

# Contextualizing Gandhi in the dialogue of 'Politics' and 'Power' - Considering His Basic Propositions

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The Western democracy and its theoretical supremacy over other narratives of governing people and nations for more than two centuries is put to severe test in January 2021 with Trump's followers laying siege to Capitol after their debacle at the hustings. An armed and angry mob stormed Capitol Hill and clashed with police. They either are unable to digest the harsh reality of their debacle at the hustings or felt incredulous about the fallibility of their 'God.' Though the long-cherished systems won in the ultimate run, for now, the blatant exhibition of love for 'power' has blurred the hitherto fine layers of distinction between the so-called evolved democracies and the backward or archaic regimes elsewhere where private militia, military juntas, coups etc., are the order. The pride of the West is injured and injured forever. Now the West has no exclusive claims for superior democracies. The theories of 'politics,' 'power,' 'democracy,' and 'autocracy' etc., had completed their full cycle and reached a *cul-de-sac*. It's time the West 'unburden' itself from the cross of the White Man burden and the presumptive moral duty of educating the 'barbaric,' 'backward' and 'stagnating' East or Africa or the Latin America.

While Otto Von Bismarck, the conservative Prussian statesman was said to have defined: "Politics is the art of the possible, the attainable – the art of the next best", Albert Einstein, the world's acclaimed physicist appears to have opined: "Politics is more difficult than physics." Charles de Gaulle, on the contrary considered "Politics too serious a matter to be left to the politicians." It's true politics is pursued in the real and living world, and not in a sober or silent laboratory, though sometimes even the real and living world becomes a great testing ground for all that is written in the text. However for many, both the theoreticians and the commoners, the idea of 'politics' is only a means to power, and a proposition - power, *however*. The exigencies and expediencies do not permit a practicing politician to search for truth in politics.

While the East over a century accepted the dominant theories of 'politics' and 'power' of the West and aped it without any doubt, there was one individual shaking his head in despair. He was at his most disappointed self in 1909 when he 'could not restrain' himself writing his manifesto - **Hind Swaraj** as a counter-thesis for the West's civilization and its magnificent claims. He said<sup>i</sup>, drawing his strength of argument from Edward Carpenter's **Civilization: Its Cause and Cure**, that 'societies have been formed to cure the nation of civilization.' He even charged<sup>ii</sup> - "The tendency of the Indian civilization is to elevate the moral being, that of the Western civilization is to propagate immorality.' He was not denying the West its sober contribution but was cautioning his country men against aping the West uncritically. He defined civilization<sup>iii</sup> as 'that mode of conduct which points out to the man the path of duty. Performance of duty and observance of morality are convertible terms.' He was questioning the moral authority of the West to comment, theorize and teach the East on many issues<sup>iv</sup> - 'The English ... have the habit of writing history; they pretend to study the manners and customs of all people. ... They write about their own researches in most laudatory terms and hypnotize us into believing them. We in ignorance then fall at their feet.' Thus Gandhi understood the connectivity between politics and spirituality also in contradistinction to the intellectual trends of his time. He tried to reconcile the two hostile enemies - politics and spirituality - with the same unusual and unorthodox manner in which he had also attempted reconciliation of tradition and modernity.

Early in his political career in India, Gandhi faced the dilemma as to whether he was a politician dabbling in politics or spiritual person straying into politics unknowingly. In 'Young India' Gandhi<sup>v</sup> replied to such a question. The accusation was: "Mr. Gandhi has the reputation of a saint but it seems that the politician in him often dominates his decision. ..." Gandhi wrote: "... Now I think that the word 'saint' should be ruled out of **present life**. It is too sacred a word to be lightly applied to anybody, much less to one like myself who claims only to be a humble searcher after truth, knows his limitations, makes mistakes, never hesitates to admit them when he makes them, and frankly confesses that he, **like a scientist**, is making experiments about some of '**the external verities**' of life, but **cannot even claim to be a scientist** because he can show no tangible proof of scientific accuracy in his methods or such tangible results of his experiments as modern science demands. ... the politician in me has never dominated a single decision of mine, and **if I seem to take part in politics, it is only because politics encircle us today like the coil of a snake** from which one cannot get out, no matter how much one tries. ... I have been experimenting with myself and my friends by introducing religion into politics. **Let me explain what I mean by religion. It is not the Hindu religion**, which I certainly prize above all other religions, but the religion which transcends Hinduism, which changes one's very nature, which binds one indissolubly to the truth within and which, ever purifies. It is the permanent element in human nature which counts no cost too great in order to find full expression and which leaves the soul utterly restless until it has found itself, known its maker and appreciated the true correspondence between the maker and itself." [Emphasis supplied]

Elsewhere Gandhi<sup>vi</sup> said: "The whole gamut of man's activities today constitutes an indivisible whole. You cannot divide life, social, economic, political and purely religious, into watertight compartments. I don't know of any religion apart from human activity. It provides moral basis of all other activities, which they would otherwise lack, reducing life to a maze of sound and fury signifying nothing." What is good and moral for one department of life must be so to the rest. There cannot be one individual truth, and another collective truth, one private truth and another public truth.

Anthony J. Pare<sup>vii</sup> examines Gandhi's philosophy as an idea of reconstitution of the four aims of life of a noble Hindu - *Purusharthas* i.e., *dharma* (ethics and religion), *artha* (wealth and power), *kama* (Pleasure) and *moksha* (liberation from samsara, the cycle of birth, death and rebirth). Pare<sup>viii</sup> considers that: "He (Gandhi) belongs to the group of forward-looking thinkers who want to explore new ways in which the theory of the *Purusharthas* might be made to work." Though the religion had been the basic foundation of Gandhi's entire philosophy, his idea of religion is qualitatively different from conventional scheme, and his concept of the State is modern and civic in the nature. He had wholeheartedly embraced the modern idea of nation, albeit a non-violent nation. But his modernity is again somewhat different from the known meaning of modernity. As Hardiman<sup>ix</sup> in his seminal work "Gandhi in his time and ours" argues the difficulty flows from the term '**modernity**' itself.

Gandhi poses several challenges before the present generation and mostly in the frontiers of political life. He places ethical and moral strands of the society more and above the political immediacies. In the Indian wisdom, it goes like: "*Yad-yad acarati sresthas- tat-tad ev'etaro janah / Sa yat pramanam kurute lokas tad anuvartate*" [Whatever the noblest person do, the ordinary man imitates. The standard they set, the ordinary men follow]. The political leader is also mostly the moral leader of the society in the modern life. Politics have engulfed the human life so much so that the life without or beyond politics is unimaginable in modern man's compass.

There is a need to place spiritual and material aspirations in their respective spaces in the social dialogue. At the same time none can be totally avoided. But both 'religion' and 'politics' are not attached with the same meanings in the Gandhi's theory and practice as normally employed in polemical or academic parlance. Major tradition of modern political theory rejects the idea that politics is a part of a moral or ethical order, though it doesn't deny space for ethics in politics as such. Despite the assertion of Nietzsche, God continues to haunt us. The dominant discourse in political theory, however, is Epicurean, revolving around common good, happiness, economic and social equality, freedom etc. The West argues, instead, that politics is all about power. Any 'means' is acceptable by which the end – 'the power' is achieved, enemies are defeated or compromises reached. The general presumption is without the goal of power, and ways of its attainment, values, however noble, are useless. It is what they called as 'political realism'.

Jeremy Bentham's Utilitarian theories, the revolutionary ideas of violent social change, wars, and strife etc., dominated Europe's political theory in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Marx and Engels in their *Communist Manifesto* attempted to provide a radical alternative. Political violence was not alien to any political theory either in the past or in the present and it had no exceptions based on region or religion. The idea that once political and civil rights are secured, a just society emerges - was seriously challenged by Marx and Engels. Post-Hegel and Marx, politics have been understood in terms of ideologies. The theories explained the ideas of each political epoch and how they differ, because the institutions and practices differ and the significance of an idea changes across history. The conflict of rights of various groups and sections gave democracy a different content. The twentieth century has been a lab for contesting ideas of democracy and dictatorship. By the beginnings of the twentieth century democracy appeared to have gained over other modes of organizing societies. The occasional revolutionary interventions in Russia and some other Eastern European societies etc., didn't have any dent in the overall faith of the West in the multi-party representative democracy based on adult franchise and secret ballot. But within democracy, the play of pressure groups made democracy always tentative and fragile. The Eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of world political map was mostly painted with a tinge of red, where revolutionary thought dominated the political discourse. 'Sovereignty of the people' sought to replace the idea of 'sovereignty of the State'.

Thus, when Gandhi had grown into a political activist, first in South Africa, and then in India, the West was crumbling under its own contradictions – of its enlightenment reasoning, political upheavals, wars, violent changes in the State structures, and the consequent moral and ethical dilemmas. 'A new political philosophy is necessary to a new world,' declares the opening sentence of Laski's<sup>xi</sup> *Grammar of Politics.* But the political reality is that such restatements would, in fact, be a necessary recurrence at every epoch. The industrial world and its inhuman consequences, the globalized world and its failures, the technological and information revolutions, and certain consequent curvatures of times, consumerism and unwieldy State institutions continuously force the helpless individual into several existential questions without answers seemingly available.

Gandhi tried to balance the two contradictory claims, material and spiritual pursuits quite precariously on both the edges. It can also be fairly said that Gandhi failed on both the fronts, a natural consequence of the acts of any pioneer in a field. With the historical experience of the assumed dialectical movement of history between matter and spirit in the backyard, there is no point of ignoring Gandhi. He compels his presence and makes his intervention invariably. In the heyday of "secularism" determining the contours of governance and politics, Gandhi came back with the idea of the intense relationship of religion and politics, but in great contradiction to the classic ideas of both the conservatives and the modernists. Gandhi's religion, as well his politics, were

always tentative and experimental. He made his ashram life and political life a laboratory for continued search for the relational connectedness of the both. 'Look at things with plain eyes, without the glasses of civilization and sophistry' is Gandhi's other dictum. Sophistry of reason has reached such absurd levels in the philosophy now that it has become a faith of its own way. Gandhi tried to impress upon the intellectual sections of the society to first collect the data with utmost sincerity and deduct theory out of the facts.

According to Iyer<sup>xii</sup>, Gandhi recognized when he said: "Most religious men I have met are politicians in disguise. I, however, who wear the guise of a politician, am at heart a religious man." Iyer<sup>xiii</sup> quotes Gandhi saying, addressing a group of missionaries in 1938: "I could not be leading a religious life unless I identified myself with the whole of mankind and that I could not do unless I took part in politics. ..." Many great souls considered politics as polluting their path for liberation, and it had befallen on Gandhi to stay back in society and reinterpret the ideas of *moksha* (or liberation). He didn't find the meaning of *moksha* only in silence, meditation and relinquishing the mundane pursuits and in its individualistic possibility. He found it more in sympathizing with those suffering, liberating them from the phenomenal and spiritual bondage, and considered his own individual liberation as a part of such community liberation. He has come with a highly innovative perception on religion which earned both admiration and criticism. Parel<sup>xiv</sup> thus quotes the conclusion arrived at by Gandhi on this issue: "No Indian who aspires to follow the way of true dharma can afford to remain aloof from politics .... One who aspires to a truly religious (dharmic) life cannot fail to undertake public service as his life mission".

During South Africa struggle he realized the need to accept and organize Indians as one political class, instead of understanding them as Hindus, Muslims, and Christians etc. He adopted the same method in his struggle for freedom even in India. In South Africa, the numerical weakness of Indians allowed his experiment of inclusive approach with some reasonable success, but back in India, it was more a complex political reality. Here the Hindu nationalism had already attained certain stages with the additive experience of its strained relationship with Muslim rule for over eight hundred years. The first strains of Gandhi could be seen in his Khilafat movement and in his struggle to convince the common Hindu Congressmen about its need. Since then till its culmination in his assassination, the idea of Hindu-Muslim unity propounded by Gandhi remained problematic in Indian politics.

But it didn't deter his endeavors for social change. Here Parel's<sup>xv</sup> observation is of some significance: 'Gandhi was committed to social change, but, unlike the Marxists and the Neo-Marxists, he was able to integrate the idea of social change within the frame work of an independent Indian canon.' 'Religion' in political theory of Gandhi means 'morality.' Thus Fischer<sup>xvi</sup> quotes him saying: "...There is no such thing as religion overriding morality. Man, for instance, cannot be untruthful, cruel and incontinent and claim to have a God inside." But the spirituality of a person has no social utility if it constitutes an expression of some esoteric knowledge which some specialized human beings can alone understand. Fischer<sup>xvii</sup> again quotes him saying: "I do not believe the spiritual law works on a field of its own. On the contrary, it expresses itself only through the ordinary activities of life. It thus affects the economic, the social and the political fields." His religion made him to live among the people and work for their cause, contrary to the other spiritual personalities who distanced themselves from the ordinary people and preferred seclusion. He<sup>xviii</sup> further affirmed: "... I shall never know God if I do not wrestle with and against evil even at the cost of life itself."

Gandhi<sup>xix</sup> said: “What a joy it would be when people realize that religion consists not in outward ceremonial but an ever-growing inward response to the highest impulses that man is capable of.” These highest impulses include service of the deprived. That is why he further said<sup>xx</sup>: “To see the universal and all-pervading spirit of truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field. That is why my devotion to truth has drawn me into the field of politics, and I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means”

Is not religion the cause of the misery in the past? “... No doubt religion has to answer for some of the most terrible crimes,” Gandhi<sup>xxi</sup> answers in affirmative, “But that is the fault not of religion but of the ungovernable brute in man. ...” A spiritual personality of the nature of Gandhi may be considered as one who strayed into politics. But it was Gandhi’s considered choice based on his innovative interpretation of religion. His ideas on ‘politics’ were enigmatic, and can even be said ‘anachronistic.’ Iyer<sup>xxii</sup> said: ‘The image of Gandhi as a politician is even more puzzling than the image of him as a saint.’ Rolland<sup>xxiii</sup> considered Gandhi as one ‘who has introduced into human politics the strongest religious impetus of the last two thousand years.’

Parel<sup>xxiv</sup> says: ‘The achievements of Kautilya, ... were rendered nugatory and, as a result, Indian political philosophy stagnated for nearly two millennia.’ Almost after many centuries Gandhi emerged at the national scene and attempted to reestablish the connectivity among various faculties of human pursuits - politics, religion, morality, earthly success, recognition and certain sublime goals. His intervention was distinguished by Parel as ‘Indian political thought’ in contradiction to the ‘political thought in India.’ The Machiavellian ideas of power have gone so deep into the nerves of the politics that, irrespective of their basic tenets, all the political theories, from extreme right to the extreme left in the political spectrum, revolve around ‘*political power*’ or ‘*power politics*.’ Achieving the power and retaining the power, enjoying the power and dethroning the other from the seat of power is the *leitmotif* of all the theories of power. Any other alternative is unthinkable to a modern mind and would be rejected *in limine* as ridiculous perorations of the incompetent.

Alternatively, some suggest modern ethics sans religious morality. When Nietzsche pronounced the death of ‘God’ it meant a command to the man for inventing secular ethics. Gandhi welcomed the self-regulation, but also found its easy impassibility. He said<sup>xxv</sup>: “If national life becomes so perfect as to become self-regulated, no representation is necessary. There is then a state of enlightened anarchy.” This ‘enlightened anarchy’ in Gandhian construct is the equivalent of ‘withering away of the State’ or ‘Statelessness’ in the Marxian theory.

The West has introduced a dichotomy of religion versus secularism. The long battle between the Church and the King lead to demanding a typical secularism more suitable to the Western political reality. There’s a general rationality in that proposition. But it requires a creative interpretation. In Gandhi’s improvisation, it necessarily need not be ‘*irreligious*’ to be ‘*secular*.’ It is not intended to deprive of the State a religion, but to reinforce in it, its *raj dharma*, a duty to respect every religion and to provide equal opportunities for every religious order in the social framework, ‘*sarva dharma samabhava*.’ The politics of Gandhi are more in the nature of moral prescriptions and self-regulatory as in his idea of ‘*dharma*’, or one’s own duty. Religion, in Gandhi’s political theory, fills that space of morality which was negated by the modern political theory altogether. He considered the divorce of politics and morals as the most disgusting feature of secular politics. He asserted: “For me there are no politics devoid of religion.... Politics devoid of religion are a death-trap because they kill the soul.”<sup>xxvi</sup>.

This idea is evident in Gandhi's another statement<sup>xxvii</sup>: '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. Political power means the capacity to regulate national life through national representatives....' Pare<sup>xxviii</sup> thus considers the idea of 'politics' in Gandhi's philosophy: "Politics is both a mode of life and a mode of activity. As a mode of life it is life lived in the political community, which today, in most cases, is the civic nation. As a mode of activity, it is the striving for power and wealth within the bounds of ethics (dharma) and within the requirements of a healthy spiritual life (the pursuit of moksha). Because politics is a purushartha, it is necessary for full human development. Again, because it is a purushartha, it is by definition, compatible with the other basic ends of life – dharma, kama, and moksha." Iyer<sup>xxix</sup> also says: "Politics was to him not a profession but a vocation, and he was a politician only in the sense that he was conscious of a mission to serve the masses in the political and social sphere and to inspire them with love of the common ideal."

Politicization of religion occurred in past and it continues to show its ugly dimensions even now. Not just India, now the whole world is joining the whirlpool of the politics of religion. The USA, The UK, France etc., both modern democracies and the stagnating archaic societies are struggling hard to come to grip with the resurgent religion. The problem also lies in Gandhi's opinion about the modern democracy, and more specifically about the Parliaments, the institutions which carry the notion of being the center of power. The presumption is – it represents the opinions and aspirations of people. But Gandhi was a great critic of parliamentary form of democracies and parliaments themselves. After his own experiences in the England and South Africa, he refuses to accept that parliaments are the only expression of people's will. He once said<sup>xxx</sup>: "It is very difficult to get rid of our fondness for Parliament. ... One can withstand the atrocities committed by one individual as such; but it is difficult to cope with the tyranny perpetrated upon people in the name of the people. ... The common man in India at least believes that the Parliament is a hoax. Even an extraordinarily intelligent man, caught in the meshes of this civilization, loses his sanity in Parliament."

However, over a period of time in the freedom struggle, and after working along with the modernists like Nehru and others, and due to the dialogue with some other intellectuals of the time, it appears he had softened his antagonism to the parliamentary form of government. He also realized that most of his colleagues and the people of India were not in consonance with him either with the form of governance he had visualized or with his basic principles of life. He later admitted: 'But today my *'Corporate activity'*, is undoubtedly devoted to the attainment of parliamentary Swaraj in accordance with the wishes of the people of India.'

Gandhi's political guru, Gokhale taught him that the dream of every Indian should be an act in the political field and 'to spiritualize the political life'. In understanding the scope and meaning of this expression of 'spiritualizing the political life of the country' Gandhi, in a speech said<sup>xxxi</sup>: "I think political life must be an echo of private life and that there cannot be any divorce between the two." In a letter he said<sup>xxxii</sup>: "I take part in politics because I feel that there is no department of life which can be divorced from religion and because politics touch the vital being of India almost at every point." Thus Gandhi deferred with idea of that the end of politics is power. The Western concepts of power were further strengthened by the evolutionary sciences and concepts such as 'the survival of the fittest.' The modern conception of politics also posits a faith in this evolutionary idea. It goes even to the extent of sacrificing 'the spiritual salvation' (moksha) for the sake of political power. That is why the *telos* of his politics is 'to wrestle with this snake.' Finally, politics for Gandhi sometimes means, "protest politics" or "politics of resistance" to injustice, oppression, and tyranny. 'Satyagraha movement developed protest politics into an art and a science.'<sup>xxxiii</sup>

In the ultimate schema of things Gandhi laid his faith in the individual freedom and individual moral authority. Political power and representative politics were a transitory phase till individuals rise to the level of governing their own affairs. "The power to control national life through national representatives is called political power. Representatives will become unnecessary if the national life becomes so perfect as to be self-controlled. It will then be a state of *enlightened anarchy* in which each person will become his own ruler. He will conduct himself in such a way that his behavior will not hamper the well-being of his neighbors. In an ideal state there will be no political institutions and therefore no political power. That is why Thoreau has said in his classic statement that government is the best which governs the least."<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Gandhi achieved a rare combination of reestablishing the lost relation between ethics and politics through the traditional Hindu ideas of '*artha*' and '*dharma*.' The faithful adherence of one to one's own religion and to the natural choice of profession or trade or avocation as per one's nature is '*dharma*' or *rt*, which means an order. The idea of *dharma* in the physical world also mandates a man to do all that is necessary to preserve his land, people and corporate things. Thus it necessarily draws men to politics, which replaces warfare, arms and unnecessary bloodshed for power. Pare<sup>xxxv</sup> quotes T.N. Madan with agreement who expressed a hope that India needs someone like Gandhi to teach "the proper relation between religion and politics, values and interests."

Gandhi had accepted the modern idea of the nation. Gandhi regularly invoked the word '*praja*' – for a polity in his Gujarati works to convey the idea of nation. Thus for him it was not in a geographical context that conveyed the notion of a nation, but a polity – an organized society, a state as a political entity, a form of civil government or constitution. His entire life, it is true, was occupied with freedom struggle for a geographical India. But he understood Indian civilization as an open and inviting civilization accommodating the influx. This influx of various races into India over centuries and settling down in Indian social structure was not considered something as intersecting the idea of his nation.

He was as secular as any of his co-fighters in the freedom fight. As we have already noted earlier, religion for him was his personal affair which wouldn't impinge on his activities while acting as a State. Thus Gandhi didn't entertain the ethnic nationalism also. "The state would look after your secular, welfare, health, communications, foreign relations, currency and so on, but not your or my religion. That is every body's personal concern", answered Gandhi<sup>xxxvi</sup> to a Christian missionary's question as to what would be role of religion and state in free India. Much earlier, in 1909, writing in *Hind Swaraj*, he said<sup>xxxvii</sup>: "India cannot cease to be one nation because people belonging to different religions live in it. The introduction of foreigners does not necessarily destroy the nation, they merge in it. A country is one nation only when such a condition obtains in it. That country must have a faculty for assimilation; India has ever been such a country. ... If the Hindus believe that India should be peopled only by Hindus, they are living in dreamland. ... In no part of the world are one nationality and one religion synonymous terms, nor has it ever been so in India."

Gandhi and his idealization of Ramarajya have provoked many contentious arguments against Gandhi. Marxists, Ambedkarites, Muslims and Christians vehemently denounced it as reactionary. He was even rejected as caste-Hindu mostly on this count. The image of *Ramarajya* generates its negative connotations in the depressed classes as Lord Ram in Ramayana is accused of beheading Sambhuka, a person from lower strata of the State and barred from learning sacred texts. But Gandhi was communicating and connecting himself with the rural masses through this image of '*Ramarajya*' as it was deeply entrenched into their collective memory. His Rama was the force of

the weak - 'Nirbal ke bal Ram,' but not a suppressor of the weak. The image of Rama continues to provoke passionate social tremors even today. When the softer version of Rama in the Gandhian construct was rejected, the other 'strong, masculine and the 'ari veera bhayankara' (the one who strikes terror among the enemies) is now emerging. Political shortsightedness would have its own projections.

As Parel said Gandhi's is a 'civic nation.' 'The spirit of democracy is not a mechanical thing to be adjusted by abolition of forms. It requires change of the heart. ... The spirit of democracy requires the inculcation of the spirit of brotherhood. ...'<sup>xxxviii</sup> "He (Gandhi) belongs to the group of forward-looking thinkers who want to explore new ways in which the theory of the Purusharthas might be made to work."<sup>xxxix</sup> In this respect, as in some others, he was definitely modern. But his modernity is an alternate to the known meaning of modernity. As David Hardiman in his seminal work "Gandhi in his time and ours" argues that the difficulty flows from the term '**modernity**' itself.

He understood both politics and religion as inalienable and yet different from the conventional readings. Some of his experiments and concepts were unknown in the corridors of the mainstream political theory and consequently he was a highly misunderstood person, both in spiritual circles and in the modern intellectual passages. That politics was not just a struggle for power, and it was more related to service – was unthinkable to known politics. That a saint, by journeying into forests, hermitages, and seclusion couldn't secure *moksha* when the people of the society were demoralized, living in slavery, drudgery, and grinding poverty was equally shockingly 'new idiom' to the saints and religious heads. In this milieu Gandhi stood as a lone traveler with 'different language and grammar' of politics. He considered the life and its activities as an organic whole. The unity of 'means and ends', unity of public truth and private truth, nonviolence and pursuit of Truth, religion, spirituality, politics, and leading anti-colonial movement and many complex things are one seamless web of a whole in his philosophy. Gandhi's theoretical contribution to the relevance of religion, as ethical and moral element of life, in politics needs further examination. But we have entered into another phase of history where religion started reasserting its space threateningly everywhere. It appears that any amount of progress in sciences or any materialistic advancement is not going to reduce the human endeavors for spiritual pursuits. The human beings are repeatedly entering a moral crisis.

In the conflict between the man and the God, and man's endeavour to become God - Gandhi represents the 'man'; Gandhi's was a struggling soul to rise to the higher spiritual stages of 'Mahatma'. But a 'mahatma' didn't mean to Gandhi a soul that ignores the reality of moral and ethical dilemmas among his men around him. He didn't revert back to a contemplative, and exclusivist hermitage to uplift himself or his people from this moral degradation. His message is emphatic in restating that there is no liberation to the individual soul unless the ordinary mortals around him are also lifted up to realize the idea of liberation in their material conditions first and spiritual liberation later, or both simultaneously, if possible without sacrificing the other for the cause of 'immediacy.' When the conservative religion understood its role in politics either in returning to ashram or into the dark domains of the archaic, masculine, revolutionary tactics based on terror and violence, Gandhi attempted to elevate the soul and morale of the common man through a rare mix of religion and politics. The understanding or misunderstanding of Gandhi in his emphasis on ethical or morality based politics or in the alternative, in maintaining the connectivity between politics and religions, deserves revisiting when the politics of the West-type reached their dead-end and the road ahead is uncertain.

- <sup>i</sup> M.K. Gandhi, Hind Swaraj, Centenary Edition, Rajpal, Delhi, p.27-28
- <sup>ii</sup> ibid, p. 52
- <sup>iii</sup> ibid, p.49
- <sup>iv</sup> ibid, p. 42
- <sup>v</sup> Young India 12 May 1920, from Raghavan Iyer, Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol.I Clarendon Press. Oxford, 1986 p.41-45
- <sup>vi</sup> J.B. Kriplani, Gandhi: His Life and Thought, © Publications Division, Govt. of India, 1970 (2005), p.353
- <sup>vii</sup> Anthony J. Parel (2006), Gandhi's Philosophy and the Quest for Harmony, Cambridge University Press
- <sup>viii</sup> Parel (2006), p.13
- <sup>ix</sup> David Hardiman, Gandhi in his time and ours, Permanent Black © 2003, p-66
- <sup>x</sup> Bhagavad Gita, III.20
- <sup>xi</sup> Harold J. Laski, Grammar of Politics, Surjeet Publications, p.14
- <sup>xii</sup> Raghavan Iyer, The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi, Oxford University Press, (2000), p.8, Gandhi to Polak, SWMA, Natesan, 1918, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., p.xxiv
- <sup>xiii</sup> Iyer, ibid, p.41, from D.G. Tendilkar, Mahatma, Vol.IV, pp. 387-88
- <sup>xiv</sup> Parel, (2006)p. 201
- <sup>xv</sup> Parel (2006), p.201
- <sup>xvi</sup> Louis Fischer (Ed) (1962), The Essential Gandhi, from Young India November 24, 1921, p.186
- <sup>xvii</sup> Louis Fischer (Ed), p.193, Young India, September 3, 1935
- <sup>xviii</sup> Louis Fischer (Ed), p.198, Young India, October 11, 1928
- <sup>xix</sup> Judith M. Brown (Ed), (2008), Mahatma Gandhi: Essential Writings, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, p-50, Letter to SE Stokes
- <sup>xx</sup> Brown, ibid, p.65 from Gandhi, An Autobiography, 'Farewell'
- <sup>xxi</sup> Fischer, (1962), p.186, from Young India, October 14, 1926
- <sup>xxii</sup> Raghavan Iyer, (2000), p.6
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Romain Rolland, Mahatma Gandhi, Publications Division, Government of India, p.2
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Parel (2006), p.7
- <sup>xxv</sup> Raghavan Nair, (1986), Vol.I, p.399, In reply to Sjt. Satyamurti, 'Power not an end', Young India, 2 July 1931
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Young India, 24 March 1924
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Louis Fischer (Ed) (1962), P-166, Young India, July 2, 1931
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Parel (2006), p.197
- <sup>xxix</sup> Raghavan Iyer, (2000), p.8
- <sup>xxx</sup> Raghavan Iyer, 1986, p.337
- <sup>xxxi</sup> Raghavan Iyer, 1986, Vol-I, p.375, from Indian Review May 1915
- <sup>xxxii</sup> Raghavan Iyer, 1986, Vol-I, Letter to G.S. Arundale, Young India, 6 August 1919, p.376
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> Parel, p.199
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> Enlightened Anarchy – A Political Ideal, Sarvodaya, January, 1939
- <sup>xxxv</sup> Parel (2006), p.115 from Bhargava, Secularism and its Critics, p.314
- <sup>xxxvi</sup> CWMG, Vol.92, p.190, Talk with a Christian Missionary, Harijan, 22 September, 1946
- <sup>xxxvii</sup> Gandhi, Hind Swaraj, p.40
- <sup>xxxviii</sup> Louis Fischer (Ed), 1962, p.192, from Young India, December 8, 1920
- <sup>xxxix</sup> Parel (2006), p.13