Chapter – II

IDEOLOGY OF MAHATMA GANDHI & BHAGAT SINGH

Gandhi led India to independence by employing non-violent civil disobedience. Not only in India, he has inspired movements for civil rights and freedom across the world also. Gandhi is affectionately remembered as Bapu and the ideas or principles promoted by him are known as Gandhism. Gandhian ideology or Gandhism encompasses his ideas, words and actions which provide guidance to the people. However Gandhi himself did not approve of the notion of "Gandhism", as he explained in 1936:

“There is no such thing as "Gandhism", and I do not want to leave any sect after me. I do not claim to have originated any new principle or doctrine. I have simply tried in my own way to apply the eternal truths to our daily life and problems...The opinions I have formed and the conclusions I have arrived at are not final. I may change them tomorrow. I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills.”

(Kamath, 2007)¹

Gandhi’s thought evolved over time, with his early ideas becoming the core or scaffolding for his mature philosophy. In London he committed himself to

truthfulness, temperance, chastity, and vegetarianism. His return to India to work as a lawyer was a failure, so he went to South Africa for a quarter century, where he absorbed ideas from many sources, most of them non-Indian. Gandhi grew up in an eclectic religious atmosphere and throughout his life searched for insights from many religious traditions. He was exposed to Jain ideas through his mother who was in contact with Jain monks. Themes from Jainism that Gandhi absorbed included asceticism; compassion for all forms of life; the importance of vows for self-discipline; vegetarianism; fasting for self-purification; mutual tolerance among people of different creeds; and "syadvad", the idea that all views of truth are partial, a doctrine that lies at the root of Satyagraha (Rudolph & Rudolph, 1984). He received much of his influence from Jainism particularly during his younger years (Religion – Hinduism, 2012).

Gandhi's London experience provided a solid philosophical base focused on truthfulness, temperance, chastity, and vegetarianism. By moving in 1893 to South Africa he found a solution to this problem and developed the central concepts of his mature philosophy. N. A. Toothi felt that Gandhi was influenced by the reforms and teachings of Swaminarayan, stating "Close parallels do exist in programs of social reform based on to non-

violence, truth-telling, cleanliness, temperance and upliftment of the masses." (Williams, 2001)⁴ Vallabhbhai Patel, who grew up in a Swaminarayan household was attracted to Gandhi due to this aspect of Gandhi’s doctrine.

Gandhi’s ethical thinking was heavily influenced by a handful of books, which he repeatedly meditated upon. They included especially Plato's Apology and John Ruskin's Unto this Last (1862) (both of which he translated into his native Gujarati); William Salter's Ethical Religion (1889); Henry David Thoreau's On the Duty of Civil Disobedience (1849); and Leo Tolstoy's The Kingdom of God Is Within You (1894). Ruskin inspired his decision to live an austere life on a commune, at first on the Phoenix Farm in Natal and then on the Tolstoy Farm just outside Johannesburg, South Africa (Parekh, 2007).⁵ Balkrishna Gokhale argues that Gandhi took his philosophy of history from Hinduism and Jainism, supplemented by selected Christian traditions and ideas of Tolstoy and Ruskin. Hinduism provided central concepts of God's role in history, of man as the battleground of forces of virtue and sin, and of the potential of love as an historical force. From Jainism, Gandhi took the idea of applying non-violence to human situations

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and the theory that Absolute Reality can be comprehended only relatively in human affairs (Meller, 1994).6

Gandhi's most effective methods such as fasting, non-cooperation and appeals to the justice and compassion of the rulers were learned as a youth in Gujarat. Along with the book mentioned above, in 1908, Leo Tolstoy wrote: A Letter to a Hindu, which said that only by using love as a weapon through passive resistance could the Indian people overthrow colonial rule. In 1909, Gandhi wrote to Tolstoy seeking advice and permission to republish A Letter to a Hindu in Gujarati. Tolstoy responded and the two continued a correspondence until Tolstoy's death in 1910 (Tolstoy's last letter was to Gandhi). The letters concern practical and theological applications of non-violence. Gandhi saw himself a disciple of Tolstoy, for they agreed regarding opposition to state authority and colonialism; both hated violence and preached non-resistance. However, they differed sharply on political strategy (Murthy, 1987).7 Gandhi called for political involvement; he was a nationalist and was prepared to use non-violent force. He was also willing to compromise. Gandhi considered Satyagraha and non-violence as two strategic tools for achieving freedom.

Truth and Satyagraha

Gandhi was deeply influenced by the teachings of Buddhism, Jainism and Gita as he was brought with these values during his childhood. He was an ardent believer of Truth. Thus his ideology was shaped by his belief in truth and non-violence. Gandhi dedicated his life to the wider purpose of discovering truth, or Satya. He tried to achieve this by learning from his own mistakes and conducting experiments on himself. He called his autobiography The Story of My Experiments with Truth. Gandhi said, “Truth alone will endure, all the rest will be swept away before the tide of time” (Tendulkar, 1951). Bruce Watson argues that Gandhi based Satyagraha on the Vedantic ideal of self-realization, and notes it also contains Jain and Buddhist notions of non-violence, vegetarianism, the avoidance of killing, and 'agape' (universal love).

Gandhi stated that the most important battle to fight was overcoming his own demons, fears, and insecurities. Gandhi summarised his beliefs first when he said "God is Truth". He later changed this statement to "Truth is God". Thus, satya (truth) in Gandhi's philosophy is "God" (Johnson, 2006).

Gandhi said,


“Truth is God. I claim to be a votary of truth from my childhood. It was the most natural thing to me. My prayerful search gave me the revealing maxim ‘Truth is God’ instead of the usual one “God is Truth’. That maxim enables me to see God face to face as it were. I feel Him pervade every fiber of my being.” (Harijan, 1942, pp. 264)\(^{10}\)

At one occasion Gandhi mentioned that:

“I recognize no God except the God that is to be found in the hearts of the dumb millions. They do not recognize His presence; I do. And I worship the God that is truth or truth which is God, through service of these millions.” (Harijan, 1939, pp. 48)\(^{11}\)

Gandhi invented the practice of Satyagraha which seeks to eliminate antagonisms without harming the antagonists themselves and seeks to transform or "purify" it to a higher level. The term Satyagraha has its origin in Sanskrit language. It is made up of two words: Satya and agraha. As per Sanskrit language, Satya means truth and agraha means insistence. Thus Satyagraha literally means adherence to truth or holding firmly onto the truth. The term Satyagraha was coined by Mahatma Gandhi to designate the

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\(^{10}\) Harijan. (1942). 9(30).

\(^{11}\) Harijan. (1939). 7(5).
struggle of Indians during his stay in South Africa. He has mentioned in his autobiography that Satyagraha manifested itself even before its name was invented and that initially he used to refer to it as 'passive resistance' (Gandhi, 1990). However, Gandhi realized that Europeans had a very narrow perception for the phrase-passive resistance. He observed that passive resistance was considered as a weapon of the weak and may eventually result in violence also. Then Gandhi realized that a new term need to be coined which could designate the struggle of Indians and reflect the true nature of the Indian movements. So, for coining a relevant term, a competition was organized for readers through a newspaper, Indian opinion. A nominal prize was decided to be awarded to the winner. Mr. Magan Lal Gandhi, grandson of an uncle of Gandhi, introduced the term "Sadagraha" in the news-sheet, Indian Opinion and won the prize. Gandhi felt that it was little unclear and he changed it to Satyagraha.

Gandhi has illustrated the meaning of Satyagraha with the following words:

“Truth (satya) implies love, and firmness (agraha) engenders and therefore serves as a synonym for force. I thus began to call the Indian movement Satyagraha, that is to say, the Force which is born of Truth and Love or non-violence, and gave up the use of

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the phrase “passive resistance”, in connection with it, so much so that even in English writing we often avoided it and used instead the word “satyagraha” itself or some other equivalent English phrase.” (Gandhi, 1995)¹³

In a letter to Shankarlal Ghelabhai Banker, a follower of Gandhian School of Thought, Gandhi fully elaborated his ideas about Satyagraha:

“The English phrase "passive resistance" does not suggest the power I wish to write about; "Satyagraha" is the right word. Satyagraha is soul-force, as opposed to armed strength. Since it is essentially an ethical weapon, only men inclined to the ethical way of life can use it wisely. Prahlad, Mirabai, and others were Satyagrahis. At the time of the Morocco fighting, the Arabs were under fire from French guns. The Arabs were fighting, as they believed, solely for their religion. Reckless of their lives, they advanced running towards the French guns with cries of "Ya Allah". Here, there was no scope at all for fighting back to kill. The French gunners refused to fire on these Arabs and, throwing up their caps, ran to embrace these brave Arabs with shouts of joy. This is an example of Satyagraha and the success it can

achieve. The Arabs were not Satyagrahis by deliberate choice. They got ready to face death under pressure of a strong impulse, and had no love in their hearts. A Satyagrahi bears no ill-will, does not lay down his life in anger, but refuses rather to submit to his "enemy" or oppressor because he has the strength himself to suffer. He should, therefore, have a courageous spirit and a forgiving and compassionate nature. Imam Hassan and Hussain were merely two boys. They felt that an injustice had been done to them. When called upon to surrender, they refused. They knew at the time that this would mean death for them. If, however, they were to submit to injustice, they would disgrace their manhood and betray their religion. In these circumstances, they yielded to the embrace of death. The heads of these fine young men rolled on the battlefield. In my view, Islam did not attain its greatness by the power of the sword but entirely through the self-immolation of its fakirs. It is soldier-like to allow oneself to be cut down by a sword, not to use the sword on another. When he comes to realize that he is guilty of murder, the killer, if he has been in the wrong, will feel sorry forever afterwards. The victim, however, will have gained nothing but victory even if he had acted wrongly in courting death. Satyagraha is the way of non-
violence. It is, therefore, justified, indeed it is the right course, at all times and all places. The power of arms is violence and condemned as such in all religions. Even those who advocate the use of arms put various limits on it. There are no limits on Satyagraha, or rather, none except those placed by the Satyagrahi’s capacity for tapascharya, for voluntary suffering.” (Gandhi, 1917, pp. 517-520)

Through his writings Gandhi tried to differentiate between passive resistance and Satyagraha. He wrote in a letter:

"I have drawn the distinction between passive resistance as understood and practised in the West and Satyagraha before I had evolved the doctrine of the latter to its full logical and spiritual extent. I often used “passive resistance” and “Satyagraha” as synonymous terms: but as the doctrine of Satyagraha developed, the expression “passive resistance” ceases even to be synonymous, as passive resistance has admitted of violence as in the case of the suffragettes and has been universally acknowledged to be a weapon of the weak. Moreover, passive resistance does not necessarily involve complete adherence to

truth under every circumstance. Therefore it is different from Satyagraha in three essentials: Satyagraha is a weapon of the strong; it admits of no violence under any circumstance whatsoever; and it ever insists upon truth." (Gandhi, 1920, pp. 350)\textsuperscript{15}

According to Gandhi’s philosophy pertaining to Satyagraha, means and ends are inseparable. Gandhi wrote: “They say, 'means are, after all, means'. I would say, 'means are, after all, everything'. As the means so the end…” He emphasized that the means employed for achieving an end are always associated to that end. He was not in favor of fighting injustice or achieving freedom “by any means necessary”. He believed that if one uses violent, unjust or coercive means, the ends produced would necessarily embed that injustice. To clarify his stance, Gandhi explained with the following example:

“If I want to deprive you of your watch, I shall certainly have to fight for it; if I want to buy your watch, I shall have to pay for it; and if I want a gift, I shall have to plead for it; and, according to

\textsuperscript{15} Gandhi, M. K. (1920, January 25). Letter to Mr. – ” The collected works of Mahatma Gandhi, 19.
the means I employ, the watch is stolen property, my own property, or a donation.” (Gandhi, 1909, pp. 287)\(^\text{16}\)

He opined that the methods or strategies utilized for fulfilling an objective always affect the outcomes. He was of the view that violent means will give violent freedom. Thus, one should not use unfair means to obtain an end or violence to achieve peace (Gandhi, 1909, pp. 287)\(^\text{17}\).

Many people consider Satyagraha as a synonym of non-violence. But Gandhi always emphasized on them as two different principles. According to him, non-violence is "a way of life based on love and compassion" and “was an outgrowth of nonviolence.” He considered Satyagraha as a special form of nonviolence. He emphasized that although Satyagraha incorporates non-violence yet both are two different principles. He explained the relationship between nonviolence and Satyagraha with the following words:

“It is perhaps clear from the foregoing, that without ahimsa it is not possible to seek and find Truth. Ahimsa 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 of a smooth unstamped metallic disk. Nevertheless, ahimsa is the


\(^{17}\) Ibid.
means; Truth is the end. Means to be means must always be within our reach, and so ahimsa is our supreme duty (Gandhi, 2001).  

The literal meaning of Satyagraha is "Truth-force" which implies the force that is generated through adherence to Truth. Gandhi described Satyagraha as truth force or soul-force. He said, “I have also called it love-force or soul-force. In the application of Satyagraha, I discovered in the earliest stages that pursuit of truth did not admit of violence being inflicted on one’s opponent but that he must be weaned from error by patience and compassion. For what appears to be truth to the one may appear to be error to the other. And patience means self-suffering. So the doctrine came to mean vindication of truth, not by infliction of suffering on the opponent, but on oneself.” (Gandhi, 1920, pp. 206)

Civil disobedience and non-cooperation as practised under Satyagraha are based on the "law of suffering", a doctrine that the endurance of suffering is a means to an end. This end usually implies a moral upliftment or progress of an individual or society. Therefore, non-cooperation in Satyagraha is in fact a means to secure the cooperation of the opponent consistently with

truth and justice. Sjt. P. Kodanda Rao, Editor-in- Chief of the weekly publication of the Servants of India Society was of the view that Gandhi’s philosophy of civil disobedience has been adapted from the writings of Thoreau. Gandhi clarified his ideas of civil disobedience by writing a letter to P. Kodanda Rao. He wrote,

“The statement that I had derived my idea of civil disobedience from the writings of Thoreau is wrong. The resistance to authority in South Africa was well advanced before I got the essay of Thoreau on civil disobedience. But the movement was then known as passive resistance. As it was incomplete, I had coined the word Satyagraha for the Gujarati readers. When I saw the title of Thoreau’s great essay, I began the use of his phrase to explain our struggle to the English readers. But I found that even civil disobedience failed to convey the full meaning of the struggle. I therefore adopted the phrase civil resistance. Non-violence was always an integral part of our struggle.” (Gandhi, 1935)

In his letter to P. Kodanda Rao, Gandhi clarified his vision with following words:

“Satyagrahi’s object is to convert, not to coerce, the wrong-doer.
Success is defined as cooperating with the opponent to meet a just end that the opponent is unwittingly obstructing. The opponent must be converted, at least as far as to stop obstructing the just end, for this cooperation to take place.” (Gandhi, 1935)

So according to Gandhi, the objective of Satyagraha, is not to overwhelm but to convert the opponent. In other words, Satyagraha aims to bring about a "change of heart."

Gandhi believed that Satyagraha arms the individual with moral power rather than physical power. Satyagraha is also termed a "universal force", as it essentially "makes no distinction between kinsmen and strangers, young and old, man and woman, friend and foe." Gandhi wrote:

"There must be no impatience, no barbarity, no insolence, no undue pressure. If we want to cultivate a true spirit of democracy, we cannot afford to be intolerant. Intolerance betrays want of faith in one's cause." (Prabhu & Rao, 1967)

Throughout his life, Gandhi led various Satyagraha campaigns. These campaigns were very much disciplined and were based on the principles of his philosophy. The participants were known as Satyagrahis. Usually they

21. Ibid.
were highly disciplined, devoted and trained followers of the Gandhian principles. Gandhi emphasized that Satyagrahis should train themselves and maintain discipline during their political campaigns involving civil disobedience. He was of the view that only when people have proved their active loyalty by obeying the many laws of the State that they acquire the right of Civil Disobedience.” (Gandhi, 1990)\textsuperscript{23} And this obedience should be willing and respectful rather than from any fear of penalty. He wrote, “Before one can be fit for the practice of civil disobedience one must have rendered a willing and respectful obedience to the state laws. For the most part we obey such laws out of fear of the penalty for their breach, and this holds good particularly in respect of such laws as do not involve a moral principle. For instance, an honest, respectable man will not suddenly take to stealing, whether there is a law against stealing or not, but this very man will not feel any remorse for failure to observe the rule about carrying headlights on bicycles after dark. Indeed it is doubtful whether he would even accept advice kindly about being more careful in this respect. But he would observe any obligatory rule of this kind, if only to escape the inconvenience of facing a prosecution for a breach of the rule. Such compliance is not, however, the willing and spontaneous obedience that is required of a Satyagrahi. A Satyagrahi obeys the laws of society intelligently and of his own free will,

because he considers it to be his sacred duty to do so. It is only when a
person has thus obeyed the laws of society scrupulously that he is in a
position to judge as to which particular rules are good and just and which
injust and iniquitous.” (Gandhi, 1990)24

Therefore he propounded that the Satyagrahis should:

i) Appreciate the other laws of the State and obey them voluntarily
ii) Tolerate these laws, even when they are inconvenient
iii) Be willing to undergo suffering, loss of property, and to endure the
suffering that might be inflicted on family and friends (Gandhi, 1925)25

In the same letter, which was written to Shankarlal Ghelabhai Banker,
Gandhi projected his views regarding the conduct of Satyagrahis. He wrote:

“A man who believes that Satyagraha may be started only after
weighing the chances of defeat and victory and assuring oneself
of the certainty of victory, may be a shrewd enough politician or
an intelligent man, but he is no Satyagrahi. A Satyagrahi acts
spontaneously.” (Gandhi, 1917, pp. 517-520)26 He further wrote,
“The Satyagrahi desires to harass neither the Government nor

24. Ibid.
collected works of Mahatma Gandhi, 13.
anyone else. He takes no step without the fullest deliberation. He is never arrogant. Consequently, he will keep away from 'boycott' but be always firm in the vow of Swadeshi as a matter of duty. He fears God alone, so that no other power can intimidate him. He will never, out of fear of punishment, leave a duty undone.” (Gandhi, 1917, pp. 517-520)\(^{27}\)

Gandhi taught the principles of Satyagraha in Sabarmati Ashram and asked his followers to follow the Yamas mentioned in Yoga Sutras:

i) Nonviolence

ii) Truth

iii) Not stealing

iv) Non-possession (not the same as poverty)

v) Body-labor or bread-labor

vi) Control of the palate

vii) Fearlessness

viii) Equal respect for all religions

ix) Economic strategy such as boycott of exported goods (swadeshi) (Gandhi, 2001)\(^{28}\)

\(^{27}\) Ibid.

He also laid out some rules which he considered essential for every Satyagrahi in India:

i) Must have a living faith in God

ii) Must be leading a chaste life, and be willing to die or lose all his possessions

iii) Must be a habitual khadi weaver and spinner

iv) Must abstain from alcohol and other intoxicants

Gandhi wrote in Young India, a series of rules for Satyagrahis. All the Satyagrahis were instructed to follow these rules during their campaigns. The rules for Satyagraha campaigns are as follows (Gandhi, 1930, pp. 340)\(^\text{29}\):

i) Harbor no anger

ii) Suffer the anger of the opponent

iii) Never retaliate to assaults or punishment; but do not submit, out of fear of punishment or assault, to an order given in anger

iv) Voluntarily submit to arrest or confiscation of your own property

v) If you are a trustee of property, defend that property (non-violently) from confiscation with your life

vi) Do not curse or swear

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vii) Do not insult the opponent

viii) Neither salute nor insult the flag of your opponent or your opponent’s leaders

ix) If anyone attempts to insult or assault your opponent, defend your opponent (non-violently) with your life

x) As a prisoner, behave courteously and obey prison regulations (except any that are contrary to self-respect)

xi) As a prisoner, do not ask for special favorable treatment

xii) As a prisoner, do not fast in an attempt to gain conveniences whose deprivation does not involve any injury to your self-respect

xiii) Joyfully obey the orders of the leaders of the civil disobedience action

xiv) Do not pick and choose amongst the orders you obey; if you find the action as a whole improper or immoral, sever your connection with the action entirely

xv) Do not make your participation conditional on your comrades taking care of your dependents while you are engaging in the campaign or are in prison; do not expect them to provide such support

xvi) Do not become a cause of communal quarrels

xvii) Do not take sides in such quarrels, but assist only that party which is demonstrably in the right; in the case of inter-religious conflict, give your life to protect (non-violently) those in danger on either side
xviii) Avoid occasions that may give rise to communal quarrels

xix) Do not take part in processions that would wound the religious sensibilities of any community

Gandhi visualized Satyagraha not only as a political strategy but as a universal approach against injustice also. He believed that it is applicable to large scale political conflicts as well as to interpersonal conflicts. The seeds of Satyagraha were already sown in South Africa, when Gandhi launched a miniature Satyagraha, although it fructified in India. Gandhi practiced Satyagraha during the Indian independence movement as a tool of nonviolent resistance or civil resistance. Satyagraha theory has influenced many leaders of the world. Martin Luther King, Jr. expressed his views on Gandhi and Satyagraha with following words,

“Like most people, I had heard of Gandhi, but I had never studied him seriously. As I read I became deeply fascinated by his campaigns of nonviolent resistance. I was particularly moved by his Salt March to the Sea and his numerous fasts. The whole concept of Satyagraha (Satya is truth which equals love, and agraha is force; Satyagraha, therefore, means truth force or love force) was profoundly significant to me. As I delved deeper into the philosophy of Gandhi, my skepticism concerning the power of love gradually diminished, and I came to see for the first time
its potency in the area of social reform. ... It was in this Gandhian emphasis on love and nonviolence that I discovered the method for social reform that I had been seeking.” (King & Carson, 1998).30

Martin Luther King Jr. and James Bevel deployed Gandhian philosophy of Satyagraha in their struggles and campaigns for social justice and civil rights.

Gandhi devoted his life to the service of the nation and became the true Satyagrahi. He regarded Satyagraha as a process of educating public opinion as it covers all the elements of the society. Indeed Satyagraha teaches the art of living as well as dying. It has the potential to rid the society of all sorts of evils be it political, moral or economic.

**Non-violence (Ahimsa)**

Although Gandhi was not the originator of the principle of non-violence, he was the first to apply it in the political field on a large scale. The concept of non-violence (ahimsa) has a long history in Indian religious thought. The word ahimsa has been derived the Sanskrit language which means non-harm. It implies causing no harm and exhibiting good will towards others. Ahimsa or non-violence is one of the basic principles of Gandhism. Mahatma Gandhi

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was a strict follower of nonviolence (ahimsa). He once said that an eye for an eye will leave everyone blind. So he suggested that if one’s opponent is violent, he/she should exhibit moral superiority through non-violence. He emphasized that non-violence should be considered as a weapon of coward or weak. Gandhi realized later that this level of non-violence required incredible faith and courage, which he believed everyone did not possess (Borman, 1986).\textsuperscript{31} He therefore advised that everyone need not keep to non-violence, especially if it were used as a cover for cowardice, saying, "where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence." Gandhi thus came under some political fire for his criticism of those who attempted to achieve independence through more violent means. He was of the view that violent means will give violent freedom.

Gandhi believed that all religions preach non-violence. He viewed "Ahimsa is in Hinduism, it is in Christianity as well as in Islam." He noted: "Nonviolence is common to all religions, but it has found the highest expression and application in Hinduism (I do not regard Jainism or Buddhism as separate from Hinduism)." (Prabhu & Rao, 1967)\textsuperscript{32}

Non-violent resistance is the chief principle behind Satyagraha movement, which was not only successful in India but also in Western

countries. Gandhi considered non-violence both as a moral issue and a political strategy. He successfully applied the principle of non-violence/ahimsa to all spheres of life. According to him, ahimsa not only implies causing no physical harm rather it also prohibits mental states like evil thoughts and hatred, unkind behavior such as harsh words, dishonesty and lying etc. Gandhi considered ahimsa as a creative energy force, which is capable of leading one to divine truth.

Gandhi believed that God can never be realized by one who is not pure of heart. He pointed out that non-violence is impossible without humility (Tendulkar, 1951). He considered true non-violence mightier than mightiest violence. He viewed truth as a vast tree which yields more and more fruit, the more you nurture it (Prabhu & Rao, 1967). According to him, truth and non-violence should not be considered as cloistered virtues rather they are applicable as much in the forum and the legislatures as in the market place (Tendulkar, 1951).

**Fasting**

Fasting is a practice of willingly restraining oneself from food or water for some period of time. The principle of fasting as a means of controlling the


senses partially originated from the promise to his mother. Before leaving for
his first international visit, he had promised his mother to abstain from three
things and abstinence from non-vegetarian food was one of them. Fresh
fruits and nuts became his staple food. In South Africa, Gandhi took vow of
brahmcharya. Earlier Gandhi had observed fasting mainly for health reasons.
But later on when he realized its role in self-restraint, he commenced fasting
with the hope of supporting his brahmacharya vow. Thus commencement of
fasting was a means of self-restraint and he considered it a way to curb
animal passion also.

Gandhi observed fasting as a self-disciplinary strategy so as to
exercise mental control over worldly desires. He mentioned in his biography
that he greatly benefited both physically and morally through fasting
(Gandhi, 1990).36

He believed that fasting can help to curb animal passion also but only
if it is undertaken with a view to self-restraint. He pointed out that fasting is
futile unless it is accompanied by an incessant longing for self-restraint. He
further added that fasting and similar discipline is, one of the means to the
end of self-restraint, but it is not all, and if physical fasting is not
accompanied by mental fasting, it is bound to end in hypocrisy and disaster

He cited the following verse of the Bhagavadgita in this context:

“For a man who is fasting his senses Outwardly, the sense objects disappear, Leaving the yearning behind; but when He has seen the Highest, Even the yearning disappears.”

Alter affirmed that Gandhi's fixation on fasting was much more a part of his exercises in self-discipline than merely a political strategy (Alter, 1996, pp. 301-322). He used fasting as a political tool also. Information regarding his fasts was disseminated by congress to garner attention. He would generally undertake fasts unto death to press for his demands. In one incident, a strike broke out from labourers’ side. As a settlement was not taking place between mill-owners and labourers, Gandhi by putting his heart and soul decided to fast until the strike was settled. This strike lasted for 21 days. His motive behind fasting was not just to popularize him rather it was a way to show goodness in human beings as he was believer of non-violence. He believed that if other person is cruel and heinous even then deep down somewhere he has a heart and is a human being. On another occasion of fasting, his main motive was to stop riots in the country. There was an occasion when Gandhi fasted until people resorted back to non-violent ways. This fast was for the

37. Ibid.
unity of Hindus and Muslims as they were killing each other in name of religion. Due to Gandhi’s fast, many of them surrendered their weapons. Gandhi observed fast of minimum one day and maximum of 21 days. There were three occasions when Gandhi fasted for 21 days. First penitential fast which he kept for social development was in 1913 for 7 days in Phoenix in South Africa. Irrespective of other fasts, Gandhi fasted first time for 21 days, in Delhi in 1924, for Hindu-Muslim unity. He ended fast while listening to the Quran and Gita being read. Then in 1933, he kept another fast for 21 days. This was his third fast against untouchability for the upliftment of Harijans. Then in 1943 in Delhi, he fasted for 21 days to bring communal riots to a halt. In total, there were 17 fasts, which he undertook for India’s freedom movement. Fasting was his shield to show British officials his strength without holding any weapon. In his opinion, undertaking fast changes people’s heart because they are influence by his sacrifice. Even he started first day of Satyagraha fight with fasting in 1919 and ended in 1948. Gandhi, was a man who never harmed others. He was totally against non-violence. In Chauri-Chaura incident when some non-violent ways were opted by Indians to oppose British cruelties, his heart totally pierced with grief because he never desired to set India free this way. Fasting in this modern jet set world is just to show off their ways of living but for him it was a way to demand rights peacefully and with patience. Whenever Gandhi
felt himself and Indians cheated, he opted fasting as a weapon to attain all rights, which Indians deserved.

**Swaraj**

Gandhi's writings expressed four meanings of freedom: as India's national independence; as individual political freedom; as group freedom from poverty; and as the capacity for personal self-rule. Gandhi was a self-described philosophical anarchist, and his vision of India meant an India without an underlying government. He once said that "the ideally non-violent state would be an ordered anarchy." (Chakrabarty, 2006)³⁹

While political systems are largely hierarchical, with each layer of authority from the individual to the central government have increasing levels of authority over the layer below, Gandhi believed that society should be the exact opposite, where nothing is done without the consent of anyone, down to the individual. His idea was that true self-rule in a country means that every person rules his or herself and that there is no state which enforces laws upon the people. This would be achieved over time with non-violent conflict mediation, as power is divested from layers of hierarchical authorities, ultimately to the individual, which would come to embody the

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ethic of non-violence. Rather than a system where rights are enforced by a higher authority, people are self-governed by mutual responsibilities.

According to Gandhi, a free India did not mean merely transferring the established British administrative structure into Indian hands. He warned, "You would make India English. And when it becomes English, it will be called not Hindustan but Englishtan. This is not the Swaraj I want." (Gillen & Ghosh, 2007) According to another historian, Gandhi saw democracy as more than a system of government. He meant promoting both individuality and the self-discipline of the community. For him, democracy was a moral system that distributed power and assisted the development of every social class, especially the lowest. It meant settling disputes in a non-violent manner; it required freedom of thought and expression. For Gandhi, democracy was a way of life. One of Gandhi’s earliest publications, Hind Swaraj, published in Gujarati in 1909, is considered as the intellectual blueprint of India's independence movement.

India, with its rapid economic modernisation and urbanisation, has rejected Gandhi’s economics but accepted much of his politics and continues to rever his memory (Ghosh, 2001). Reporter Jim Yardley noted that, "modern India is hardly a Gandhian nation, if it ever was one. His vision of a

village-dominated economy was shunted aside during his lifetime as rural romanticism, and his call for a national ethos of personal austerity and non-violence has proved antithetical to the goals of an aspiring economic and military power." By contrast Gandhi is "given full credit for India's political identity as a tolerant, secular democracy." (Yardley, 2012)⁴²

As Gandhi’s ideology is very vast and complex, it is a very arduous task to sum up his entire thoughts. So efforts have been done to explore those aspects of his ideology which were his main principles during the pursuit of independence. Through these principles, efforts were done to explore his perception of freedom. It is evident that Gandhi’s quest to achieve truth by non-violence projected him as the leader of masses. Mass participation in civil disobedience movement, non-cooperation movement and Quit India movement shows that he was a leader of masses. With his leadership, he led the Indian people to independence. And his ideology continues to be the light-house not only for Indians but for the people throughout the world.

**IDEOLOGY OF BHAGAT SINGH**

Bhagat Singh played a dominant role in revolutionary activities in the post non-cooperation movement. Earlier he was drawn to Gandhi's peaceful

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movement when he got disturbed by the Jalianwala Bagh massacre. But due to the sudden cancellation of the movement after Chauri-Chaura incident, he lost faith on Gandhi and his teachings. The revolutionaries got dis-illusioned with Gandhian techniques. Throughout his short life, Bhagat Singh emulated the examples of his ancestors. Bhagat Singh's ancestors were among those who were not reconciled to the foreign domination. Bhagat Singh's father was influenced by the Hindu reformist movement Arya Samaj. His uncles, Ajit Singh and Swaran Singh as well as his father were part of the Ghadar party led by Kartar Singh Sarabha. Bhagat Singh spent the years from 1924 to 1928 in studying the history of revolutionary movement in India. Singh was attracted to anarchism and communism (Nayar, 2000).

Singh passed through the phases of being a Gandhian Nationalist to a Romantic Revolutionary, and then after coming under the influence of Terro-(or Anarcho-) Communism for a short period, finally became a convinced Marxist, a follower of Scientific Socialism. Taking a cue from this, it is assumed that he became a Marxist after 1928 or in the last two years of his life when he was in the prison. But it is noteworthy that underlying the transition from one political phase to another, he experienced a consistent and continuous ideological development. Bhagat Singh’s patriotism was neither based on mere ‘anti-British-ism’ or anti-colonialism,

nor on crude anti-imperialism. His anti-imperialism was not only more radical than that of Lokmanya Tilak, Dadabhai Nauroji and Gandhi, but also was soundly grounded in the Leninist understanding of imperialism. He along with the members of HSRA popularised the concept of revolution (Mishra, 2007, pp. 44).

**Revolution**

Singh and the members of HSRA time and again, made it clear that “revolution is not a cult of bomb or pistol”, “by revolution we mean that the present order of the things based on manifest injustice must change...” and “Revolution for us means the ultimate establishment of an order of society where no barriers would exist, and where the sovereignty of the proletariat would be accepted, and consequently, through a world federation the humanity would redeem itself from the bondage of capitalism and from the perils of the imperialist wars.” (Singh, & Dutt, 1929). Bhagat Singh wrote:

> “Revolution is made by labouring intellectuals and hardworking activists. Unfortunately, the intellectual side of the Indian Revolution has always remained weak. As a result, the essential elements of the revolution as well as the effects of work

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accomplished have not been sufficiently addressed. Therefore, it is necessary for a revolutionary to consider studying and reflection a sacred duty.” (Lal, 2004).46

Anarchism

Bhagat Singh published a series of articles on anarchism in *Kirti*. He was concerned that the public misunderstood the concept of anarchism, writing that "The people are scared of the word anarchism. The word anarchism has been abused so much that even in India revolutionaries have been called anarchist to make them unpopular.” He believed that the ultimate goal of anarchism is complete independence, according to which no one will be obsessed with God or religion, nor will anybody be crazy for money or other worldly desires. There will be no chains on the body or control by the state (Chopra, 1985).47 Eventually Bhagat Singh having imbibed with these lofty ideals made the supreme sacrifice for the country.

Atheism

Bhagat Singh was a believer in God in his initial life. There is a widely held opinion that Bhagat Singh was an atheist from beginning. To clarify this widely held notion, various aspects of his life need to be explored. Bhagat Singh hailed from a family of staunch Arya Samaji’s who were obviously


theist and followers of God. In his autobiographical disclosure he has cited that:

“I lived in the boarding house for one year. Besides prayers early in the morning and at dusk time, I sat for hours and chanted religious mantras. At that time I was a staunch believer. Then I lived with my father. He was a tolerant man in his religious views. It is due to his teachings that I devoted my life for the cause of liberating my country. But he was not an atheist, his God was an all-pervading entity. He advised me to offer prayers every day. In this way I was brought up.” (Singh, 1931)\(^48\)

He further quotes that:

“In non-cooperation days, I got admission to the National College. During my stay in this college, I began thinking over all the religious polemics such that I grew sceptical about the existence of God. In spite of this fact I can say that my belief in God was firm and strong. I grew a beard and ‘Kais’ (long head of hair as a Sikh religious custom). In spite of this I could not convince myself of the efficacy of Sikh religion or any religion at

all, for that matter. But I had an unswerving, unwavering belief in God.” (Singh, 1931)49

However, after reading about the great revolutions across the world and the biographies of Lenin and Marx, he was convinced beyond doubt that God doesn't exist. In his autobiographical disclosure he wrote:

“I studied Bakunin, the anarchist leader. I read a few books of Marx, the father of Communism. I also read Lenin and Trotsky and many other writers who successfully carried out revolutions in their countries. All of them were atheists. The ideas contained in Bakunin’s ‘God and State’ seem inconclusive, but it is an interesting book. After that I came across a book ‘Common Sense’ by Nirlamba Swami. His point of view was a sort of mystical atheism. I developed more interest in this subject. By the end of 1926, I was convinced that the belief in an Almighty, Supreme Being who created, guided and controlled the universe had no sound foundations. I began discussions on this subject with my friends. I had openly declared myself an atheist.” (Singh, 1931)50

49. Ibid.  
50. Ibid.
He explained that his orientation towards atheism was not merely a show of vanity. He believed that religions divide the people and divert them from the cause of independence (Singh & Hooja, 2007). He believed that the religious beliefs deprive a man of his understanding power and makes him reactionary. He clarified his rejection of age-old belief in God by citing following reasons:

“As I have indicated, one of my revolutionary friends used to say that “philosophy is the outcome of human weakness.” Our ancestors had the leisure to solve the mysteries of the world, its past, its present and its future, its whys and its wherefores, but having been terribly short of direct proofs, every one of them tried to solve the problem in his own way. Hence we find wide differences in the fundamentals of various religious creeds. Sometimes they take very antagonistic and conflicting forms. We find differences in Oriental and Occidental philosophies. There are differences even amongst various schools of thoughts in each hemisphere. In Asian religions, the Muslim religion is completely incompatible with the Hindu faith. In India itself, Buddhism and Jainism are sometimes quite separate from Brahmanism. Then in

Brahmanism itself, we find two conflicting sects: Aarya Samaj and Snatan Dheram. Charwak is yet another independent thinker of the past ages. He challenged the Authority of God. All these faiths differ on many fundamental questions, but each of them claims to be the only true religion. This is the root of the evil. Instead of developing the ideas and experiments of ancient thinkers, thus providing ourselves with the ideological weapon for the future struggle, – lethargic, idle, fanatical as we are – we cling to orthodox religion and in this way reduce human awakening to a stagnant pool.” (Singh, 1931)\

He urged people to become realistic by throwing the faith aside and face all adversaries with courage and valour. He pointed out that:

“ ‘It is necessary for every person who stands for progress to criticise every tenet of old beliefs. Item by item he has to challenge the efficacy of old faith.” (Singh, 1931)\

Bhagat Singh believed that if not for religion, people would have been united and fought against Britishers as one. These lines from ‘Why I am an Atheist’ show the importance of selfless service to the nation:

53. Ibid.
"I am going to sacrifice my life for a cause. What more consolation can there be? A God-believing Hindu may expect to be reborn a king; a Muslim or Christian can dream of the luxuries he hopes to enjoy in paradise as a reward for his sufferings and sacrifices. What hope should I entertain? I know that it will be the end when the rope is tightened around my neck and the rafters moved from under my feet. To use more precise religious terminology- it will be my moment of utter annihilation. My soul will come to nothing. If I have the courage to take the matter in the light of 'Reward', I see that a short life of struggle with no such magnificent end shall itself be my 'Reward'. That is all. With no selfish motive or desire to be awarded here or hereafter, quite disinterestedly, have I devoted my life to the cause of independence, because I could not do otherwise." (Singh, 1931)\textsuperscript{54}

\textbf{Violence}

Bhagat Singh is generally portrayed as a violent man- someone who can kill easily. The fact is that Bhagat Singh was non-violent to his core to such an extent that it pained him to hurt or kill anyone (Singh, 2011).\textsuperscript{55} Historical

\textsuperscript{54} Ib\textit{id}.
\textsuperscript{55} Singh, B. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India. (2011, October 1). \textit{Research, Reference and Training}. 

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accounts make it clear that Bhagat Singh’s acts were not violent at initial stage. Only the atrocities of British Empire had diverted his mindset. Furthermore, he and his associates had a different viewpoint regarding the issues of violence and non-violence. Their ideas propounded through The Philosophy of Bombs are as follows:

"Let us, first of all, take up the question of violence and non-violence. Violence is physical force applied for committing injustice, and that is certainly not what the revolutionaries stand for. On the other hand, what goes by the name of non-violence is in reality the theory of soul-force, as applied to the attainment of personal and national rights through courting, suffering and hoping thus to finally convert your opponent to your point of view."..... "The question really, therefore, is not whether you will have violence, but whether you will have soul-force plus physical force or soul-force alone." (Vohra, 1930)  

After Saunders' death, HSRA issued a public notice, signed by Balraj, a pseudonym of Bhagat Singh. He wrote, "SORRY for the death of a man. But in this man has died the representative of an institution which is so cruel,

lowly and so base that it must be abolished. In this man has died an agent of the British authority in India---the most tyrannical government of governments in the world. Sorry for the bloodshed of a human being; but the sacrifice of individuals, at the altar of the Revolution that will bring freedom to all and make the exploitation of man by man impossible, is inevitable.” (Balraj/Singh, 1928)  

Similarly, after Assembly bombings, he and B. K. Dutt threw some leaflets signed by Balraj. The text contained following lines: "We are sorry to admit that we who attach such sanctity to human life, we who dream of a glorious future when man will be enjoying perfect peace and full liberty, have been forced to shed human blood." (Singh, 2011) All these findings show that Bhagat Singh had faith in non-violence, but was forced to act violently due to atrocities of British.

Even when Bhagat Singh and his associate threw two bombs in assembly chamber, they did not even try to escape or resist. Rather he and his associate surrendered while shouting the slogan "Inquilab Zindabad!" ("Long Live the Revolution") and threw leaflets. Moreover, bombs thrown by them were also not so intense which could harm anyone. They were designed not to kill, and there was no major harm. This reflects that the

objective behind this incident was not to trigger violence but to convey the message of resentment and to create public awareness. The pamphlets also read that it takes a loud voice to make the deaf hear. Arrest of Bhagat Singh and his associate created mass awareness and resulted in public sympathy. Such instances show that Bhagat Singh did all violent acts intentionally, who was also aware of the repercussions. After his death, he became a popular folk hero and youth icon. So, even with such intense support of public he and his associates were executed owing to the reason of Singh’s attitude to attain complete Swaraj.

Bhagat Singh’s non-violent and crystal clear motives can be sensed from his quoted words, “In May, 1927, I was arrested in Lahore. This arrest came as a big surprise for me. I had not the least idea that I was wanted by police. I was passing through a garden and all of a sudden police arrested me. To my own surprise, I was very calm at that time. I was in full control of myself.” (Singh, 1931)\(^{59}\)

The nephew of the freedom fighter and revolutionary Bhagat Singh, Prof. Jagmohan Singh has also observed that Bhagat Singh believed in the principle of non-violence. He argued that Bhagat Singh believed that sustainable peace can only be brought through the Non-Violent means; it

was just that he used violence for temporary purposes (Singh, 2005).

Through the ‘Philosophy of Bomb’ Bhagat Singh and his comrades clarified that their goal was to achieve national freedom as part of the politics aimed at a revolutionary transformation of the present social system and based on the materialist-scientific philosophical world-view. Bhagat Singh (and Vohra) in ‘Philosophy of Bomb’ differentiate between ‘violence’ and ‘force’, the former being used by the ruling classes, the oppressors or the state to perpetuate exploitation and their rule, while the latter being the resistance put up by the exploited or oppressed people and insist that what they were resorting to was ‘force’ and not ‘violence’. (Vohra, 1930)

He was not in favour of irrational violence but considered the use of physical force important when challenged by tyrannical forces. He wrote on one occasion, “What happens when a non-violent attempt fails to achieve the objective? It is here that soul force has to be combined with physical force so as not to remain at the mercy of tyrannical and ruthless enemy.” Through his letter titled ‘To Young Political Workers’ he made his ideological position distinctly clear, where he says –

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“Apparently I have acted like a terrorist. But I am not a terrorist. I am a revolutionary who bears much concrete and specific ideas of a long-term programme...” and then he states, “We want a socialist revolution, for which the indispensable foundation is a political revolution. That is what we want. The political revolution means the transfer of the state (or to put it bluntly, the power) from the hands of the British to the hands of the Indians, and that too, those Indians who are at one with us as to the final goal. To be more precise, it is necessary that the power be transferred to the revolutionary party through the efforts of the common people. After that, to proceed in right earnest is to organize the reconstruction of the whole society on the socialist basis....” (Singh, 1931)\(^6\)

**Satyagraha**

Singh, however, also adopted various forms of struggle such as hunger strike and Satyagraha, which generally ‘terrorists’ do not resort to! In his early days, Bhagat Singh was a part of Gandhi’s non-cooperation movement. He participated in the movement in hope of seeking some political advancement

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so as to shatter and paralyse British Imperial System. Bhagat Singh was against all sort of biases practised especially on Indians. He even followed Gandhi’s Satyagraha, a peaceful protest against British government. While in jail, he deployed fasting as a non-violent way to communicate his message to the British authorities. In addition to Gandhi, India’s Independence Movement witnessed fasting by other fighters such as Jatin Das (who fasted to death) and Bhagat Singh. Singh along with his fellow inmates underwent an indefinite hunger strike in the Mianwali Jail. He joined Jatindra Nath Das, B.K. Dutt and Rajguru in this protest. This strike was a protest against prejudiced difference in treatment of the white versus native prisoners as former were provided with special privileges and demanded to be recognised as ‘political prisoners.’ The hunger strike fetched great attention of media and people’s support. After 63 days of long fast Jatindra Nath Das lost his life which sowed seeds of negativity in hearts of Indians against authorities. Finally on 116th day, Singh along with other freedom fighters ended his fast (surpassing the 97 day world record for hunger strike which was set by an Irish revolutionary) upon his father’s and congress leadership’s request.

In their last letters both Sukhdev and Singh distanced themselves from the bomb attacks that engulfed the Punjab in late 1930. Although calling for a military department in the future Communist Party, Bhagat Singh was emphatic that it would have to be subordinate to the political wing. He told
his followers that except for the first few days of his career as a revolutionary, he was never a terrorist. He was absolutely confident that they would not achieve anything by those means: ‘bam fainkna na sirf bekaar, balki nuksandayak hai’, throwing a bomb is not only useless but could have negative consequences for the revolutionary movement. To the All Punjab Students Conference, Bhagat Singh and Dutt sent a ‘wireless message’ advising them not to use bombs and pistols, but to follow the Congress program. Bhagat Singh reminded his followers that it was important not only to die for your goals but also to live by them. (Nair, 2008, pp. 649-681)63

Though the means adopted by Bhagat Singh were against the core Gandhian philosophy, the two important actions that he carried out- the assassination of Saunders and the dropping of non-lethal bombs at the Central Assembly were to seek revenge which was born out of hurt and humiliation. Jitendranath Sanyal, one of the Bhagat Singh’s comrades, who was imprisoned for writing a biography of Bhagat Singh in 1931, in his statement before the Court had said –

“The Sardar Bhagat Singh, I knew was neither a terrorist nor an anarchist; therefore to discharge my duty towards my late friend I thought of presenting his true and historical picture. In this I

wanted to show that he was a communist and an internationalist and that people had misunderstood him.” (Sanyal, 2006)64

In the biography, Sanyal had written -

Bhagat Singh started to live like a communist, from the time he began his reading of communist literature, and emphasizes that Being a true communist, his outlook on each and every matter remained internationalist. Like all other revolutionaries he also had risen above regional sectarianism, but had gone one step ahead of them. His humanism had left the nationalism long behind, there was not an iota of geographical or linguistic sectarianism in him (Sanyal, 2006).65

This ideological evolution of Bhagat Singh is reflected in various facets of his thought and practice. Bhagat Singh always dreamed of an India which is equal for all after independence. As he was a follower of communism, he always believed in equality of people. He thought that even if people get independence by Gandhian ways, the labour class, daily workers would continue to get exploited. He said that true independence can never be won if the poor masses are not empowered. However, one feels sad

65. Ibid.
looking at the rich-poor divide in today's India, which is too far away from achieving the state for which he sacrificed his life.