

## **CHAPTER-I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Gandhi's philosophy of *ahimsā* and *satyāgraha* are based on certain metaphysical presuppositions. There is no denying the fact that Gandhi's life and thought was remarkably influenced by *Vedānta* philosophy, in particular Advaita *Vedānta*. Undifferentiated consciousness as the material and efficient cause of the world is the basic idea behind the theory of 'oneness of life'. Gandhi's metaphysical presuppositions included a firm belief in the existence of God, original goodness of human beings, human perfectibility etc.

Gandhi's philosophy may be categorized as 'transformative metaphysics'. This has both the elements of 'descriptive metaphysics' and 'speculative metaphysics' and is much more than these. This kind of a metaphysics brings a new dimension to experience, defines and changes human beings relation with society and has major influence on content and structure of existential consciousness. Richard Rorty and P. Strawson have elaborately discussed descriptive and revisionary models of metaphysics.

In an answer to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan's question as to what defines the role of religion in a man's life, Gandhi replied that it is an individual's contact with society that determines the nature of religion in his life. 'Social contact' is defined by one's concern for the welfare fellow human beings who are suffering, less fortunate and fallen.

This present research after a through study of Gandhi's understanding of *ahimsā* and *satyāgraha*, tries to locate the matrix of multidimensional variations in the principle of non-violence and *satyāgraha* while negotiating socio-political transformative movements. This is the core objective of my research. I have tried to map the conceptual variations in the principles of *ahimsā* and

*satyāgraha* from the thinking of Martin Luther King Jr., Aung San Suu Kyi and Dalai Lama. I have also tried to locate some of the socio-political transformative movements across the world which are based on Gandhi's philosophy.

Spiritual aspects in Gandhi's philosophy and teachings are now a part of the intellectual heritage of mankind. In his thought and action, Gandhi had adopted spirituality as a means to guide political action and to cause major social change. His *Satyāgraha* is believed to generate spiritual force, which he termed as the truth force. It resulted from practice of non-violence and could be applied for resourcing conflicts for causes in different situations. Non-violence in Gandhian thought becomes effortlessly both an intrinsic as well as an instrumental value. Non-violence and violence refer to good and evil in human condition. Gandhi's goal is to drive evil out by cultivating the good. Violence stands for all kinds of evil to be avoided.

Gandhi's call for non-violence is not quiet. There are movements at global, national and regional all over the world. Most of the movements have taken influences from Gandhi's writings and experiments. As violence raises the requirements and demands for non-violence paradoxically increases. Although non-violence has a long history, yet it is associated with Mahatma Gandhi's name for the simple reason that Gandhi has constantly and systematically practiced non-violence. Gandhi had not only established the broader importance of non-violence as a means but also gave a new momentum to the elimination of violence.

From the Gandhian notion of non-violence, one of the most fundamental question is that what is the importance of Gandhi's non-violence theory in the

recent decades? What are the conditions in which the method of non-violence can be successful?

Today Gandhian non-violence has a very important meaning. Non-violence is as much a fundamental principle of Jainism as of Buddhism. Jainism has declared *ahimsā* as the highest religion, the highest duty of mankind. Buddhism also has a great prominence to *ahimsā*, but the place of *ahimsā* in Jainism is central. Gandhi's theory of non-violence transcends all regional, racial, religious and cultural barriers. *Ahimsā* is as old as the *Vedās* and the *Upaniṣads*. In the *Gītā* the teaching given to Arjuna was the lesson given to all mankind. When Gandhi was acquainted with the teachings of the *Gītā* he felt that it was not only a historical work but also as valuable as to the present instance. The renunciation of the *Gītā* is the acid test of faith. In the *Gītā*, it is said that performing action without attachment man can attain the supreme goal. In the practice of non-violence and *Satyāgraha* Gandhi has repeated the same thing as well. To the good one should be good and to the evil also one should be good in order to make them good because non-violence at all means respect for all beings.

As Raghavan N. Iyer wrote in his book *The Moral and Political Thought of M.K Gandhi* "what Gandhi wished to stress was the potency in society of what he called 'soul force'. While brute-force is based on egotism, which creates conflict and misery, soul-force is based on love, trust and humility, which create harmony and true happiness."<sup>1</sup> According to Professor Akeel Bilgrami, "the act of truth seeking is an intentional act. One indeed *desires* to know truth. This desire is something dispositional in our nature of being in the world. It gets manifested in various forms of attitudes that are necessary for existence as for

the wellbeing of all. Knowing is truth centric, and is well expressible in the performance of various activities. Truth as a normative principle guides action. Therefore, truth seeking is an endeavour that each of us undertake in our everyday activities. That is one should have *agraha* on truth – *satyāgraha*. It is important that we need to examine, in what sense Gandhi was a *seeker* of truth.”<sup>2</sup> Truth, for Gandhi, is all pervasive. Truth for Gandhi is not as purely philosophical concept, but as a concept in the complex maze of myriad action in the practical life undertaken by him. Truth has to be practised in every practical dimension of life is the central point of Gandhian thoughts.<sup>3</sup>

Gandhi’s philosophy of *Satyāgraha* is a natural outcome of the supreme concept of truth. *Satyāgraha* is the exercise of the purest soul-force against all injustice, oppression and exploitation. For Gandhi acts of overt physical violence are only a small part of overall violence. In addition to acts of overt physical violence, Gandhi primarily emphasizes multidimensional foundational structures and diverse kinds of violence: economic violence, psychological violence, linguistic violence, social violence, cultural violence, religious violence, educational violence and so forth. We cannot use violence to overcome violence and achieve non-violence. Because violence leads to more violence and we become deceived in endless brutal cycles of growing violence. He believed that *satyāgraha* is an infallible means for resolving all social, political and economic evils. The basic aim of the *satyāgraha* movement is to educate the masses, make them conscious of their exploitation, prepare them into a broad front, provide them with a powerful organization and finally lead them in their struggle against the exploiters. Gandhi’s *satyāgraha* method fulfils

all the necessary requirements for a revolution, no matter whether that revolution is non-violent or violent.

*Satyāgraha* as representing the embodiment of Gandhi's concept of 'Truth' could sum up everything. *Satyāgraha* is Gandhi's uncompromising insistence on Truth. According to him his religion is based on truth and non-violence. Truth is his God and non-violence is the means to reach Him. "*Ahimsā* and Truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are like the two sides of a coin, or rather a smooth unstamped metallic disc."<sup>4</sup> Gandhi attaches an encompassing sense to *Satyāgraha* that this becomes the vehicle of Truth that is God himself. Gandhi's doctrine of non-violent struggle is persuasion. Gandhi did not believe that violence was ever 'necessary' he thought that non-violence would even have worked against Hitler. It does not seem that Gandhi actually considered violence immoral, since he said that it is better to be violent than to be coward, if one has not the strength of non-violence. "The practice of *ahimsā* requires an inner strength which can only be generated by a living faith in God. A sincere faith in God will make man see that all human beings are fellow-beings and essentially one."<sup>5</sup> So let us just say that we have less faith in the efficacy and universal appropriateness of non-violence. However, non-violence is the only way to genuinely achieve progress, and it is really the element of persuasion that enables it to do this. In violent action persuasion is really beside the point: when you destroy your enemy, it does not make any difference than what they think. In Gandhi's *Satyāgraha*, or non-violent struggle, the whole purpose of the encounter is winning over the heart and mind of your 'enemy'. Romain Rolland said, "No one has the greater horror of passivity than this tireless fighter; who is

one of the most heroic incarnations of men who resists. The soul of his movement is active resistance, which finds outlet not in violence; but in the active force of love, faith and sacrifice. This threefold energy is expressed in the word *satyāgraha*.”<sup>6</sup> There is violence and suffering in non-violent struggle, but instead of attempting to inflict these upon the ‘enemy’, we allow the ‘enemy’ to inflict them on us without resistance. Before this happens, however, before the non-violent struggler sets out, in effect, to provoke a confrontation, the issue must be made as clear as possible to the ‘enemy’. We should say to the oppressor we think you are doing an injustice, but instead of seeking to punish and make you suffer for that, we will take the suffering and punishment on ourselves, to persuade you of our good will, sincerity and ‘truthfulness’. A non-violent struggle is rendered pointless if it is ever conceived as an attempt to force a certain view point into effect. The opponent of the struggle may well fill that way, but it is upto the non-violent people to be as convincingly non-coercive as to be persuasive of the rightness of their cause. Gopinath Dhawan, a Gandhian scholar writes; “The idea that underlies non-cooperation is that even the evil-doer does not succeed in his purpose without carrying the victim with him if necessary by force, and that it is the duty of the *Satyāgrahi* to suffer for the consequences of resistance and not to yield to the will of the tyrant. If the victim continues to tolerate the wrong by passive acquiescence, if he enjoys benefits acquiring from that wrong or wrong-doer directly or indirectly the victim is an accessory to the tyrant’s misdeed.”<sup>7</sup>

The greatest discovery of the twentieth century political thought is the discovery of *Satyāgraha* as the weapon of non-violent political action aimed at bringing about socio-political change. *Satyāgraha* is the positive doctrine of

resistance. It is not violent resistance. It is sharply distinguished from violent resistance in the sense that non-violent resistance is the peculiar attribute that attends this resistance. A *Satyāgrahi* does not inflict pain on the adversary, he does not seek his destruction. In the use of *Satyāgrahi* there is no ill will whatever. But it is not passive merely because it is non-violent. The moral resistance of *Satyāgraha* is as active and determined as the violent resistance of a traditional fighter. Non-violence, for a passive resister is a matter of convenience and expediency, it is a matter of policy and may be given up as and when violence proves or has the chance of proving more suitable or convenient for a particular occasion. A *Satyāgrahi*, on the other hand accepts non-violence as a matter of principle as a way of life. *Satyāgraha* is based on truth. Truth is the very substance of the soul. That is why this force is called *Satyāgraha*. The soul is informed with knowledge. If someone gives up pain through ignorance we shall win him through love.

Every human being is blessed with unique and unconquerable spirit of excellence of higher vision of life as ordained by God within the great force of non-violence. Though the concept of non-violence literally means absence of violence or negation of violence, in Gandhi's philosophy it acquires a positive nuance pointing to its features which can be practiced in one's life and the life of collectivity. The main and highest source of its positive meanings lies in its equations with truth and truth being further an equivalence of God. Gandhi expresses the relation of man to God thus, "Man is not God, but neither is he different from the light of God."<sup>8</sup> The logic of truth — God equation is preceded by the meaning of love embedded in a concept of non-violence which, for Ramchandra Gandhi, is essentially non-injury as the right translation of *ahimsā*.



He writes in Mahatma Gandhi's translation, '*ahimsā*' is 'non-violence', the progressive minimization of coercion in the conduct of human affairs, the force wearance of animal slaughter and cruelty to animals as far as is possible in the struggle for honourable survival at least this, the whole exercise of restraint requiring to be set in context of deepening and growing love of all creatures and their common creator God.

Gandhi holds that true democracy can never come through violent means as the natural corollary to their use would be to remove all opposition through the suppression or extermination of the antagonists. That does not make the individual freedom. Individual freedom can have the fullest play only under a regime of unadulterated *ahimsā*. "Upto the nineteenth century, violence was regarded as strictly instrumental, a means that needed an end to justify it. Whereas most political thinkers since Hobbes have accepted the need for self-preservation and have sought for a principle of political legitimacy that would justify the use of force to secure this end, a few like Kant have said that to maintain one's own life is a conditional duty but it is an unconditional duty not to take the life of another who does not injure one."<sup>9</sup>

## **1.1. An Introduction to the Life and Philosophy of Martin Luther King Jr., Aung San Suu Kyi and the Dalai Lama**

### **1.1.1. Martin Luther King Jr.**

Martin Luther King Jr. was born on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1929. His grandfather began the family's long tenure as pastors of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, serving from 1914 to 1931. Later his father has served the same and from 1960 until his death Martin Luther acted as co-pastor. Martin Luther

attended segregated public schools in Georgia, graduating from high school at the age of fifteen; he received the B. A. degree in 1948 from Morehouse College of Atlanta. After three years of theological study at Crozer Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania where he was elected president of a predominantly white senior class. With a fellowship won at Crozer, he enrolled in graduate studies at Boston University, completing his residence for the doctorate in 1953 and receiving the degree in 1955.

Gandhi was not alone in his faith in non-violence. Martin Luther King Jr. also maintained the same belief. He was black; a descendent of the African slaves. When he was a young child he played with the neighbour's White Children, but when the time came to go to school he went to one school and they went to another. This raised in his mind the question of inequality in the society.

King told that non-violence cuts off the chain of hate. By the word 'agape' he means that it is a love in which the individual look for not only of his own good, but the good of his neighbour and it begins by loving others for their sake. Agape creates no distinction between friend and enemy. It means love in action. Agape is a willingness to sacrifice for others. King's point was that the first step in loving our enemies is developing and maintaining the power to forgive. It is that kind of agape love that does not divide the world into worthy and unworthy people, but builds and restores relationships by helping us see all people as our neighbours and co-creators. Thus agape means recognition of the fact that all livings are interrelated and all humanity is involved in the process of brotherhood. We should love because returning hate for hate multiplies hate.

### **1.1.2. Aung San Suu Kyi**

Aung San Suu Kyi's struggle is one of the most extraordinary examples of the civil rights movement in recent decades. Suu Kyi came into politics to work for democratisation. The United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution in December, 2008 condemning the human rights situation in Burma and call for SuuKyi's release. In 1996 she talks about the prodemocracy movement in Rangoon.

Aung San Suu Kyi is also known as Daw Aung San Suu Kyi born on 19<sup>th</sup> June 1945 in Myanmar. Daughter of Aung San and Khin Kyi is the winner of the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1991. Suu Kyi was two years old when her father was died. Her mother was appointed as ambassador to India. For further study she attended the Oxford University where she met her husband Michael Aris. When she returned to Burma to nurse her mother, there the mass slaughter of protesters against the brutal and unresponsive rule of military strongman U Ne Win led her to speak out against him and to begin a non-violent struggle for democracy and human rights.

In July 1989 the military government of the newly named Union of Myanmar placed Suu Kyi under house arrest in Yangon. The military offered to free her if she agreed to leave Myanmar, but she refused to do so. The newly formed group with she became affiliated, the NLD, won more than 80 percent of the parliamentary seats that were contested in 1990, but the results of that election were ignored by the military government.

### **1.1.3. Dalai Lama**

The word Dalai Lama means different things to different people as Dalai Lama has mentioned in his book *Freedom in Exile*. To some it means that the Dalai Lama is a living Buddha, the earthly manifestation of *Avalokiteshvara*, Bodhisattva of Compassion. For some others it means God King. During the late 1950's it meant that he is a Vice President of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China. But when the Dalai Lama escaped into exile he was called a counter revolutionary and a parasite. But none of these are the ideas of the fourteenth Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso. To him Dalai Lama is a title that signifies the office he holds. He thought that he himself is just a human being a Tibetan who chooses to be a Buddhist monk.

His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, describes himself as a simple Buddhist monk. He is the spiritual leader of Tibet. He was born on 6 July 1935, to a farming family, in a small hamlet located in Taktser, Amdo, Northeastern Tibet. At the very young age of two, the child who was named Lhamo Dhondup at that time was recognized as the reincarnation of the previous 13th Dalai Lama, Thubten Gyatso.

The Dalai Lamas are believed to be manifestations of *Avalokiteshvara* or Chenrezig, the Bodhisattva of Compassion and the patron saint of Tibet. Bodhisattvas are believed to be enlightened beings who have postponed their own nirvana and chosen to take rebirth in order to serve humanity.

As the Dalai Lama has pointed out that if our minds are dominated by anger, we will lose the best part of human intelligence, wisdom and the ability

to decide between right and wrong. Anger is one of the most serious problems facing the world today. Hated and fighting cannot bring happiness to anyone, even to the winners of battles. Violence always produces misery and thus is essentially counter-productive.

## **1.2. Place of the Proposed Post Gandhian Thinkers and their Contribution in the Socio-political Transformative Movements**

In 1954, Martin Luther King became pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. Always a strong worker for civil rights for members of his race, King was, by this time, a member of the executive committee of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the leading organization of its kind in the nation. He was ready, then, early in December 1955, to accept the leadership of the first great Negro non-violent demonstration of contemporary times in the United States, the bus boycott described by Gunnar Jahn in his presentation speech in honour of the laureate. The boycott lasted 382 days. On December 21, 1956, after the Supreme Court of the United States had declared unconstitutional the laws requiring segregation on buses, Negroes and whites rode the buses as equals. During these days of boycott, King was arrested, his home was bombed, he was subjected to personal abuse, but at the same time he emerged as a Negro leader of the first rank.

In 1957 he was elected president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization formed to provide new leadership for the now burgeoning civil rights movement. The ideals for this organization he took from Christianity; its operational techniques from Gandhi. At the age of thirty-five,

Martin Luther King, Jr., was the youngest man to have received the Nobel Peace Prize of his time. When notified of his selection, he announced that he would turn over the prize money of \$54,123 to the persistence of the civil rights movement.

Suu Kyi was freed from house arrest in July 1995, although restrictions were placed on her ability to travel outside Yangon. The following year she attended the NLD party congress, but the military government continued to harass both her and her party. In 1998 she announced the formation of a representative committee that she declared was the country's legitimate ruling parliament. Michael Aris died in London in early 1999. Prior to his death, the military junta denied him a visa to visit Suu Kyi in Myanmar and Suu Kyi, anticipating that she would not be allowed to return the country if she left, remained in Myanmar.

The junta once again placed Suu Kyi under house arrest from September 2000 to May 2002, apparently for having violated restrictions by attempting to travel outside Yangon. Following clashes between the NLD and pro-government demonstrators in 2003, the government returned her to house arrest. In 2009 a United Nations body declared her detention illegal under Myanmar's own law. In 2008 the conditions of her house arrest were somewhat relaxed, allowing her to receive some magazines as well as letters from her children.

In May 2009, shortly before her most recent sentence was to be completed, Suu Kyi was arrested and charged with having breached the terms of her house arrest after an intruder entered her house compound and spent two nights there. In August she was convicted and sentenced to three years in prison, though the

sentence immediately was reduced to 18 months and she was allowed to serve it while remaining under house arrest. At the time of her conviction, the belief was widespread both within and outside Myanmar that this latest ruling was designed to prevent Suu Kyi from participating in multiparty parliamentary elections scheduled for 2010.

That suspicion became reality through a series of new election laws enacted in March 2010. In support of Suu Kyi, the NLD refused to reregister under those new laws and was disbanded. The government parties faced little opposition in November 7, 2010, election and easily won an overwhelming majority of legislative seats amid widespread allegations of voter fraud. Suu Kyi was released from house arrest six days after the election and vowed to continue her opposition to military rule.

Government restrictions on Suu Kyi's activities were further relaxed during 2011. She was allowed to meet freely with associates and others in Yangon and by midyear was able to travel outside the city. In January 2012 Suu Kyi announced that she was seeking election to a constituency in Yangon and her bid to run for office was approved by the government in February. In late May and early June Suu Kyi visited Thailand, her first trip outside Myanmar since 1988. Later in June she travelled to Europe, making stopovers in several countries. Highlights of that journey included giving the acceptance speech for her Nobel Prize in Oslo, Norway and being invited to address the British Parliament in London.

Dalai Lama advocates that the achievement of justice, harmony and peace depends on many factors. In the present conditions, there is definitely a growing

need for human understanding and a sense of universal responsibility. In order to achieve such ideas, we must generate a good and kind heart, for without this, we cannot achieve universal happiness or world peace. We cannot create peace on paper. While advocating universal responsibility and universal brotherhood and sisterhood, the facts are that humanity is organized in separate entities in the form of national societies.

He feels that politics devoid of ethics does not further human welfare and life without morality reduces humans to the level of beasts. However, politics is not axiomatically 'dirty'. Rather, the instruments of our political culture have distorted the high ideals and noble concepts meant to further human welfare. Naturally, spiritual people express their concern about religious leaders 'messing' with politics, since they fear the contamination of religion by dirty politics.

Today, the values of democracy, open society, respect for human rights and equality are being recognized all over the world as universal values. Dalai Lama pointed out that there is an intimate connection between democratic values and the fundamental values of human goodness. Where there is democracy there is a greater possibility for the citizens of the country to express their basic human qualities and where these basic human qualities prevail, there is also a greater scope for strengthening democracy. Most importantly, democracy is also the most effective basis for ensuring world peace. He believed that many of the violations of human rights in Tibet are the result of suspicion, lack of trust and true understanding of Tibetan culture and religion.



Despite some development and economic progress, Tibetan culture continues to face fundamental problems of survival. Serious violations of human rights are perpetual throughout Tibet. Yet they are only the symptoms and consequences of a deeper problem. The Chinese authorities have so far been unable to take a tolerant and pluralistic view of Tibet's distinct culture and religion; instead they are suspicious of them and seek to control them. The majority of Chinese 'development' plans in Tibet are designed to assimilate Tibet completely into the Chinese society and culture and to overwhelm Tibetans demographically by transferring large numbers of Chinese into Tibet. This unfortunately reveals that Chinese policies in Tibet continue to be harsh, despite the profound changes carried out by the Chinese government and the Party elsewhere in the People's Republic of China. Thus, as a result of deliberate policies, an entire people with its unique culture and identity are facing the threat of being utterly overwhelmed.

However, responsibility for working for peace lies not only with our leaders, but also with each of us individually. Peace starts within each one of us. When we have inner peace, we can be at peace with those around us. When our community is in a state of peace, it can share that peace with neighboring communities and so on. When we feel love and kindness toward others, it not only makes others feel loved and cared for, but it helps us also to develop inner happiness and peace. We can work consciously to develop feelings of love and kindness. For some of us, the most effective way to do so is through religious practice. For others it may be non-religious practices. What is important is that we each make a sincere effort to take seriously our responsibility for each other and the world in which we live.

Every destructive action goes against basic nature; building, being constructive, is the human way. Everybody needs to overcome violence. From a strictly practical perspective, on certain occasions violence indeed appears useful. One can solve a problem quickly with force. At the same time; however, such success is often at the expense of the rights and welfare of others. As a result, even though one problem has been solved, the seed of another has been planted.

There are many kinds of violence and non-violence, but one cannot distinguish them from external factors. If one's motivation is negative, the action it produces is, in the deepest sense, violent, even though it may appear to be smooth and gentle. Conversely, if one's motivation is sincere and positive but the circumstances require harsh behavior, essentially one is practicing non-violence. No matter what the case may be, Dalai Lama feels that a compassionate concern for the benefit of others not simply for oneself is the sole justification for the use of force.

Human rights are of universal interest because it is the inherent nature of all human beings to desire for freedom, equality and dignity and they have a right to achieve them. We have all been born into this world as part of one great human family. Rich or poor, educated or uneducated, belonging to one nation or another, to one religion or another, adhering to this ideology or that, ultimately each of us is just a human being like everyone else. We all desire happiness and do not want suffering.

People everywhere have come to realize the great importance and value of human rights. Not only it offers the prospect of relief to many suffering

individuals, but it also is an indication of humanity's progress and development. Dalai Lama feels that concern for human rights violations and the effort to protect human rights represents a great service to people of both the present and future generations. He considers human rights work or activism to be a kind of spiritual practice.

### **1.3. Objectives**

1. To study the prevalent theories on *ahimsā* and *satyāgraha* before Gandhi.
2. To critically evaluate the understanding of Gandhi on *ahimsā* and *satyāgraha*.
3. To find out the apparent changes which have come in the theory and practice of *ahimsā* and *Satyāgraha* in post Gandhian Era.
4. To study the challenges to *ahimsā* and *Satyāgraha* in the modern times.

### **1.4. Hypothesis**

Only a very few people seem to be capable of undergoing self inflicted suffering in support of *ahimsā* or *satyāgraha*. Very few people qualify for the conceptual formulation and application of these principles, without a trace of fear or self-interest. *Ahimsā* as a policy is acceptable to many people, but as a creed there are very few. The doctrine of *satyāgraha* demands high standard of compliance with the laws of community with an importation of the religious spirit. The instinctive suspicion of Gandhi's conceptual formulation of *ahimsā* and *satyāgraha* goes away and a bind of respect develops by looking at the understanding and practice of these ideas by the lives of Vinoba Bhave, Nelson

Mandela, Dalai Lama etc. Further research only can tell the improvisations brought over by these political thinkers and activists.

### **1.5. Chapterisation**

In this research work, I would like to make a critical assessment of the basic concepts of *ahimsā* and *satyāgraha* as understood by Gandhi and moral and political thinkers and activists who claim to be following Gandhi. As we know Gandhi was not an abstract theorist, he was a man of action. It is necessary to see that his conceptual formulations were limited by the fact that as a political moralist he wrote from the standpoint of an individual rather than concerning himself with ethical and practical problems facing men in authority. However, he tried to apply his basic concepts of *ahimsā* and *satyāgraha* to different practical matters such as the relation of labour and capital, the promotions of collective human welfare, village self-government, attitude toward work, problems of educational and social reconstruction, social inequalities and the decentralization of political and economic power. I have concerned myself in this thesis to study the conceptual formulation and practice of *ahimsā* and *satyāgraha* before Gandhi, of Gandhi, and by the leading moral and political thinkers and activists who seem to follow Gandhi. I have examined the basic concepts of *ahimsā* and *satyāgraha* and their applicability with reference to the lives of Martin Luther King (Jr.), Nelson Mandela, Aung San Suu Kyi, Dalai Lama etc. My interest is to map the subtle changes that have crept into the conceptual formulations of these people.

These modern political thinkers and activists were under the considerable influence of Gandhi. However, they modified these two principles to suit the

contexts in which they were using them. They experimented with *ahimsā* and *satyāgraha* and met with great success. My research does not focus on the application of these two principles by Gandhi during India's freedom struggle. I would present the understanding of Gandhi on *ahimsā* and *satyāgraha* in bringing socio-political changes in the society. The thrust area of this research is the modern day moral, political thinkers and activists who are inspired by Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence and used it in their struggle against oppression and injustice. In the following paragraph I would like to give the basic understanding of Gandhi on these topics.

Gandhi's *Satyāgraha* and *ahimsā* have a comprehensiveness that lies in the highest level of human consciousness. Gandhian philosophy is emergingly seen today as one of the most essential vehicles of understanding the contemporary religious, socio-economic, political and educational problems.

The second chapter deals with the different classical non-violence and *satyāgraha* theories in Indian traditions resembling to *Rāmāyana*, *Māhābhārata*, *Gītā*, *Vedā* and the *Upaniṣads*, Buddha, Jaina, Nyaya, Vaisesika, *Samkhya*, Yoga, Mimamsa and in Vedanta philosophy and as well as in Western philosophy also. The doctrine of non-violence is one of the cardinal features of India's ancient tradition. American thinkers like Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson were also influenced by the reading of *Bhagavad-Gītā*, *Purana* and the *Upaniṣads*. Henry David Thoreau is well known to the Americans as the author of *Walden*. For the Indians, he is primarily known as the author of the essay on *Civil Disobedience*. The appeal to Thoreau's influence was calculated to establish a link between Gandhi and Thoreau. Their ideas and ways of living are deep and extensive. Undoubtedly Thoreau had a greater influence upon

Gandhi than of Emerson because he was a practical man willing to practice his beliefs.

The third chapter is an attempt to explore what is Gandhi's understanding of non-violence and *satyāgraha*. Gandhi's understanding of non-violence has vast prospective for democracy. This chapter also discusses the various methods and principles of non-violence and *satyāgraha* that Gandhi has adopted.

In the fourth chapter, I have discussed about the thinkers Martin Luther King Jr., Aung San Suu Kyi and the Dalai Lama that were influenced by the Gandhian theory of non-violence and *satyāgraha*. Martin Luther King represents this process with a Christian orientation. King admits Gandhi's theory of non-violent direct action as an acceptable and effective method fighting against injustice and discrimination. Resembling to Gandhi Martin Luther also subscribed to the decentralization of political power. From Gandhi's non-violence King has found the comprehension of the Christian notion of returning love for hatred and self-sacrifice instead of imposing suffering on the opponent. He had a dream that his children would "no longer be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character."<sup>10</sup> It was Dr. King who was able to make the Black people realize that they were somebody and it would be possible to them to live together with the white people and meet together on the table of brotherhood.

The fifth chapter attempts to focus about the movements like democracy, human rights movements where non-violence seemingly plays an enormous role in the post Gandhian era.

The sixth chapter summarizes the major findings and discusses the implications and suggestions for further research.

The problem to the world today is not only of individual morality or social behaviour but of inter-group and worldwide behaviour and principles. As J.B. Kripalani says in *The Gandhian Approach to World Peace* “murder does not cease to be a crime and a sin if it is committed in the interest of the self, the family or the nation. It must be remembered that the nation is only a big family. If an administrator cannot take bribes to support his family, he cannot also engage in acts of doubtful morality to serve what he considers would be in the best interests of the nation.”<sup>11</sup>

Gandhi’s moral prominence as a man and his outstanding role as a charismatic leader are more vital than his contribution to moral and political thought. His own belief positively required him to examine his acts more than his ideas and theories. He was the superhuman defender of human rights in South Africa.

He has been depicted as a saint by Romain Rolland, Carl Heath and Stanley Jones. He seemed to be the principles of humanity. In his autobiography he mentioned that Tolstoy’s *The Kingdom of God is within You* and the *Gītā* has a profound influence on his life. He was never tired of reading Ruskin’s *Unto This Last* and each time he read out this book learned something new from it.

So we can articulate that no other prominent Indian intellectual was as steeped as Gandhi was in the religious and philosophical texts of the classical Indian tradition and he was original in his thinking.

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