is the politics. Human existence has no meaning unless it is being spiritually grounded. It implies that human life is not merely guided by utilitarian considerations of advantage.

Human existence sustains itself by having faith in and beyond what merely benefits. It is faith into the God as truth. Truth is the fountain of justice. Being truthful is to recognize human as human or human as an end in himself. Treating others as an instrument would lead to violence at the core of the self because it considers other as that which brings advantage for the self is constantly insecure because whether the other would make self-secure or not. If the other is considered as human, then the self is secure because it is serving the other. Thus, morality and politics involve constant appeal to the right as available in the spiritual, with which one improves oneself in the world. This conception is crucial to Gandhi's idea of practical action. This conception of practical action remains valid only in a small society. The small society, by its character, is constituted by exemplary actions of individuals to influence each other. This is possible in a society which is not fully oriented to pursuit of power or wealth. In a small society, public sphere is constituted by personal actions of many exemplary individuals. The new structures of economy and polity should not have yet made individuals to pursue merely power or wealth. Individuals should still be choosing and applying ethical principles to all fields of practical action. It is a society in which all realms of human activity are informed by ethical principles. On the other hand, there could be an alternative picture of society in which all fields of action orient themselves according to instrumental rationality or the calculus of costs and advantages. The society, in which ethical ideas inform practical action, would be called traditional social order, though it is not exactly traditional order as he wouldn't conceive traditional in the sense of fixed and unchanging. For him, traditional social order is in need of transformation. Such a transformation should take place as from within. It should not involve a process of objection of social relation and viewing them as instruments in evolving a good society. Gandhi evolved alternative ideas and

ideals in evolving a good society that is not radically discontinuous with traditional society. A modern society is radically discontinuous with traditional society, but as someone from within. To understand the contours of alternative society that he proposed, it would be useful to look at his ideas on Swaraj, Satyagrah and Ahimsa.

## **Swaraj**

Gandhian idea of swaraj fundamentally aimed at a thorough critique of western civilization and laid the basis for true civilization.

Swaraj in politics or economics or in ideas or whatever is etymologically the kingdom or order or dispensation of swa, self, myself, consequently in all seeking of swaraj I seek swa seeks, to be the ruler, centre, is the source of all things, and this seeking is both wisdom and sickness. Sarvodaya and not self /selfishness only in and through the truth of a advaita the truth that you and I are not other than one another.”<sup>36</sup>

“Self-communication involves a realizing of the self as an evolving self, constantly constituting itself according to what is outside itself and yet simultaneously locating within itself.”<sup>37</sup>

“It is this notion of self in God and God in self. That constitutes for Gandhi self-communication or religious life or accepting God.”<sup>38</sup>

Swaraj means self-rule or kingdom or the self. It is also a process of overcoming non-self. It is also a process of realizing or becoming one with transcendental self. In the process of attaining control over one’s passion and mind one also realises the limited nature of the perceptual world. In the process, one attains self-knowledge, swaraj as the kingdom of self-underpins certain fundamental ideas of Gandhi’s thought like selflessness, Self-sacrifice, interdependence of all humans and self-situatedness or rootedness in one’s own soil.

According to Swarajist ideal, the self is related to others and to the one self through the medium of God or transcendental self. Modern civilization precisely

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<sup>36</sup> Gandhi Ramachandra, “The Swaraj of India” in Dallmayer Fred & Devy. G.N, *Between Tradition and Modernity: India’s Search for Identity*, New Delhi, Sage Publications, 1998. P.302

<sup>37</sup> Raghavendra Rao. K. “Communication against Communication: The Gandhian Critique of Modern Civilisation” in Parekh Bhikhu& Pantham Thomas, *Political Discourse; Explorations in Indian and Western Political Thought*, New Delhi, Sage Publications, 1987. P.268

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*

denies this medium of God in mutual relations and relation to one self. Instead these relationships are premised on the possibility of reason or knowledge's ability to organize human affairs for collective good. Gandhi's swarajist ideal depends on primacy of each person in relation to the others as human. It views other's existence as necessary for realization of one self. More importantly one's relation to one self is not mediated by desubjectivised knowledge of science or reason or rationally formulated schemes of justice. Swarajist society is an ideal in which one is related to the other and oneself through the medium of God/Religion in which self pursues truth by overcoming limitations of the body and the mind. It implies, in a swarajist conception, communication between humans is direct which denies the role of any impersonal force. Swarajist conception can legitimize only those institutional arrangements which do not reduce human to human communication. It does not support the use of machinery, railways etc. and nation-state in the political realm.

Gandhi follows Gita's conception of the self. There are two aspects to the self, "The self in itself as man, the imperishable substratum of our being, and the embodied self, the dehin, the spatio-temporal self joined to the psychosomatic organism comprising body, senses, mind and soul"<sup>39</sup>

Realization of embodied self requires putting order in the various forces at work in the embodied self. It requires self-knowledge and self-transformation. It produces and inner awakening in the embodied self which comes to recognize that there are deeper layers to one's being than as mere selfish individual. The actual process of putting order in the embodied soul requires vigorous disciplining of the body and the mind. Thus swaraj is nothing other than the rule that one exercises over one's mind. Home rule is self-rule or self-control. The task in life is to attain deeper and deeper levels of self-knowledge when the mind and the senses are properly disciplined. Shielding the soul from ignorance enables to it act its natural way, that is according to truth, love and Dharma. Only a purified soul can exercise soul force and hold on to truth with firmness and conviction without pray to anger and desire. Thus swaraj is seen as a state of affairs in which all factors of the human personality are brought under proper discipline, the mind ruling the sense, the soul ruling the mind

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<sup>39</sup> Parel Anthony. J, "The Doctrine of Swaraj in Gandhi's Philosophy" in Baxi Upendra, Bhikhu Parekh(ed), *Crisis and Change in Contemporary India*, New Delhi, Sage Publications, 1995. P.65.



and the self ruling the soul. The overall experience of swaraj is the attainment of a new mental condition metaneia, swaraj should be the basis of any true civilization.

Gandhian approach, as it has been shown above, does not share western liberal conception of the self as individuals attempting to maximize their pleasures. For Gandhi, human beings were necessarily interdependent and formed an organic whole. They became rational, reflective and moral being within a rich civilization created by scares of sages, saints and scientists. Every human being owed humanity to others and benefited from the world to the creation of which he contributed nothing. Since human beings were necessarily interdependent beings they do not degrade themselves or inflict psychic and moral damages on others without inflecting on themselves as well. Since human beings were interdependent, they cannot continue oppression without necessarily brutalizing themselves. This offers an alternative ethic to look at domination and discrimination both domestic and international.

Swaraj also implies not just to pursue material prosperity both personal and social. Swaraj means freedom in relation to one's self-realization or based on nature of self understood in terms of its interdependence. In the search for freedom how are we related to each other. In this context, "swaraj means swadeshi i'e., at homeness. This means being rooted in one's immediate surroundings"<sup>40</sup>.

Swaraj does not means nativism in its pejorative sense. Nativism in its pejorative sense implies unreflective, unexamined commitment to one's culture and thought. It does not consider what is valuable and worth learning from other cultures. It does not remain open to possibilities of exchange of ideas internationally and prefers security of one's home to adventurous possibilities of venturing out into the world. It remains nervous of gross cultural possibilities and cosmopolitanism.

Swarajist ideal cannot be treated as nativist in this sense. It strongly argues for being rooted in one's own environment and at the same time let the windows remain open to feel the breeze from all other cultures. This does not mean total loss of one's culture and life to alien forms.

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<sup>40</sup> Pattery George, "Pluralist Society: A Gandhian perspective", in Mukharjee Asha, Sen Sibaji Kali Bagchi K (ed) *Civil Society in Indian Culture, Indian Philosophical Studies*, Washington D.C. The Council for Research in Values; 2001. P,48.

Swaraj does not rule out the possibility of borrowing from other cultures. Cultural borrowing must freely flow from one's self, but not as an alien imposition or untruth at the core of the being or selfish imitation.

Swaraj in the context of individual and society can be realized only in a society functioning according to Dharma.

“Let there be no mistake about my conception of swaraj. It is complete independence of alien control and complete economic independence. So at one you have political independence at other the economic. It has two other ends. One of them is moral and social the corresponding end is Dharma i'e. religion in the high sense of the term... let us call this the square of swaraj which will be out of shape if any of its angles is untrue.”<sup>41</sup>

So, the ideal of swaraj is encompassed in the ideal of Dharma in the sense of control of mind over sense ingrained in social norms itself. This is the overarching framework within which economic and political independence assumes relevance. For Gandhi, swaraj does not mean mere political independence. Political independence can be realized only in a society of Dharma. Gandhi was pointing to the inherent powers in Indian society which accrue to it because of its Dharma and it makes possible the realization of Gandhian idea of Satyagraha and Non-Violence.

### **Satyagraha**

Swaraj and Satyagraha are ideas invented and made popular by Gandhi. These ideas may have their antecedents in Indian traditions. They have developed distinct connotations in his use. They have been tailored to face the onslaught of colonialism. There were others working in the field of politics during colonial rule, who were fighting against it. There were extremists, revolutionary terrorist, Muslim separatists etc. Gandhi didn't succumb to familiar strategies of either moderates or revolutionary terrorists. He was particularly skeptical of reproducing of repressive coercion, in alternative futures imagined for free India. Because swaraj for him does not mean merely freedom from alien rule, but it includes freedom from all forms of colonial domination from institutional to ideas to colonial ideas. He did not follow methods of

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<sup>41</sup> Bhattacharya Buddhadeb. "Gandhi's political Thought" in Roy Krishna (ed), *Political Philosophy: East and west*, Delhi Allied publishers, 2003 p-77.

struggle of any of the political groups' dominant in the field of politics at that time. He invented a new political weapon, satyagraha, which had grown out of his own practical experiences in fighting oppressive and unjust regimes in South Africa and India. He found the traditional method of politics of securing power and transforming society with that power as ethically undesirable. It reproduces the forms of state and politics that one is struggling against. He did not want to replace the people occupying the seat of power. He wanted to institutionalize alternative values into common institutions of society and politics through public action. The existing political groups in the field of politics, he saw, perpetuating the colonial forms of politics and model of public action. Bhikhu Parekh<sup>42</sup> mentions two ideas that traditional colonial politics rely upon: violence and rational discussion. Violence and rational discussion are limited weapons in the fight against colonialism as well as in building a society on alternative values.

For Parekh, rational discussion is a limited possibility is a weapon to fight against injustice "if a person did not care for others, had no fellow feeling for them or thought them subhuman he would not take their interests into account and would find all kinds of reason to ignore those interests. Even if he rationally appreciated the equal claim of their interests, he would lack the motive to respect and promote them".<sup>43</sup> Thus, rational discussion is a limited option to fight injustice because it appeals to mind. The mind may be convinced of the rightness of reason but heart remains away from what mind says, rational discussion cannot take to desired destination. Rational discussion does not address the possibility of range of sympathy. The limitedness of violence as a strategy to fight against injustice, Parekh interprets Gandhi is due to not merely its practical consequence, but due to its ethical undesirability in human societies.

"The use of violence derived the ontological facts that all human beings had soul that they were capable of appreciating and pursuing good and that no one was so degenerate that he could not be won over by appealing to his fellow feeling and humanity. Furthermore, human beings sincerely disagreed about what was the right thing to do, saw truth in fragment and from different angles of vision and all their

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<sup>42</sup> Parekh Bhikhu, *Gandhi: A very Short Introduction*, P-63-67

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid* P-65

beliefs were fallible and corrigible. In Gandhi's view the use of violence denied this".<sup>44</sup>

Thus, Gandhi's idea and practice of satyagraha denied fundamental premises on which colonial civil society is based upon. He denied those principles not for any strategic reason. Those principles violated the nature of Indian civilization which could function as principles for the entire humanity. One such principle is control of sense by the mind to evolve a virtuous personal conduct. Social structure should provide background and foundation to sustain such a virtuous ethical conduct. Gandhi invented alternative ideas to sustain such a society and to face the onslaught of violence of colonial civil society. Colonial civil society by its constitutional logic, makes social relations as instrumental or premised on occurring advantage. It produces violence and hatred both in social and political life. Gandhi's basic aim was to retain such a horizon necessary for virtuous conduct. His struggle against colonialism was not to achieve political power, but to retain form of life in which swaraj and satyagrah can be practiced as they sustain a form of society that functions according to Dharma, a dynamic principle of human sustenance

Swaraj and satyagraha are critical ideas in sustaining a form of life which operates according to the principles of Dharma. Traditional politics destroys such a society and brings into existence a society in which members are bound together by mutual advantage and live in mutual competition with each other, but not mutual cooperation. Gandhi's efforts had been directed at preserving such a society. Both his political struggle and programmes of social reconstruction aimed at this goal. Gandhian effort does not merely limit itself to a negative criticism of modern civilization. It also aims at reorganization of society according to principles of swaraj and satyagraha. Partha Chatterjee<sup>45</sup> reads these principles as set of political principles that made possible a cohesive nationalism organizing disparate forces. It was these principles which made dominant forces to become hegemonic. It could be also interpreted to argue that swaraj and satyagraha offer ideas and ideals to think about alternative form of organization of society. Such an organization does not take a bourgeoisie form of life. But sustaining forms of life that are counter-bourgeoisie in nature and translating them into a society built on the idea of cooperation. Hence it is

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid* P.66

<sup>45</sup> Chatterjee Partha, *Gandhi's critique of civil society*.

essential to explicate the components of idea of satyagraha in detail. It is intimately connected with two other ideas satya and ahimsa.

Satya does not mean truth of positivist cognitive science. It is not an empirical notion of truth. It is not factual conception. It is a moral notion for Gandhi; it is both social and epistemic notion. It is about truth of one's perception about others. It is also about knowing in the sense of knowing someone as this or that which has the possibility of overcoming in the course of practice. Truth as one knows it changes the course of social and political practice. It does not establish a notion of factuality which is hard and stabilized for ever which can never change. This notion of factuality is the factuality of science. For Gandhi, truth is social and moral. It is concerning what one considers it to be true at the moment. It also changes over a period of time.

It changes in course of practice. What one knows as true may be realized as false by the person in course of his actual practice. Change take place in interaction with external instance, but more importantly, it happens as form within by an appeal to a moral standard, voice of conscience or God. In course of practice one would understand it to be false or wrong because in course of practice, his inner conscience would tell him that it was wrong. His conception of truth does not lead to objectification of social life because it is a moral and experiential notion. This conception of truth overcomes subject-object dichotomy crucial to modern scientific knowledge.

There are two notions of truth for Gandhi: Absolute Truth and Relative Truth. Both are related notions. One reaches absolute truth via relative truth.

“We knew the fundamental truth we want to reach, we knew also the way. The details we do not know we shall never knew them all, because we are but very humble instruments among millions of such, moving consciously or unconsciously towards the divine event. We shall reach the Absolute Truth, if we will faithfully and steadfastly work out the relative truth as each one of us knew it.”<sup>46</sup>

“ ....for me, truth is the sovereign principle, which includes numerous other principles. This truth is not only truthfulness in word, but truthfulness in thought also,

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<sup>46</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *Letters to Mirabehn*, 20 April 1933, CW, vol,54, P,456 as quoted in *Ibid* p.179.

and not only the relative truth of our conception but the Absolute Truth, the Eternal principle that is God... But I worship God as Truth only, I have not yet found him, but I am seeking offer him.... But as long as I have not realized this Absolute Truth, so long must I held by the relative truth as I have conceived it. The relative truth must meanwhile, be my beacon, my shield and buckler”<sup>47</sup>.

Relative truth is what guides us. It is what we know it currently. This keeps on changing. We have to continuously hold on to it. We should not succumb to untruth, howsoever; tempting it may be we do not know the details of the ultimate truth. We can never know given our finiteness, we should also strive to reach ultimate truth though we may never reach it. This offers a distinct logic to public action. Truth is not merely in terms of one specific field. Being truthful in all the spheres is important. Howsoever, powerful or tempting untruth may be one should not follow state or other powerful forces coming in the guise of truth. Along the way, one would aim to reach ultimate truth. One should constantly beware of Maya, illusion or self-deception.

There is another dimension of absolute truth as ultimate reality. Truth is ultimate reality

“Dharma derived from dhr (to be firm, to sustain or uphold), refers to the moral law which governs the cosmos. The essence or basis of this cosmic law, according to the Hindu tradition, is Satya (truth)”<sup>48</sup> It implies that Satya is what pervades entire reality. It is both an ontological entity and moral norm. As an ontological entity, truth pervades all aspects of reality. Ultimate reality is absolute truth which is the basis or essence of Dharma. So no field of human action can be treated as excluded in application of ethical principles.

Thus, truth and Dharma are identical. Relative truth is what one holds to be true at any one moment or current opinion. Humans are finite beings. They cannot know truth in its infinite dimension and on the basis of it. It is perfect to act on the basis of one’s current conception of truth. This is what humans knew and do at the moment. This might ultimately lead one to final truth. Satya’s root is sat, means being abiding actual, right, wise, the essence of reality what is and what ought to be.<sup>49</sup> Thus,

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<sup>47</sup> *An Autobiography* in *Collected Works*, vol-39, p-4 as quoted in *Ibid* p.179.

<sup>48</sup> Panthom Thomas, Habermas, “Practical Discourse and Gandhi’s Satyagraha,” P, 300.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*.

truth also has a connotation of being sincere, pure, good, effectual or valid. On the one hand, there is a conception of truth in the sense of what one currently holds to be true which is backed by the force of personal conviction and the idea of truth as absolute truth. As one approaches truth as ultimate reality, one has to approach it from one's own personal point of view. The very idea of truth acts as a moral critique of forces of oppression and domination. The critique is rooted and located in one's being as a person as against forces of domination and oppression. The critique aims at not only the transformation of the world, but also the transformation of one self. It means a process of transcending delusion and self-deception. This truth helps as an instrument of moral critique of civilization based on illusions and false hoods.

As Pantham puts it satyagraha is an experiment for the introduction of truth and non-violence into the practico-political field. It was meant to rupture the dichotomy between political expediency and ethical principles. It unites the practical and the ethical.<sup>50</sup>

As it was discussed earlier, one can know relative truth only, given the fact that humans are finite beings. They can know truth from their perspective only. Their perspective is also limited in the sense that it is clouded by illusions. One cannot know truth from others point of view since humans are finite in their perspective, the only possibility is to view others actions as emanating from them as seekers of truth. If one considers others actions as being flowered by untruth, one wouldn't hesitate from using violence against others. As human beings are aware of their finiteness, they ought to believe that in each human there resides God, they shouldn't use violence. Those who believe in truth, they wouldn't use violent means to achieve their goals because it is violation of other as humans.

For Gandhi, Ahimsa in the limited sense means non-injury to others. This is a negative connotation of the term. The positive connotation of it means love or charity.

"In its negative form it (ahimsa) means not injuring any living being whether by body or mind. I may not therefore, hurt the person of any wrong-doer or bear any ill will to him and so cause him mental suffering. In its positive form, ahimsa means the largest love, the greatest charity. If I am a follower of ahimsa, I must love my enemy or a

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid p.300-01

stranger to me as I would my wrong doing father or son. This active ahimsa necessarily includes truth and fearlessness.”<sup>51</sup>

Non-violence in its positive sense transforms the logic of social movements. Non-violent action requires a relationship of love towards one’s enemy.

Non-violence as attitude overcomes the binary logic of social movements. Social movements posit a world of victors and victims, or oppressors and oppressed. In this world, each recognizes the other as oppressor or oppressed. It distorts the self image of a person as one becomes either oppressor or oppressed. The mutual perception also interpenetrates into each other’s vision, thereby distorting each other’s self-images and image of others. This is where non-violence as a weapon of satyagrahi transforms social and political world of colonialism. Colonialism with its objective knowledge of population shapes mutual perceptions of people. It introduces scientific ideas of society which unfolds the logic of the oppressor and the oppressed.

Non-violence, in its positive sense offers avenues to overcome these colonial perceptions. At the heart of non-violence, there lies an idea of self-sacrificing love. Non-violence implies that attitude of love towards even enemies. It is not an egoistic love, but a self-sacrificing love. It includes a satyagrahi should not bear ill will even towards someone who caused harm. It brings into being hatred between people involved in a situation. A satyagrahi should have a pure heart. He should not have malice towards even his enemies. An impure heart does not help one to reach truth. Truth is clouded by impurities of the heart. A satyagrahi overcomes the social and political divisions with the purity of heart. This is possible only by self-sacrificing love. Self-sacrificing love is critical to non-violence and satyagrahi. Thus, non-violence in its positive connotation transcends social divisions and hatreds and created by colonial politics.

“You do not become non-violent by merely saying, “I shall not use force.” It must be felt in the heart. There must be within you an upwelling of love and pity towards the wrong-doer. When there is that feeling. It will express itself through some

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<sup>51</sup> Iyer, Raghavan N, *The moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*, New Delhi, OUP, 2000, Pp.179-180.



action. It may be a sign, a glance, even silence. But such as it is it will melt the heart of the wrong doer and check the wrong.”<sup>52</sup>

Thus, non-violence is an ocean of compassion. It is a feeling which melts the hearth of the opponent. There by transforming the situation that one is located in.

Satyagraha, for Gandhi, is a method of transforming socio-political relations by conscious practice of a group of highly disciplined individuals. Satyagraha is consciously formulated to overcome the form imposed by colonial politics. Colonial politics are based on competitive pursuit of power which being amenity and ill-will between different groups of society. Gandhi consciously attempted overcoming that logic of normal politics. He tried going beyond that logic by the ideas of satyagraha and swaraj. These principles are evolved by Gandhi to preserve and foster a form of society in which Individuals ability to morally influence others remain as fundamental to its constitution. Dharma as the essence of moral law constituting social order, for Gandhi, should not be erased and replaced by a mechanical society being guided by forces of profit and wealth. Thus, for Gandhi his ideas and practice essentially are intended to sustain a kind of traditional social order in which moral still informs political, economic and social, unlike a modern mechanical society.

### **Civic Community: Women and Dalits**

One of the key questions of nationalism was integration of women and dalits within its fold. The formation of community was subject of endless debates with in the times of nationalism. Gandhi has been subjected to intense scrutiny both from anti caste activists and women activists regarding Gandhi`s approach to resolution of this question. He did not have any comrades on this issue. He had to take immense pain in putting across his views. The contention here is that Gandhi stands on a different ground from all those who were inspired by rationalist epistemology. He differed from nationalist to feminists to anti caste activists. The specificity of his view emanates from his concern to sustain a form of life in which each individual retains his capacity to morally influence others which is in contrast to individual being automated to respond in ways he is expected to respond. He is programmed to respond the way system desires him. In contrast to this, he is an autonomous

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<sup>52</sup> Parekh Bhikhu, *Colonialism, Tradition and Reform: An Analysis of Gandhi`s Political Discourse*, New Delhi, Sage Publication, 1989 P-130.

individual. He is autonomous from incipient forms of power - money, politics and knowledge. The power of money and politics distorts society in such a way that people would abandon their project of self-reliance and get wedded to those who pursue power and money. Modern knowledge distorts society in mere fundamental way by altering one's self-image via production of rational knowledge. Rational knowledge would eventually become rational self-knowledge, thereby transforming one's self-image and image of others. Gandhi's main concern had been to sustain a form of life where individual would be able to influence others. This is clear in addressing the question of integration of woman and Dalits into the civic community.

Along with colonialism, scientific knowledge of society had taken hold over educated elite. They were influenced by early positivists. Educated elite started a new comprehension of society. They understood society either as a machine or an organism, the two different metaphors for conceptualizing society. This brings an end to subject-centric perspective or social knowledge as produced by subject himself. It brought into existence objective knowledge of society produced via scientific study and the disciplines like Colonial Anthropology. This colonial knowledge produced an image of society as consisting of variety of social groups and racial groups. This knowledge refashioned the self of the individuals as they view themselves in increasingly according to the perceptual images shaped by such knowledge. Such knowledge also carried into native societies theories of liberation. Theories of liberation had inevitable structure of constituting society as victors and victims or dominant and the dominated. It altered experiential realm of public politics. People increasingly started viewing themselves victims of oppression or persecution. For instance, Hindus, of late, view themselves as victims of appeasement of Muslims by secular state. Similarly, Dalits view themselves as victims of upper-caste domination. These are in one sense, theoretical ideas. These ideas percolated themselves down to the way structure of public experience is constituted. These imaginations radically alter the moral economy of society. Imagination itself is power. Imagining oneself as a victim radically weakens his/her moral strength. These structures of imagination were purchased and inculcated in native society. Being a victim in one's self-image inflicts fractures at the centre of one's vision. It affects significant others as well. The others will be forced to alter their self-image because they had to buy the images mocked at them. It alters their self-image and distorts it by bringing guilt in it. Thus,

colonialism undermines the self-confidence of a society by altering itself via rational production of knowledge. Otherwise, one would be secure in one's identity and be tolerant towards others if one is strongly situated. Gandhi's negotiation with Dalit and women's questions is to precisely resist the self-images of society conditioned by colonialism and sustain a form of society in which one is secure and one is guided by Truth.

### **Gandhi and the Women Question**

Gandhi rejects objectification of women in sexual terms. That is to imagine a woman as an object of sex is the shortest route to degradation. Western societies produced an imagination of women as sexual objects or as victims of sexual oppression. On the other hand Gandhi considers them as source of strength and moral character. "Gandhi saw women not as objects of reform and humanitarianism but as self-conscious subjects who could, if they choose, become arbiters of their own destiny."<sup>53</sup>

Sita, Draupadi and Damayanthi are three ideals of Indian womanhood that Gandhi repeatedly invoked to talk about the strength of women in India.

"They were not to consider themselves abalas but rather to be like Draupadhi a symbol of robust independence who could bend even mighty Bhima himself to her imperious will form Sita who was "gentleness incarnate..... a delicate flower", to Draupadi, a gaint oak in her strength and resoluteness, to Olive Doke (a young girl who had worked among the unclad primitive Negro tribes of Africa) a symbol of absolute fearlessness, courage and will to serve a cause."<sup>54</sup>

Gandhi advocates psychological fearlessness courage and valour for women. Gandhi thought it was more a matter of psychological fear then physical weakness.

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<sup>53</sup> Kishwar Madhu, "Gandhi on Women," *Economic and Political weekly*, Vol. 20, No. 40 (Oct. 5, 1985) P. 1691

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

“Let no one dismiss the example of Sita as legendary... it was that higher type of valour which he wanted Indian womanhood to cultivate”..... The real strength of a woman was her consciousness of her purity and chastity. In any case she should prefer to give up her life rather than her virtue. Women should be self reliant as Draupahi was “who will call Draupadhi dependent, Draupadhi who, when the pandavas failed to protect her saved herself by an appeal to lord Krishna”<sup>55</sup>.

Gandhi preferred femininity over masculinity in public life. He preferred feminine courage to certain kind of manly aggression because he primarily saw women as moral force in public life. His vision stressed the superiority of women’s suffering and self sacrifice rather than aggressive assertion and forceful intervention to protect their interests and to gain political power.

His perspective is unique because he viewed women as a person with moral character not merely as object of sex. The extremity that one encounters is his defense of chastity. This is basically to drive home point that there is a sharp line between sexual licentiousness and the moral strength that one gains from chaste behaviour. Chaste behavior unfolds immense courage and strength which is being destroyed by sexual licentiousness. In other words, for Gandhi, the non-sexual touch and love is the core for sustenance of civilization conduct. Non-sexual love and friendship is the source of creativity and joy which is being destroyed by sexual motivations. Many critics did not get it right. For Gandhi, it is important for him to retain women’s way of seeing or women’s epistemic perspective. Under colonialism, masculinity is privileged and women had been encouraged to model themselves on masculine line. Gandhi wanted to retain women way of seeing.

### **Gandhi on Dalit Question:**

Gandhi’s approach to the question of untouchability and caste has been most widely criticized. Very articulate voice among all of them is Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Ambedkar’s disillusionment with Gandhian politics was due to the latter’s outwardly progressive appearance although it remained status quo ist on caste disabilities in its entirety. “A vocal critic of untouchability Gandhi was equally emphatic in defending

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

the institution of caste. This can be attributed to two important things. Here one has to bear in mind Gandhi's own commitment to the institutions of caste varnashrama dharma.<sup>56</sup>

Gandhi's approach to caste needs to be looked at from the perspective that has been unfolding in the previous sections. Over the last half a century the discourse of discrimination against untouchability took a turn and it is increasingly being articulated in caste-wars. The language of caste wars that Gandhi strongly detested, because it is a question of epistemic and moral perceptions. The inhumanity of the practice of untouchability can be articulated very well in the traditional language of humiliation. When this language gets transformed into caste wars, it merely refers to the power of the hegemonic without actually articulating a moral critique of it. Thus, Gandhi's central concern was that he did not want the traditional language of moral critique to degenerate into a mechanical language of battle between forces. He wanted to retain a frame of moral critique to question inhuman practice. He didn't want that frame to degenerate into a language of power. Hence, he defended the Varnashrama Dharma while strongly criticizing the practice of untouchability.

"Hinduism will once again shine forth if such senseless restrictions are abolished, the pristine varna system is resurrected and the distinction of high and low are banished."<sup>57</sup>

"At one time in India people used to consciously follow this law and thus lived in peace. One accepted the calling of one's varna and was satisfied in its pursuit of general welfare."<sup>58</sup>

Thus, varna system is not about high and low in social hierarchy. It is about doing one's profession and living in peace. One's profession is what gives raise to an ethic. But due to spread of modern competition based on selfishness, varnashrama dharma has been coming to an end. Gandhi argues for its revival. As the end of varnashrama dharma could mean the end of a society based on ethical reflection and emergence of a mechanical modern society. That is why he pleaded for its retention.

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<sup>56</sup> Rao, Parimala. V, "Gandhi, untouchability and the post-colonial predicament: A Note," *Social Scientist*, Vol. 37, No. ½, Jan-Feb -2009, P. 64.

<sup>57</sup> Chakrabarthy Bidyut, *Social and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*, Milton Park, Routledge, USA 2006, p. 155

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid* Pp. 155-56

“But if you discover that you will not be allowed into the temple along with your Harijan Companions, then if you have the living belief that I have that untouchability is wrong you will shun that temple as you shun a scorpions of fire. You will then believe with me that such a temple is not inhabited by God.”<sup>59</sup>

He denounced untouchability and invoked the authority of God against it. He questions the idea of pollution of human birth. He questions the idea of pollution, but he did not argue for the erasure of the identity of the caste. He would want that they should retain their identity, while at the same time, should reform some aspects of their culture. It was based on the principle that there is God residing in everyone.

Thus, Gandhi’s resolution of the question of women and dalits vividly brings to the fore his basic perspective. It makes possible autonomous moral reflection of each individual without turning him into an object of control by systemic forces. It is also essential that environment for such idea of moral critique to be possible must be created. The sharp contrast to this is an automated society. Gandhi did not go with rationalists whose foot steps are unconsciously followed by contemporary anti caste activists and feminists.

### **Theorizing Gandhian Ideas:**

In the previous sections, it has been attempted to argue for availability of ideas of certain traditional social order, the centre of which is a traditional moral critique of social institution and alien tendencies in political field. The availability of moral critique is crucial to the critique of oppressive institution. The other aspect of it is that it sustains traditional social order as moral critique includes everyone part of the community. Here, there are different kinds of articulations of Gandhian ideas in theoretical terms. Some would articulate him as an anti-modernist others would look at him as critical modernist. Still others would redescribe him as having resources to replenish liberalism. Influential stream of thinking in philosophy had interpreted him as a sort of communitarian. However, neither of the interpretations are exclusivist in the sense that same concerns are shared by different streams. The moulding of concerns varies on the basis of futures that each stream imagines. However, the discussion in the following focuses on one such stream which is loosely called

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid* p.157

communitarian interpretation of Gandhi. Mac Intyre interprets Aristotle to remould western tradition in communitarian fashion. Some thinkers<sup>60</sup> availed the resources of this tradition to interpret Gandhi. In the following key postulates of this tradition will be discussed with relevance to Gandhi.

Miri Puts Gandhian view of politics as following:-

- i. The fulfillment of a human life lies in the achievement of the higher degree of integrity or swaraj.
- ii. Such achievement can only be the result of a common pursuit in which the community as a whole is engaged in setting goals which are seen not just as satisfying the selfish desires and interests of individuals or groups constituting the community, but as embodying common good which enhance, as it were, the life of the community.
- (iii) Such a common pursuit requires a vigorous exercise of the virtues, for example honesty, courage, intelligence, temperance, patience and so on.
- (iv) But the virtues are not just means (in the utilitarian sense) to the achievement of the common good in so far the pursuit of the good for man, for what constitutes the good for man is a complete human life lived at its best, and the exercise of the virtues is a necessary and central part of such a life, not just preparatory exercise to secure such a life.
- (v) An ideal political community is one which is engaged in the common pursuit of such common goods.
- (vi) Finally, such a community will naturally be characterized by harmony, rather than conflict and thus violence will not be a natural part of such a community's life.<sup>61</sup>

This is a specific rendering of Gandhi's ideas in communitarians fashion by Mini. The role of community in the pursuit of common goals is very crucial. Pursuit of such common goals itself constitutes the objective of political life. Virtues are not

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<sup>60</sup>Miri Mrinal, Identity and the Moral life, Puri Bindu, Gandhi and the Moral life, The Self and the Other: Liberalism and Gandhi, *Philosophia*, 39, 2011, published online, 20<sup>th</sup> July 2011. Gier, Nicholas F., "Non Violence as a Civic virtue: Gandhi and Reformed liberalism," *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, Vol. 7, No, 1/3 Feb, 2003.

<sup>61</sup>Miri Mrinal, pp. 101-02.

merely for the purpose of realizing common good, but exercise of virtues itself is an eliminable part of good life. Life led without virtue is not a good life at all.

Gier<sup>62</sup> calls him a communitarian liberal. Gandhi called procedural liberalism a nominal democracy and replaces its social atomism with a concept of situated autonomy. Gandhi calls procedural liberalism as a nominal democracy and expresses reformed liberalism as either Purna Swaraj (integral) democracy or Ramarajya (sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority. Gier calls that Gandhi fits into what Macedo has called situated autonomy that is one being thoroughly sensitive to social context.<sup>63</sup> Macedo states “the autonomous individual is a socially embedded individual one who understands his intellectual and cultural inheritance but is determined to make that inheritance his own by fashioning an individual character and life plan, and turning his participation in social practices into performances expressive of his individuality”<sup>64</sup>.

Gier argues that Gandhi pointed to social atomism implicit in liberalism or morally neutral procedural liberalism. He replaces with a notion of situated autonomy in which virtuous life is important to fill the vacuum of liberal atomism. It is being replaced fill up by a notion of virtuous life led by being part of and closely tied to social context. Gier argues that non-violence is one of the personal virtues. Virtuous life is essential for socially meaningful life. Gier argues that such a notion of virtuous life can be accommodated within liberalism. For him, there is no contradiction between communitarianism and liberalism. This version takes many shades which might include an anti-modernist interpretation.

Thus, Gandhi is interpreted to yield a communitarian conception from which one can draw ideas for civil society.

For him, civil society does not mean being part of modernist institutions because modernist institutions atomize individuals and are not oriented to pursuit of integrated life.

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<sup>62</sup> See, Gier.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Macedo, Stephen, *Liberal Virtues: Citizenship, Virtue and Community in Liberal Constitutionalism*, Oxford: OUP.1990 as quoted in Gier.



Civil society can include associations and institutions that encourage an idea of politics beyond interest: politics transcending interest.

Civil society includes communities of various sorts fostered to promote collective well-being. In the process they enter into conflict with modernist centralized state and alienating tendencies within community.

Civil society's task is cultivation of virtues. Cultivation of virtues is central to realization of good life. Cultivation of virtue is not placed in instrumental relation with good of community, but as of intrinsic worth for the realization of good of the community.