

Dag Hammarskjold Memorial Lecture 2013

Toward Building Societies in the Nonviolent and Peaceful Tradition: From Gandhi to the Present Day

Prof.N.Radhakrishnan

Chairman

Indian Council of Gandhian Studies (New Delhi)

drnradhakrishnan@gmail.com

www.profnradhakrishnan.com

We have to make truth and nonviolence, not matters for mere individual practice but practice by groups and communities and nations. That at any rate is my dream. I shall live and die in trying to realize it .My faith helps me to discover new truths every day. Ahimsa is the attribute of the soul, therefore life practiced by everybody in all affairs of life--

Gandhi

The pursuit of peace and progress cannot end in a few years in either victory or defeat. The pursuit of peace and progress, with its trials and its errors, its successes and its setbacks, can never be relaxed and never abandoned –

Dag Hammarskjold

Throughout my life, I have always looked to Mahatma Gandhi as an inspiration, because he embodies the kind of transformational change that can be made when ordinary people come together to do extraordinary things. That is why his portrait hangs in my Senate office: to remind me that real result will come not just from Washington—they will come from the people. **Barrack Obama**

Distinguished Chairman, Honorable Ambassador Chowdhury, Your Excellencies, Respected members of the Board of Management of the Dag Hammarskjold Memorial Lecture, eminent peace activists and Peace fraternity of Oslo, Ladies and Gentlemen, Kindly accept the greetings of my fellow countrymen in India, who in the great Gandhian tradition respect and adore Dag Hammarskjold for the courageous initiatives he made to rid this world of war and strife. Coming from Gandhi's India it is natural for me and my countrymen to realize the significance of the contribution Dag Hammarskjold made to promote peace and understanding in the world.

Let me in all humility submit that I deem it a great privilege to be here in this historic hall to share with you my thoughts as a student of Gandhi, a peace activist and educator for peace. I also express my profound sense of gratitude to the honorable members of the Dag Hammarskjöld Memorial Committee for inviting me to be here.

Let me confess that I am a great admirer of Norway and I should at the outset salute the great Norwegian Nation which has made very significant contribution in different ways to strengthen liberal and democratic values and attitudes besides nurturing a culture of peace globally. We are all familiar with the sustained efforts the Norwegian government and the people of Norway have been making to eradicate global poverty, promote human values, liberal thinking, disarmament and peace. May your great nation be blessed with further success in all its endeavors to promote peace and goodwill globally! I am reminded of a pithy statement Dag Hammarskjöld made at this moment:

"Never measure the height of a mountain until you have reached the top. Then you will see how low it was"

I was a sixteen-year old youth who had just entered first year of my under-graduate course when the most shocking news about the tragic death of the second UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld reached us in 1961. Hammarskjöld was not an unknown name among us and Indian news papers had been highlighting his highly commendable efforts to promote bilateral relations among the warring factions during those tumultuous periods in human history. His untimely and tragic death in a plane-crash brought to light several issues related to the undercurrents of both international diplomacy and the trappings of cold war era. I remember what one of our professors said to us referring to Dag Hammarskjöld, *"it is dangerous to be good". President John F. Kennedy's homage, perhaps, was another cryptic assessment of the greatness of Dag."* I realise now that in comparison to him, I am a small man. He was the greatest statesman of our century", said Kennedy. Well it took many years for me to realize fully what it meant. One of the briefest quotes I remember often is from Hammarskjöld, *"I never discuss discussions"*.

As one of the most eminent and successful Secretary Generals of United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld is admired world over for his daring initiatives to usher in peace and promote harmony, amity and dialogue both among the nations and in warring communities. He advised the global community,

"Our work for peace must begin within the private world of each one of us. To build for man a world without fear, we must be without fear. To build a world of justice, we must be just. And how can we fight for liberty if we are not free in our own minds? How can we ask others to sacrifice if we are not ready to do so?... Only in true surrender to the interest of all can we reach that strength and independence, that unity of purpose, that equity of judgment which are necessary if we are to measure up to our duty to the future, as men of a generation to whom the chance was given to build in time a world of peace. (UN Press Release SG/360 (22 December 1953))"

One wonders whether Dag Hammarskjöld had realized that his contributions to humanity as a peace maker would soon become a precious part of human heritage when he said, 'We are not permitted to choose the frame of our destiny. But what we put into it is ours.'

There are several lessons one could learn from the life, work and contribution of this remarkable diplomat, economist, author and a fine human being that Dag Hammarskjöld was. There are also many valuable aspects for us to learn from his highly inspiring life. What he wrote about him would offer a glimpse of his character:

From generations of soldiers and government officials on my father's side I inherited a belief that no life was more satisfactory than one of selfless service to your country - or humanity. This service required a sacrifice of all personal interests, but likewise the courage to stand up unflinchingly for your convictions. From scholars and clergymen on my mother's side, I inherited a belief that, in the very radical sense of the Gospels, all men were equals as children of God, and should be met and treated by us as our masters in God."

As Kofi Annan said,

Dag Hammarskjöld's "wisdom and his modesty, his unimpeachable integrity and single-minded devotion to duty, have set a standard for all servants of the international community — and especially, of course for his successors — which is simply impossible to live up to".

Te publication in 1963 of his "journal" entitled *Markings* revealed the inner man as few documents ever have. Dag Hammarskjöld himself had described it "a sort of White Book concerning my negotiations with myself - and with God." The entries themselves are spiritual truths given artistic form. *Markings* contain several references to death, perhaps none more explicit or significant than this portion from the opening entries when he was a young man:

**Tomorrow we shall meet,
Death and I -.
And he shall thrust his sword
into one who is wide awake.**

A critic candidly reviewed *Markings* as follows:

"It is indeed quite unusual for a Secretary-General to pen down his emotions and intimate feelings in such a candid and humble way. A struggle with death and things dying. A collection of thoughts, reflections, poems and emotions that affect you deeply and keep you coming back for more. You never really finish reading this book. Deeply moving".

Richard I Miller in his book "Dag Hammarskjöld and Crisis Diplomacy" wrote: "His deep inner stillness was a mainspring of his strength — a fortress so strong that disappointments, failures, setbacks and even personal attacks could not weaken his will or compromise his resolution to carry on his great task. His interest in the Mediation Room at the U.N. Building was deeply personal, not merely esthetic. He wrote the words on the entrance: "This is a room devoted to peace and those who are giving their lives for peace. It is a room of

quiet where only thoughts should speak." He went there frequently for quiet reflection, knowing that retreats into loneliness were a source of strength for the struggle" [From Dag Hammarskjöld and Crisis Diplomacy by Richard I. Miller, Pyramid Books Edition: first printing, January 1962; Pp. 317-19.]

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Gandhi in the Global Context

Gandhi, born in 1869 in Colonial India, surprisingly began his activist's life in South Africa as a human rights activist. Describing his initiatives as "Experiments with Truth", at no stage in his 53 years of active involvement (21 years in South Africa and 32 Years in India) did he recognize a rival or enemy? Holding on to the Biblical teaching 'resist the sin, not the sinner', Gandhi brought in new humanistic insights into all his campaigns and in his life. Distinguished British historian Arnold Toynbee's statement raised interesting insights and perspectives in the evaluation of Gandhian strategies: "Gandhi made it impossible for us to go on ruling India, but the same time he made it possible for us to abdicate with honour and without dishonor".

It is naïve to believe that Gandhi did not have his detractors. He invited very strong dislike and criticism even from day one of his public campaigns and work. Though he is universally respected and admired now, it is difficult to assess which of the two, admiration or criticism weighed more. The fact is that he continues to evoke in good measure both criticism and admiration even today.

'The man who became one with the Universal Being' – this was the sub-title of Romain Rolland's book *Mahatma Gandhi* (1924). Rolland wrote in it:

'One thing is certain, either Gandhi's spirit will triumph, or it will manifest itself again, as were manifested centuries before the Messiah and the Buddha'.

Twenty years later Albert Einstein wrote of Gandhi: 'Generation to come, it may be will scarcely believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth'. Let us also not forget the contemptuous description of Gandhi by Winston Churchill, as "the half-naked fakir". Many in the British Raj found in Gandhi a wily, double-tongued politician who was out to destroy Her Majesty's Empire. Colonial masters also found in him an implacable enemy who led the collapse of both imperialism and colonial hegemony. Many of them never forgave Gandhi for initiating the global campaigns which forced colonial masters to surrender the colonies one by one. He was dubbed a politician in the garb of a saint.

Political analyst John Gunther's analysis of Gandhi's contribution is worth remembering:

“This man who is at once a saint and a politician, a prophet and a superb opportunist, defies ordinary category . . . The concept of nonviolence is a perfect example of Gandhi’s familiar usage of moral weapons to achieve practical results, of his combination of spiritual and temporal powers.”

While he was adored and worshipped as *The Mahatma* (great soul), *Father of the Nation*, *Bapu* (Father) there was also no dearth of tormentors back in his home country. A large segment of princes and orthodox Hindus were up in arms. The Communists never appreciated his efforts and they found in him a friend of the capitalists. He was the *bête noire* of orthodox Hindus who were infuriated by his denunciation of caste exclusiveness and untouchability and by his advocacy of secular politics. This hate-Gandhi mindset remained a vital factor until he was gunned down by a religious fanatic. He was also described a nationalist and denied Nobel Prize on this count.

It is over six decades now since Gandhi was assassinated. Surprisingly Gandhi invited massive critical appraisal also and he continues to be one of the most written about leaders of 20th century. Animated discussions on what Gandhi left for humanity and whether his teachings would survive the test of time have become regular features in many centers of learning and research. What even the passionate critics of Gandhi cannot miss is the string of activities along Gandhian lines one can see in almost all countries of the world now. If not in very significant measure, there are very few countries in the world where something or other in the name of Gandhi is not being organised. In short, there is a global non-violent awakening after Gandhi in very significant measure and it is also argued passionately that it is perilous to ignore Gandhi. The socio-economic and political scenario all over the world has undergone tremendous changes during the last five decades and a new culture has taken over and the talks about the global village has also seem to have landed humanity in a new mess-up in the sense many do not know what all these things are. Traditional values, concerns and strivings seem to have been replaced by a new set of attitudes and life-style which are steeped in materialism and consumerism, assiduously propagated by the champions of unlimited material progress and values, and attitudes associated with Gandhi and other visionaries are being reduced to topics for academic discussion in India. On the contrary, in several quarters outside India, peace activists, development experts, scholars and writers of eminence are seriously looking at the legacy of Gandhi, particularly the holistic vision of Gandhi and the emphasis and the strategies associated with him, against the background of the emerging challenges in various fields in the post-Gandhian period.

The fast-emerging global socio-political and economic scenario is an eloquent reminder of the speed with which the forces released by science and technology and aided by human greed has dismantled almost at one stroke all humanity hitherto believed invincible. Nothing is sacrosanct now. The geopolitical compulsions and the mad frenzy of both developed and developing nations, to appropriate for themselves all

what they can lay their hands on, reminds us of the haste and anxiety seen among the nocturnal thieves to plunder completely and decamp with the booty before anyone wakes up in the house. It appears that a kind of colonial instinct also guides modern man in all his activities. Only the label changes, the bottle and the decoction continue to be the same.

The Major Challenges

It appears that among the major challenges of the twenty-first century will be:

1. *Taming the monster of violence and keeping it within limits besides eliminating terrorism.*
2. *Ensuring equitable distribution of wealth and natural resources; also to cry a halt to the exploitation and insensitivity shown in preserving balance in nature.*
3. *Elimination of poverty and hunger.*
4. *Increasing reliance of rulers and politicians on religious fundamentalist elements and forces to capture power and sustain themselves in power by exploiting religious sentiments, and*
5. *Decline of moral, spiritual and ethical considerations and the extending tentacles of consumerism and materialism.*

Of all these, the most disturbing is the alarming manner in which violence is spreading – spreading like a cancer. The biggest challenge to the present century will be how to tame this monster. Besides eating into the vitals of all what humanity has been able to achieve, it threatens to hold humanity to ransom and is in the driver's seat now. The chilling factor in this sordid and frightening scenario is the speed with which violence has sent shock waves everywhere. Violence is no longer the luxury of the industrialised or developed nations or those kept under long years of colonial rule but it is everywhere. Let us look at what the National Centre of Education Statistics of the Department of Education in Washington DC pointed out at a news conference:

100,000 children take a gun to school every day (Children's Defense Fund says as many as 135,000)

160,000 will miss school because of fear of injury

320,000 per month

60,000 per day

2,000 young people attacked before every hour in a working day

282,000 per month

14,100 per day

900 teachers threatened and nearly 40 attacked per hour

125, 000 Threatened each month

8,250 threatened per day

5, 200 physically attacked each month

260 per day

37 per hour

Every 36 minutes - a child is killed or injured by a firearm - over 14,000 per year.

1986 -1990 - 250 hostage incidents - using guns - in 35 states.

Development: New Perceptions

All of a sudden, economics has overtaken all other branches of human endeavor and pushed other areas to insignificant positions. Religions and ethical values that have been nourishing and sustaining civilisations for centuries are no longer of any significance. Traditional societies are alarmingly breaking-up, and there is a spread of the cult of violence. Nurturing of unprincipled political order and fostering irrelevant cultural semantics and appearance of militarisation in a new garb and stalking of dehumanising poverty and malnutrition which still affect more than one third of the global community are of no concern to the managers of human destiny now. The general discrimination despite all brave talks and initiatives, the apathy and the kind of cynicism with which morality and ethics are being viewed and abused, the callous indifference shown to Mother Earth and the manner in which nature is being exploited thinking that there is inexhaustible wealth hidden beneath the surface and many similar disturbing and unhealthy trends with which modern civilization is associated with, have been sending dangerous signals and all those who care for human survival are desperately looking for signals which would send some rays of hope - hope that everything is not lost and that it is not too late.

Discriminatory world-order

And it appears that at one go; humanity has been seized by those who believe that economic growth is the real index of both development and real power. While the power of money was never under-estimated anywhere, never before in human history everything is being measured in terms of per capita income or GNP or the relative purchasing power or such other material considerations. This pre-occupation which has created a situation where family ties, inter-personal, cultural, ethical, even religious and social aspects have been relegated to the background is really sending shock waves all around. Nobody seems to be worried about the terrific manner in which all aspects that sustain humanity and regulate growth and other issues receive scant attention from those who control our lives. This has become a universal phenomenon and no society or country can feel that the situation is different with them. All what we hear is the talk about sharing of wealth, arms reduction and nuclear non-proliferation by those nations who produce all lethal weapons that could wipe out humanity several times in the event of a war and advocating acceptance of NPT, which several countries like India genuinely feel discriminatory in its present form. The warning and spirited campaigns undertaken by the environmentalists to stop many of the harmful steps by the managers of our destiny receive practically no attention and unfortunately these warnings by and large, remain cries in the wilderness.

Degradation of human being to the level of a commodity

The anguish of the humanity is well reflected in what Pope Francis said last week:

"Today the news is scandals. The many children who do not have food are not news.

This is grave. We can't rest while things are this way...

The crisis the world is going through is not on economic front, but a crisis of values."

The sad fact is that man is nowhere in the reckoning now. He has been pitifully reduced to the status of a consumer and he is first and last a consumer now. His purchasing power is all that matters. Similarly, the purchasing power of a nation is all what the other nation now cares for. The talk in the world capitals are all centered on the biggest markets in the world and our newspapers devote more than a bulk of their space for market trends, stock markets and bullion rates while a bulk of the remaining space in the news papers deal with violence of various forms, political gossips, coup attempts, private life of celebrities and such other hot items which would ensure a steady interest among the readers. The readers, who are caught in the web of a violent culture and are force-fed by the sweetmeat provided by an enticing consumerist culture, are also satisfied by the 'kick' they get by reading these items. Why should they waste their time on news and features about culture, art or development? This attitude, unfortunately, seems to be gaining ground.

Relevance of Gandhi

The relevance of Gandhi or for that matter anybody else has to be examined against these emerging trends of time. The galloping horses of humanity, which are at the moment being goaded and whipped to run as fast as they could in order to win the coveted place of material achievements have to be reined in by the collective assertion by an awakened humanity which has the right to exist. But then, this will be possible only if we are prepared to ponder over the immense damage being caused to the edifice of humanity. It is not even slow poisoning; it is almost like 'sudden death', to borrow an expression from football.

Gandhi on Machinery and Industrialization

Gandhi's views on machinery and large industries invited criticism from many quarters. He is branded anti-progressive on this score. Galtung makes a very interesting observation in this regard. To Gandhi, big cities and big industries were instruments of British imperialism for which Gandhi had no love. 'Is it not possible, however, to humanize citizens and industry? Citizens can become confederations of relatively autonomous neighborhoods. Industries can reform in a similar fashion: technologies that degrade neither human users nor the natural environment can be evolved. Large factories and office buildings may give way to more work at home. Gandhi proposed nonviolence as an alternative to the choice between violence and capitalism. Citizens

and industries remodeled as I suggest would provide similar alternatives to the choice between industry and cottage industry and agriculture. “Gandhi certainly perceived the middle way but he did not develop it with regard to villages versus cities. It is the responsibility of the millions of people who were inspired by Gandhi to work out the middle way on the basis of his work and the message he left for posterity”, argues Professor Galtung.

Gandhi in the cyber age and in the context of Globalization

What is the relevance of Gandhi in this all pervading materialistic, agnostic and consumerist culture? It is precisely these three tendencies Gandhi fought in all his life. It is a fact of history that repudiation of one philosophy at a given time does not mean the death or irrelevance of it. The men and women who moved the world were mostly either crucified, burnt alive, or were branded heretic, or excommunicated. Still independent inquiry and pursuit of truth and to express themselves against injustice were continued in all ages, probably with added vigor. The irreversible fact of history, again, is that the list of such ‘rebels’ steadily grow despite all attempts to ward off the perceived threat.

Despite all the impressive gains mankind has achieved in the present century through intelligent harnessing of science and technology which brought in unexpected and unimaginable results in various fields, the world today is on the throes of several global crises. Conflicts and tension of all sorts are increasing, sending shock waves all around. With the disappearance of the Soviet Union as the leader of block-of nations, the world has become unipolar. If anybody believed that the cold war years have ended and humanity could live in peace henceforth, his hopes have been completely belied as could be seen from the various disturbing fighting and raging violence and senseless killings in various parts of the world. Notwithstanding all high sounding assurances on arms reductions and cuts in military expenditure, we see an alarming escalation in the production of lethal weapons. It is estimated that there is an annual-worldwide consumption of 1000 billion dollars on arms alone. Even one-sixth of this huge amount is sufficient enough to remove world hunger in the next six years.

Where have we gone wrong? Have we lost all our concern for our less fortunate brethren? Almost all the planning models we have experimented have strong elitist bias and connotation of moneymaking and influence building seem to be the base of all the models we have been experimenting with in recent times. This has led to serious consequences in many areas.

The tendency of urbanization is as old as human civilization and it is a natural consequence of a changing society. In fact this process was considered a welcome development on grounds of economies of scale reduction of disturbances, and efficient sharing of resources generated through the adoption of urbanization. With industrialization, a new element was introduced and people who own means of production gradually usurped the fruits of industrialization and a new class of people

emerged. Impoverisation and marginalization have increased. Instead of offering vast opportunities to the worker what happened was the growing awareness that jobs are becoming fewer and scarce. A vast majority was denied access to jobs and land the gulf between the organised labors also increased. More distressing than any of these is the untold miseries industrialization has brought in which led to the sprouting up of slums – those veritable hells where humanity is crushed beyond any sign of redemption.

Introduction of high technology has inevitably made agriculture, the oldest human profession, into an industrial activity. This rendered many farm hands surplus. Where do the labour forces go? Inevitably, to the urban centers. Bombay is the best example. Out of the total population of the 10.5 million in 2000, six million are leading a subhuman kind of living in these veritable infernos called slums.

Development without justice and compassion?

By no stretch of imagination can anyone say that these are moral prescriptions by an orthodox social reformer. On the contrary, they reflect the profound understanding of a revolutionary thinker, philosopher activist, whose vision in life was steeped in pragmatism, love, compassion and change with consent

An examination of the views and practices of Gandhi and J. C. Kumarappa and the theories of Schumacher, Henderson and Capra, in the light of what is described today as Sustainable Development, a term so vogue, and heard from almost everybody who has anything to do with preservation of life of earth, would reveal the amazing fact that in Gandhian thought and action, humanity has sufficient tools it needs for sustainable development. As early as 1909, through his little book 'Hind Swaraj', Gandhi drew humanity's attention to what might happen to the globe if proper check is not imposed in the various strategies and alternatives we examine. Gandhi said, "I must confess that I do not draw a sharp line or any distinction between economics and ethics. Economics that hurts the moral well-being of an individual or a nation is immoral and, therefore, sinful". This indicates that sustainable development requires both biological and cultural diversity which in turn is inescapably linked to justice and compassion, toward each other and to the nature.

"We notice that the mind is a restless bird. The more it gets, the more it wants, and still remains unsatisfied. The more we indulge in our passions, the more unbridled they become. Our ancestors, therefore, set a limit to our indulgence. They saw that happiness was largely a mental condition. A man is not necessarily happy because he is rich or unhappy because he is poor." Gandhi had written in his little classic Hind Swaraj that was published when the twentieth century was just being ushered in.

We are fostering a system which has inbuilt iniquities, power, wealth, knowledge and we have a culture/civilization bereft of any trace of compassion. It has all the trappings of Casino Capitalism which has infinite power to entice humanity through its charm.

We go on blaming science and technology but how many of us care to realise that technology by itself has no will. It is the social will which determines. The aeroplane which carries passengers can carry bombs.

Economic well-being appears to be the sole of purpose of life and the manner in which value systems are being trampled upon raises the big question: where are we heading to?

The usherers, drum-beaters and self-styled (self-appointed) custodians of emerging trends, perhaps, are impervious to the following paradoxes:

- *While absolute poverty has decreased globally, relative poverty has increased.*
- *More people have become literate. But access to information and technology has become concentrated and centralized.*
- *More countries have become democratized but there is greater concentration of power.*
- *Communication explosion but growing alienation, family break up, lack of communication at individual level has become rampant.*

By 'growth', what is meant today is economic growth and man has all of a sudden been reduced to the level of commodity whose worth is determined by factors other than what distinguishes them from the beast.

Moral values, ethics, spirituality, family values, religious insights have all seemed to have lost their place and values in the emerging global scenario. Ethics and morality appear to be out of tune with the ethos of the global village. Globalization has thrust to the forefront. The death of religion and the deterioration of the nation-state, leading to global integration mostly on the strength of economic prosperity of the industrially rich and developed nations which by and large are in the driver's seat today, have led to a situation where vast iniquities that divided the small minority of haves from the huge majority of have-nots. Very few, unfortunately, appear to be conscious of the dangers of blind globalization in their anxiety to take advantage of its so-called benefits. The economic liberalization and technological automation threaten to widen even further existing economic, social, political and cultural disparity.

Global justice will be a far cry unless bold initiatives are undertaken to overcome these disparities. The declining in-importance of nation-state in favor of global village concept has confounded the situation further since the present uni-polar politics and hegemony of the superior currencies not only dictate terms to the poor cousins who are by and large at the receiving end.

Gandhi's Challenge

Gandhi continues to challenge many postulations and keeps on reminding humanity that there is a 'Truth' beyond all what we perceive and hold to be truth'. By making truth as the axis of all his endeavors Gandhi was seeking the spirituality of truth itself which is the very basis of science. He there by convincingly challenges those which espouse the notion that spirituality and science need to be at war with each other.

Here, Gandhi out-grows the condescending position of a social scientist and revolutionary thinker and social activist that was assigned to him by commentators and historians. If science is 'truth-seeking', by making his life "Experiments with Truth" Gandhi went far beyond the traditional parameters of classifications. Gandhi who asserting the supremacy of truth over everything. He reminds us here of Einstein's statement that imagination is greater than knowledge.

Science vs. the moral fiber of the individual

This also implies that there is a great power within every human being in his/her consciousness. The outer world has been effectively influenced by changing what is within us. The inner world constitutes a vast reservoir of untapped energy which, if used diligently, has the power to take on the material world. The courage to make every crisis into an opportunity and every obstacle into a possibility springs from the inner and spiritual fiber of the individual. Newton's Law of Motion, if make taken in its metaphorical sense, illustrates this argument further, 'every object in the universe attracts every other object with a force directly proportionate to the product of their masses and inwardly proportional to the square of the distance between their centers'.

Just like that science and scientist, who believe that there is nothing impossible in life, Gandhi held on to truth like a baby cling to its mother. When he emphasized the power of love, compassion, truth, nonviolently the mightiest of the Empires of the day, many doubted his wisdom. His claim that India could win the freedom without resorting to violence and war, it looked laughable. His ideas described impractical, naïve or even dubbed as 'Amid-summer Night Dream'.

Undistributed by these barbs, Gandhi pursued his "Experiments with Truth" with the precision and devotion of scientist. He was guided by the teaching of Gita and the assertion of Thoreau who wrote, *"I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life through conscious endeavor". What is important is the ability of every human being to nature their sprit and inner resources and allow to transcending the walls and fences will eventually merge as liberated souls. John Milton's words corroborate this": "the mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell and a hell of heaven"*.

Gandhi combines spiritual with insights with scientific truth

It goes to the credit of Gandhi that he evolved a philosophy and life style which was permeated with spiritual insights and scientific truth. He did not see any difference in them and when he asserted in his autobiography, 'what I want to achieve – what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years – is self realization, to see God face to face, to attain Moksha', (page x) he was restating the profound relationship between the spiritual and the material.

Gandhi was not interested in the argument whether religion is forerunner of science or science has always been nurturing religion or religion and spirituality are

older to science. He could see how science outgrew the importance of religion in the life of individuals as more and more developing scientific truth and capability. The champions and custodians of the spiritual domain relapsed into just meditative and contemplative life styles thereby becoming status quoists. Science and technology with its manifold focus and application came into the life of people with surprising and hitherto unbelievable results. The primacy of religion steadily eroded while science forged ahead with unstoppable speed and energy.

Gandhi's seminal contribution lies in the area of blending science and spirituality as revealed in the philosophy and practice of Satyagraha. The Satyagraha as enunciated by Gandhi seeks to integrate spiritual values, community organization and self-reliance with a view to empower individuals, families, groups, villages, towns and cities. Robert Payne in his perceptive study of Gandhi remarks, Gandhi was never "truth force", so it was never "nonviolence" or "passive resistance", although it included then in its ever-winding orbit.

Morality and the Challenge of Civilization

Many Americans now accept that September 11 events are to be viewed in the general emerging scenario. They also pointed out that the US must bear a lot of responsibility for its contribution to the present situation. The US foreign and economic policies towards developing and least developing countries must be revised drastically. Americans have given primacy to materialism, consumerism and individualism at the cost of spiritualism and lost their ability to feel concerned for each other.

Gandhi, as is known fairly now, tried to infuse the fresh air of spiritualism in every domain of human endeavor, including politics. He earned the name of a saint trying to spiritualize politics. His mantra was to wipe away tears from every eye.

Religion is meant to be an advocate of peace. But we know that the biggest wars have been fought in the name of religion. There are many of us who would not like a world partitioned on the basis of religions, creed, castes and money. Such a world of peace demands an attitudinal change. In such a world the strong will not exploit the weak, the rich will not harm the poor, and the privileged will not ignore the underprivileged.

Gandhiji had stated that the very essence of our civilization is that we give permanent place to morality in all our efforts-public or private. The ancient Vedic philosophy of "*Sarva Dharma Samabhav*" or *Respect for all religions* formed the basis of Gandhiji's religious humanism.

We have a lot to learn from the animal world. Swans and penguins remain faithful to their water lifelong. Bees, Ants and Birds form the disciplined social groups. Elephants have a joint family system caring for each other. Even the Crows care for the injured mate. If only all of us care for each other and follow the same voice of Gandhiji, the world would be a better place to live in for everyone. The aim of religion is not to fill the empty vessel but to turn the eye of soul towards the light to evolve a common

understanding of all religions and their relevance to achieve peace by working collectively.

It is said that science emerged as a revolt against the Age of faith. Science gradually helped heralding the Age of Renaissance. Science is also hailed as a major phase in human history. It was argued in many quarters that it posed a major threat to the very existence of human kind.

The casteless and classless society he was striving to establish aims at the realization of both material and spiritual properties. He described the society that he was aiming was a *Ram Rajya*. Non-Hindus and a section among his admirers failed to understand what he meant by *Ram Rajya*, Gandhi said, “By Ram Rajya, I do not mean Hindu Raj, I mean by Ram Rajya, a Divine Raj the Kingdom of God”. His faith in God was unshakable. His God was not a personal God. He repeatedly chanted Ram Nama but averred that his Ram is not the Lord of Ayodhya. His Ram is Almighty God which guides him to noble action and whose presence can be felt everywhere. The Ram Rajya he was advocating was an ideal social order where an ideal King Rules over his subjects without any distinction whatsoever, truth dharma and justice will be the dominant characteristics of such a society. Both the Pandit and the poorest of the poor will have equal say in the governance. Nobody will be discriminated against anybody.

The six decades of Gandhi’s public life in three continents, spearheading various movements for new social and political milieu where all men and women will be treated as brothers and sisters, demonstrated with convincing sincerity a revolutionary zeal for change – change with consent – hitherto un-experimented in national or international politics. Tolerance, consent, reconciliation and a profound faith in the unity of all sentient and non sentient beings have been the core of the Gandhian vision of a world where harmony among the various segments of God’s creation would nurture the essential goodness in each one – both the visible and invisible threads–uniting the entire humanity into a single entity. Does this sound Utopian? Yes, quite a large number of people believe that the new social order Gandhi envisioned is too idealistic and an unattainable utopia only fit enough for academic and semantic interpretations.

Gandhi’s critique of the emerging scenario

Gandhi warned humanity as early as 1909 in his seminal work ‘Hind Swaraj’, that unprincipled growth will land humanity on the brink of disaster. Even his own close disciples raised their eye brows of disagreement when he said this. The evil that we are to fight is within us and that we are ignorant of it is the basic problem. Motif such as give and take, live and let live, love and to be loved, have become clichés in the new dictionary compiled by the champions of unlimited growth. This can be possible only if we adopt a holistic vision of life and ensure equality and justice which presupposes the simple truth that each individual is unique and we should respect his/her individuality and let him/her maintain each one’s uniqueness and what applies to an individual should apply to a nation or at a global level.

Gandhi further warned humanity against a series of social and political turmoil, ecological devastation and other human misery that might arise unless modern civilization takes care of nature and man tries to live in harmony with nature and strives to reduce his wants. Unlimited consumeristic tendencies and callous indifferences to values will not help humanity to progress towards peace, he warned. Hatred of all forms, exploitation in whichever manner it exists, are negation of humanity's basic right to exist. The Gandhian legacy of simple living in conformity with the basic rhythm of life typifies the age-old wisdom of humanity. Gandhi tries to convince humanity that wars never solved any problem. On the contrary, reconciliation should help humanity sort out the various problems. Thus, in Gandhi, as has been pointed out by many thinkers in different parts of the world, we have a world leader who dreamt of a warless world and promoter of a social order where exploitation and injustice will not become the dominant tendencies.

Gandhi's experiment in South Africa and its contemporary relevance

Two of the important factors that brought Gandhi closer to the millions are the genuine inspiration he was able to offer to the freedom-loving citizens and the generation of a feeling among a considerable section of the masses that he was motivated only by the spirit of service and not by any personal or ulterior desires. His South African experiments won him respects from even those who opposed him and those who never met him or knew him.

Tolstoy comments that what Gandhi did in South Africa was the most important thing in the world at that time were a case in point. Gandhi demonstrated that the life of a leader should also be open, capable enough to influence the masses so that they will also emulate the leader unreservedly. Gandhi did both these with remarkable success, which in turn resulted in millions following him like charmed moths. The two settlements that Gandhi started in South Africa, the *Phoenix Ashram* and the *Tolstoy Farm* bear eloquent testimony to the leadership qualities and the visionary nature of Gandhi which in turn generated great understanding, sympathy and enthusiasm among almost all dumb Indians and others in South Africa at the beginning of the twentieth century. His life, both as an initiator of new experiments and as a private individual and lawyer of great promise, were all open. He was against anybody possessing anything more than what the other person had. The members of the settlement ate in the common kitchen, worked in the farm together, their children attended the general school and nobody entertained or desired to accumulate or acquire anything of his own. Not that Gandhi did not have problems in this. It was difficult for him to convince even his own wife. Gandhi was harsh when he detected that his wife had a few things of her own. Gandhi's children were disappointed and even they nourished an ambition of attending better schools and pursuing their higher education outside South Africa. Gandhi resisted all these attempts and insisted on his children attending the same school where the children of other members of the settlement were studying. He kept

account of every pie that was spent. He stopped even charging for his own services as a lawyer. All this, not only endeared him to his followers but inspired them also to follow him as far as possible. This naturally resulted in the generation of a kind of joy and willing participation in the cause he was espousing. A new tradition of nonviolent living was sprouting in South Africa.

The efficacy of 'Satyagraha'

Back in India, the first major movement Gandhi launched was in a place called Champaran, near Bodh Gaya, the hallowed place associated with Shakyamuni Buddha. Gandhi's visit to this sleepy village, where he launched his first Satyagraha movement also witnessed joyful participation of the people in large numbers. He proved that people will respond to any genuine call for action provided they are convinced that the issues identified are their own and one who leads the movement should also be a source of love, respect and dedication and in Gandhi his followers found these qualities in abundance.

The Ahmadabad Mill strike, the Salt Satyagraha, the Non-Cooperation Movement - all witnessed large number of people jumping into the massive Civil Disobedience Movement sacrificing their wealth and comfort and courting sufferings, injuries and sacrifice.

The songs sung by those who participated in this heroic struggle extolled virtues of unprecedented magnitude. Nothing would deter these people from marching forward. Jails were filled with satyagrahis and schools and factories were also converted into temporary jails having found no room to accommodate the surging and ever growing number of those who were defying the orders of the Government. There were instances of prisoners being sent out of the main land to the Andaman Islands. Facing bullets and even death did not matter. It was the conviction, and that too, unmistakable and a grim determination to march forward like inspired souls to achieve their goal, that characterized their mood and by no means could it be said impulsive. That was the spirit of those heroic days. In this heroic struggle, the central figures who not only inspired all those who participated, as also those who proved to be the sheet anchor of the resurging fighting for self discovery and articulation of their suppressed voice, were Gandhi and those inspired by Gandhi. This remarkable achievement was possible because Gandhi convincingly demonstrated through his simple life that his identification with the masses was complete.

Gandhi cannot be described to be a philosopher in the conventional sense of the term. His views, mostly based on his profound understanding of human nature and the insights he developed from the numerous experiments he conducted with scientific precision, have been found to be not a philosopher's articulations but the records of the experience of a visionary who was searching for ways and means to lessen tension and promote harmony in the various spheres of human endeavor.

(III)

Global spread of nonviolence and nonviolent struggles

Though Gandhi emphatically said he had nothing to teach and his life was his message, he inspired many social activists, political leaders, and writers, thinkers, who acknowledged specifically Gandhi as their mentor or their principal source of inspiration. While Tolstoy, Gandhi's contemporary, described Gandhi's work in South Africa as the most significant political activity of his time, Romain Rolland was the first to discuss Gandhi in his 1924 book *Mahatma Gandhi*. Brazilian anarchist and feminist Maria Lacerda de Moura wrote about Gandhi in her work on pacifism. Scientist Albert Einstein exchanged letters with Gandhi and called him "a role model for the generations to come". In another major development Lanza Del Vasto who wanted to settle down in India to work with Gandhi founded *the Community of the Ark* in 1948 (modelled after Gandhi's ashrams). The Community of Ark influenced several peace activists who devised nonviolent techniques and modes for conflict management and societal transformation. Madeline Slade, daughter of a British admiral spent much of her adult life in India as a devotee of Gandhi. Gandhi rechristened her as Mirabehn and she emerged in later years as one of the most outstanding Gandhi followers. What the Dalai Lama said on Gandhi and his influence on the spread of global nonviolence in an interview with Catherine Ingram offers interesting insights:

"The history of this century (20th century) is confirming the nonviolence Gandhi and Martin Luther King (Jr) spoke of. Even when it is against a super power that has all these awful weapons, the reality of the situation can compel the hostile nation to come to terms with nonviolence".

From the general attitude towards Gandhi as the chief architect of India's nonviolent freedom movement and as someone who interprets nonviolence as a new idiom the international community has been showing signs of analyzing Gandhian options very seriously, as the previous century came to close and many of the overriding political and philosophical positions were either proved to be defective or died their natural death. And today, Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy is looked as a live experience with potential for transformation leading to a Global Awakening for peace.

Why is the world turning to Gandhi? The reasons are many. The ideological battle lines of the Cold War between competing social orders have disappeared with the demolition of the Berlin Wall and the demise of socialism. This has resulted in a vacuum, which discourages exploration of alternatives. That the model of development being imposed by elites is removed from popular aspirations is borne out by the success of the Green movement. The success of the Greens underscores the failure and rejection of the Western model of development against which Gandhi had warned humanity as early as the first decade of the 20th century.

The Greens turn to Gandhi

The Green perspectives on development has radicalized politics by creating an awareness of ecological risks and forcing a genuine search for global solutions. Groups inspired by Gandhi are now seeking to widen the relevance of Mahatma's teachings to encompass issues of peace, human rights, economic equality and democracy. They are convinced that it was the Gandhian critique on industrial economics, which earned the Greens a global constituency. It is a search to communicate and revive a sense of community among peoples.

Nonviolent initiatives and overthrow of dictators

That nonviolent resistance has brought significant changes from the build-up to the overthrow of the Shah of Iran and Marcos in the Philippines to the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia and the uprising in East Germany is recent history. A Hungarian speaking minority in Slovakia, deprived of education in their language and resorting to 'Civil-disobedience' is another example of ongoing Gandhian struggles.

The unending savagery of ethnic cleansing in erstwhile Yugoslavia, rediscovery of war as a "realistic means" to resolve conflicts, proliferation of sources and targets of violence and the deepening socio-economic divide between and within nations despite the widening of the boundaries of democracy has triggered a new awakening. This is evident in the quest for a new paradigm rooted in Gandhian values and a negation of the virtues of developmentalism, discredited socialism and reformed capitalism.

It may not be an exaggerated statement that colonialism wilted under nonviolent struggles. In the decades after World War II, many countries of Africa and Asia liberated themselves from centuries of violently maintained colonial rule. It may be remembered that almost all of these struggles began as nonviolent political campaigns inspired by the Gandhian initiatives. Many of these struggles remained predominately nonviolent all the way to victory while some of them turned to armed revolutionary struggle after nonviolent attempts were ruthlessly suppressed by military and police.

In the modern, post-colonial era, most of the revolutions that have successfully overthrown their own authoritarian governments have been nonviolent. For example, in the post-colonial era:

1973 - Thailand (the "October Rising")

1974 - Portugal (the Carnation revolution)

1981-1989 - Poland (Solidarity)

1986 - Filipinos (the People-power or Yellow revolution)

1987-1989 - Estonia-Lithuania-Latvia (the Singing Revolution or Baltic Way)

1989 - Czechoslovakia (the Velvet revolution)

1989 - Bulgaria

1989-1990 - East Germany

2000 - Yugoslavia (the Bulldozer revolution)

2003 - Georgia (the Rose revolution)

2004 - Ukraine (the Orange revolution)

2005 - Lebanon (the Cedar revolution)

It has been found that Nonviolent Resistance does not always succeed just as armed struggle also fail often. Some nonviolent revolutions in recent years were brutally suppressed are:

1976 - Thailand

1988 & 2007 - Burma

1989 - China (Tiananmen Square)

2008 - Tibet

There have been some revolutions achieved through a combination of violent and nonviolent strategies & tactics. For example:

1960-1994 - South Africa struggle against apartheid

1978-1979 - Iran (the Islamic revolution)

2005 - Kyrgyzstan (the Tulip revolution)

Even many among those who espouse violent revolution and scorn Nonviolent Resistance concede that in today's modern world nonviolent social change has succeeded far more often than armed struggle.

The Arab Spring Revolutions

What are known today as the Arab Spring Revolutions have their roots in the techniques Gandhi demonstrated and King adapted. Several violent or nonviolent protests in the early 21st century, especially in Tunisia and Egypt, termed "Social Media Revolutions", were essentially nonviolent. President Hosni Mubarak resigned as president of Egypt, leading people to label this as a peaceful and mostly nonviolent people's revolution.

Nonviolence enters Bosnia

The Bosnian situation has been begging for a solution quite some time. With successive multi-nation peace missions coming a cropper, peace activists, political scientists, social critics and philosophers are convinced that a nonviolent and Gandhian form of intervention might usher in a peaceful solution to the vexed Bosnian conflict.

From Martin Luther King Jr. to Aung San Suu Kyi and Mairead Maguire the list of nonviolent civil rights activists, freedom fighters, nationalists, Human Right activists, environmentalists, feminists have shown a remarkable understanding of the growing relevance of means Gandhi adopted and the vision and legacy he bequeathed to humanity.

The pace of nonviolent collective actions along Gandhian lines initiated by Martin Luther King is continued with conviction and courage by activists who lead civil liberty movements and nonviolent struggles and campaigns all over the world. Kenneth Kaunda, Bishop Tutu, Julius Nyerere, Nelson Mandela, Ho Chi Min, Aung San Suu Kyi,

Thitch Nhat Hanh, Cesar Chavez, Gary Snyder, Joanna Macy, Diane Nash, Rev. Barnard La Fayette are only few of the most illustrious names to remember in this context.

Dismantling of apartheid - message for rest of the world to end social discrimination

There is a surprising similarity between UNESCO's statement in its preamble that since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed and Mahatma Gandhi's assertion that the world either progresses with nonviolence or perishes with violence.

Mahatma Gandhi's heroic work in South Africa for full 21 years and over 32 years of work in India have given humanity a blue print of strategies for a peaceful transition of humanity where respect for all forms of life, human dignity, self-respect and tolerance would characterise humanity's progress. The year 1994 bore witness to the efficacy of Gandhi's strategies and philosophy as could be seen from the manner in which the fight Gandhi began a 100 years ago in South Africa i.e. in 1903 bearing fruits when the blacks and the whites in South Africa were able to work out a satisfactory solution to peaceful transfer of power which resulted in the holding of elections and Dr. Mandela taking over the reigns of power.

With the acceptance of Gandhian tactics for injustice and nonviolent transformation by the Greens, notably Petra Kelly, a new dimension of ecological and sustainable development models as envisioned by Gandhi has spread to many countries in the Eastern Europe. The championing of Gandhian nonviolence by the Quakers also added hopeful signs and led to a resurgent collective action for justice and freedom in many western nations. The impact of their initiatives notably in the Latin American region is quite substantial.

Scholars / trainers/researchers and analysts evince interest in nonviolence

Several motivated souls who developed nonviolent attitude in their journey of service to mankind such as Prof. Glenn D. Paige, Gene Sharp, Johan Galtung through their dedicated efforts, sustained critical interest offered valuable academic input to the significance of nonviolence for human survival.

Among those who were instrumental in bringing into the scene a whole generation of young researchers and peace activists by offering them appropriate framework to understand, analyze and research into the various aspects on nonviolence Professor Glenn D. Paige whose Herculean efforts to develop a critique of nonviolent political science is another important phase in modern history. Professor Paige has made significant contribution in enthusing several young scholars of international repute to become champions of nonviolence. Dr. Chaiwat Satha Anand, Dr. Lou Ann Guanson, Professor George Simson, Professor Sikander Mehdi, to mention a few, have already become names to reckon with as serious exponents of nonviolence.

Institutions to promote nonviolence

Another significant development in the last three decades is the emergence of quite a few institutions wedded to the propagation of nonviolence in various parts of the world. A.T. Ariyaratne (Sri Lanka), Chandra Muzafir (Malaysia), Mr. Bagoes Oka (Indonesia), Shrimati Kamala, Michael True, Lester Kurtz (USA), Danilo Dolci (Italy), Sulak Sivaraksa (Thailand), Peter Ruhe (Germany), Stephen Murphy (Australia) and Elis Sarid (Israel) are some of the names that are to be remembered for their sustained efforts to promote nonviolence through constructive programs, if not in a copy-book manner, but creative adaption of the Gandhian mode to suit the requirements of the times.

The founding of the Gandhi Canadian Foundation for World Peace with its headquarters in Edmonton (Canada), and the Centre for Global Nonviolence at Honolulu, Hawaii, by Professor Glenn Paige and others are landmark developments. The efforts of Krishan Joshee and the Attorney Bharadwaj in the Edmonton area of Canada through their initiatives to develop nonviolent attitudes to life in children and youth also deserve mention. Vance Engleman, a courageous nonviolence votary founded a Gandhi Ashram and library at Sewickly in Pittsburgh.

Nonviolent initiatives in Colombia and the martyrdom of Governor Gaviria.

Another development of immense significance in recent times was the strivings of the Antioquian (Colombia) Governor Dr. Guillermo Gaviria whose martyrdom while promoting nonviolence and nonviolent tactics particularly to give dialogue, reconciliation, solidarity and peace a chance in the conflict-ridden Colombia.

Governor Gaviria's heroic efforts to train nonviolent cadres of activists who would strive to promote the gospel of love and compassion, it appeared, reached a phenomenal height when he organized a series of nonviolent initiatives reminiscent of the Gandhi-led Salt March or King's March on Selma.

The Governor in a surprising move took out a March of reconciliation and solidarity to the mountainous Caceido town in order to meet the top leadership of FARC and persuade them to give up violence which has been plaguing his country too long. The Governor was warned against this step by his cabinet and his father. Convinced of the efficacy of nonviolent direct action the Governor persisted with his plan and took out the March. In an unusual step the Governor had ordered the police and Army not to carry weapons or try to protect the March if attacked. He was fully conscious of the risks including kidnapping. There was an international contingent of peace activists and scholars such as Prof. Glenn D Paige, Dr La Fayette, Charles Alphin, Richard Deats and Bill Bhaneja with him besides the First Lady when he was kidnapped on 21 April. On May 25th 2003. After 379 days in captivity the Governor and nine others including the Peace Commissioner were killed by his captors in an abortive military campaign by Colombian Force.

With his martyrdom Governor Gaviria has risen to the ranks of those great heroes of nonviolence and his martyrdom has generated all round interest in not only Colombia but also in many other countries in Latin America in the efficacy of nonviolence though he himself had to sacrifice his life at the altar of nonviolence strivings. The Marching slogan of the March to Cacedo **“asi...Hay un camino—la Nonviolencia” – yes...There is A way –Nonviolence---**seems to have cast a magical spell on a large segment of Colombian youth particularly whose commitment to the vision of the martyred governor and is making waves and Colombia now seems to have greater number of votaries of nonviolence and peace than ever before.

Daisaku Ikeda’s Strivings Toward a Peaceful Global Order

Dr Daisaku Ikeda, President of Soka Gakkai International and widely respected Japanese philosopher and peace activist who has been actively campaigning for world peace, abolition of nuclear weapons, spread of humanistic education, culture of peace, sustainable development, gender equality and youth empowerment has emerged a great champion and promoter of a new tradition of nonviolent problem solving and sustainable peace. He has made a very significant analysis of Gandhi’s legacy in his 1992 Gandhi Memorial Lecture. The Soka Gakkai International, perhaps the largest spiritually and culturally oriented Buddhist lay believers inspired by the teachings of the 13th century philosopher Nichiren Daishonin has a formidable following who with determination involve themselves in several extremely useful peace promotion initiatives in 192 countries and territories in the world.

Ikeda’s Gandhi Memorial Lecture has attracted wide acclaim and it has become almost a classic. First, it is scholarly besides being a forthright analysis of the essence of Gandhi’s teachings from the viewpoint of (i) optimism, (ii) activism, (iii) populism and (iv) holistic vision. Very few scholars or analysts have ever tried to look at Gandhi from these angles. Second, the lecture analyses Gandhi’s relevance in the fast-changing world scenario against the backdrop of the amazing technological and scientific progress the past century has made in the light of Gandhi’s known stand on science and technology. Third, the speaker also highlighted the relevance of Gandhi’s views vis-a-vis the eternal aspects of human life.

Drawing parallels in the lives of Ikeda’s mentor Josei Toda and Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Ikeda said, “During the second World War, at the time when Gandhi was engaged in his final struggle in prison, my mentor also imprisoned for this opposition to the Japanese military authorities. Like Gandhi, Toda was a pacifist of profound conviction. He was also a leader of the people inspired by a deep sense of compassion. Finally, like Gandhi, he was a creative social reformer who changed history. All of our activities for peace, culture and education stem from President Toda’s efforts and from the spirit which we have inherited from him”.

Referring to the epoch-making changes at the global level, Dr. Ikeda pointed out, “it is undeniable that our world has entered an age of momentous change – a period of transition on a scale that occurs perhaps once in a century. We have seen the historical forces unleashed by the process of *Perestroika* which Mikhail Gorbachev initiated surge forth, like waters bursting a dike or dam, to inundate and swallow that which was their original impetus. And while it might be said that upheaval has characterised the final years of other countries the changes we have witnessed these past few years – from the collapse of the Berlin Wall to the dissolution of the Soviet Union – have far outstripped the expectations and predications of any historian.

“On the one hand, these events have lent credence to the idea that no form of authority or authoritarianism is capable of smothering the voice of ordinary citizens who aspire to their freedom. The other, equality undeniable aspect of these changes, is that they threaten to set us adrift in new and uncharted regions of history, bereft of any guiding ideology I feel the need for us to lend our ears to the voice of Mahatma Gandhi, which quietly addressed and appeals to us, if from the still depth that lies below the angry billows churning the surface of history’s current”.

Dr. Ikeda was at his critical best when he analyses the activism of Gandhi, “Throughout his life, Gandhi was a man of action. Once, when a Brahman suggested that he enter a life of meditation, Gandhi is said to have replied that while his days were devoted to efforts to attain the spiritual liberation of enlightenment, he felt no need to withdraw to a cave for that purpose. The cave, he said, was something which he carried about with him. The quintessentially Gandhian humor of this episode gives us a wonderful portrait of the barefoot saint. In terms of the range and scope of Gandhi’s activities, they are incomparably greater and wider than those of other advocates of nonviolence, such as Tolstoy, Ikeda argued.

One of the shortcomings noticed in many of the biographers and critics of Gandhi is the fact that Gandhi the revolutionary has not been fully explored. Dr. Ikeda has done great service to the understanding of Gandhi by touching upon these aspects. He said, “The image we have of Gandhi the activist stands in marked contrast with that of the revolutionary, the child of the radical ideologies that have held sway over so much of the twentieth century. Bolshevism, for example, has produced in great qualities the kind of hot-blooded revolutionary who, while dedicated and idealistic, has been given to narrow-mindedness and dogmatism. All too often such revolutionaries have no hesitated in the resort to violence when they have felt that it was required to realise their beliefs. In his most well-known work, *Doctor Zhivago*, the Russian poet Boris Pasternak denounces the apostles of this kind of radical ideology, saying that they ‘have never understood a thing about life... have never felt its breath, its heartbeat.

The third point Dr Ikeda discusses was Gandhi’s populism, his extra ordinary communion with the masses of so-called “ordinary people”. He said, in our increasingly democratic world, there are great numbers of leaders who invoke the name of “the

people". How many of them, however, could be truly said to be working on the side of the people and for their benefit? It is not going too far, I think, to say that the greater part of these leaders are in fact merely "playing the crowd", whom they secretly despise and whom they seek to use for their own purposes.

Gandhi, in contrast, was a genuine friend and father of the common people. His selfless and devoted life lived in the very midst of the Indian people whose joys and sorrows he made his own, his perfect and natural grasp of the popular mind – all these earn him the title of Mahatma. "He asked himself: - 'Why should he (God) have chosen me, an imperfect instrument, for such a mighty experiment? I think He deliberately did so. He had to serve the poor dumb ignorant millions. A perfect man might have been their despair. When they found that one with their fallings was marching on towards *ahimsa* (nonviolence), they too had confidence in their own capacity.'

"Nichiren Daishonin, the founder of Buddhism we practise, was born the son of an unknown fisherman. It was rather with pride, however, in his origin that he raised aloft the banner of his Buddhism of the common people. Gandhi's attitude toward the common people strikes me as bearing a profound relation to the Bodhisattva way that is revealed in Mahayana Buddhism".

Gandhi's uncompromising fight against the forces that corrupt human civilization was evident in his holistic nature of thought which Dr. Ikeda highlighted at length. "If one were to express in a few words the central flow of modern western civilization, one would have to cite the sense of isolation and fragmentation which it has introduced in all areas of life and society. By this I mean the lines of separation that have been drawn between man and the universe, between humankind and nature, between the individual and society, between different peoples, between good and evil, between means and end, between the sacred and the secular, and of forth. In the midst of this ever greater fragmentation the individual human being has been forced into a state of isolation. Modern history, which on the one hand has been marked by the pursuit of human equality, freedom and dignity, has at the same time been the history of our increasing alienation.

"If it goes without saying that what Gandhi advocated throughout his life – and when he manifested in his character – stands as an antithesis to these aspects of modern civilization. Although there is a certain extremity in his critique of civilization, symbolised by his famous Charka (Spinning Wheel), which may make it difficult to accept without reservation, what I find to be invaluable is the global – even cosmic – sensibility which pervaded, in the most natural way possible, his every word and action. His was a holistic approach to life that, turning away from fragmentation and isolation, aspired to integration and harmony".

Gandhi's tackling of direct violence in the Third World – Galtung- Ikeda dialogue

Agreeing fully with this observation of Ikeda, Professor Johan Galtung in his dialogue with Ikeda points out

".... optimism was a basic condition for the astonishing major struggles that Gandhi carried out in only one life time: the battle for home rule (Swaraj): his work to elevate the people in general and particularly the self-reliant, small, coherent communities that he called 'Oceanic circles' (Sarvodaya) his battle to improve the condition of the casteless (to whom Gandhi gave the name harijan or children of God) his work to raise the status of women; his efforts in the name of equality on behalf of Indians in South Africa; his not very successful strivings for peace between Indian Hindus and Muslims; and the most important of all, his devoted support for and development of nonviolence (Satyagraha) as the only valid approach to the attainment of all his other goals". And he successfully attained all those goals inviting Albert Einstein to describe Gandhi as the greatest political genius of our times precisely because of his ability to maintain a subtle balance between the ideal and the practical. This ability found concrete, embodiment in the nonviolent resistance movement.

Dr. Ikeda has also raised a very important question about the effectiveness of nonviolence in combating what is called structural violence in the Third World. Can nonviolence work in an imperial structure dominated by centre-periphery relations in which the centre is strong and the periphery weak?

Professor Galtung is convinced that Gandhi answered direct violence with nonviolence defense. He answered structural violence with nonviolent revolution. These methods worked in the Soviet Tsarist-Bolshevik structure, one of the most brutal of all worlds' empires. The basic formula for the effectiveness of these techniques is two-fold; to strengthen the periphery (that is, the weak) and to weaken the centre (the strong). Gandhi predicted accurately the downfall of political structures based on power and violence such as those of the former Soviet Union and its satellite nations in East Europe. The comments of Gandhi during his visit to Romain Rolland that (Gandhi) had a deep mistrust of the ultimate success of the experiment being carried out there may be remembered in this context. It seems that it is a challenge to non-violence; assume significance, as it is widely understood now.

For Gandhi, ends and means always had to be consistent and subject to the same ethical principle; violence can only breed violence. Similarly, as can be seen in good relations between the British and the Indians today, nonviolence breeds nonviolence. The structures Gandhi laid at Russia's doors are applicable in the West too, points out Galtung:

“The French Revolution, which is usually celebrated as a great liberation, was actually excessively cruel and bloody.... The United States was born in blood. Genocide was conducted against may be 10 million indigenous Americans in the period 1500-1900 who were later confined to reservations, a very vicious form of structural violence. Many Native Americans remain on reservation today with no hope of an end to their misery in sight. The struggle for independence between 1776 and 1812 was mostly violent, as was the cruel and bloody Civil War of 1861-65, the main goal of which was the preservation of the Union; abolition of slavery was only a secondary issue”.

As Gandhi proved through his successful campaigns in South Africa and India the goals of these revolutionary struggles could have been attained nonviolently without encouraging and strengthening the strains of violence inherent in the people waging them, *“What the Soviets had done was no more than a parody, a caricature, a kind of revolution Gandhi initiated – of course, the Soviet system failed. History is sometimes harsh, but just judge”*, agrees Galtung.

Religion and social change

Galtung also makes a very useful analysis of Gandhi's basic approach to religion and societal change. *“Being he a reformer, Gandhi did not have any difficulty in absorbing the basic teachings of the Buddha whose revolutionary teachings are the core of Buddhism which is a reform movement within the great Hindu tradition. The word ‘Hinduism’ itself is a most inadequate term for a vast conglomerate of profound philosophies. I see Gandhi's Buddhist inclinations in three directions within this conglomerate”*, Galtung points out:

First is his instance on Ahimsa (nonviolence) not as a mere ideal but as a practice applied to all forms of life including animals. The importance of vegetarianism, which Gandhi adhered to and propagated with passionate conviction, cannot be lost sight of in developing a nonviolent attitude towards life.

The second is his outright rejection of the vertical caste-system. Shakyamuni's fierce fight against the dehumanizing aspect of social segregation in the name of caste enabled the Indian society, to begin with, to exorcise this centuries-old inhuman practice. Following in the footsteps of the Buddha, Gandhi strongly opposed the verticality of the caste order. He envisioned a horizontal caste system in which all occupations are treated equally in a symbiotic union of diverse elements. Each profession should have dignity; and to the maximum extent possible, the dignity of all should be equal.

Third, in conformity with the Buddhist idea of the Sangha or small community of believers, Gandhi experimented with the developments of small autonomous communities, respecting everyone's needs but not for everybody's greed. Both misery at the bottom and excessive wealth at the top would be eliminated in his communities. It is a big question as to how deep the Gandhian vision made a dent in the otherwise stratified Indian society. These three and other departures from mainstream belief cost

Gandhi his life at the hands of an assassin who is described sometimes as a fanatic and orthodox Hindu. Whoever he was, it appears he was someone who did not agree with Gandhi's opposition to verticality of caste system. Dr. Ikeda takes these points further up and believes that perhaps Buddhism and Hinduism refined Gandhi's rare personal traits. "Gandhi was a gradualist, not a radical. He thought good changes take time – they move at a snail's pace. This too is part of his sense of practicality and order, in which I see a reflection of Buddhist idea of the middle way.... Buddhist wisdom has clearly and accurately perceived the middle way between existence and non-existence; between pain and pleasure; and between the doctrine of eternity, according to which conditioned elements themselves are external and the doctrine of annihilation. His practical approach leads me to believe that Gandhi too perceived this middle way.

Martin Luther King (Jr.)'s emphatic statement in the 60s that it was from Gandhi that he learnt the operational tactics to concretize love and the subsequent campaigns Dr King launched for civil liberties overwhelmingly demonstrated the efficacy of the Gandhian approach as an effective alternative.

Though in different parts of the world Gandhian methods later inspired freedom fighters and social activists to fight nonviolently for their rights and freedom, it was Nelson Mandela in South Africa after Dr. Martin Luther King, the Gandhian strategies found it's most successful votaries at political and social level.

Nelson Mandela, a great friend and admirer of Dr Ikeda said he was greatly influenced by Gandhi. Nelson Mandela even described Gandhi as the Father of the South African Republic. During this speaker's brief interaction with Nelson Mandela when he had the privilege to receive Dr Mandela at the Gandhi memorial in New Delhi. Mandela stood silently at the Martyrs column for a few minutes and later told the accompanying press reporters and others: *but for Gandhi the course of the South African struggle for justice, freedom and nonviolent emancipation would have been different. Gandhi taught us to be patient and courageous.*

Parallels in the strivings of Gandhi and the SGI President

The Soka Gakkai, the SGI and President Dr Daisaku Ikeda have invited massive international attention as committed promoters of world peace. The Soka Renaissance the Gakkai have been aiming at and the Gandhian vision of nonviolent global change have much in common and Dr Ikeda's espousal of the Gandhian strategies bring him on par with Martin Luther King (Jr) and Nelson Mandela as creative geniuses who in their own way added new layers of meaning to peaceful co-existence, sustainable development by interpreting through concrete action the infinite possibilities of the Gandhian strivings for nonviolent alternatives.

‘Satyagraha’ of Gandhi, ‘Beloved Community’ of King and ‘the Human Revolution’ of Ikeda.

Dr Martin Luther King’s emphasis of **the Beloved Community**, Gandhi’s **Sarvodaya** (welfare of all) and **Satyagraha** (nonviolent action) and Daisaku Ikeda’s **Human Revolution** and **kosen-rufu** had their innate electrifying power to inspire and unite masses for nonviolent action for both individual empowerment and peace and what humanity witnessed is a massive surge towards spiritual awakening and fulfillment through creative involvement in socio cultural and religious activities.

These three great leaders are strongly, rooted in their respective religions and they drew all their spiritual energy and power they drew from their religions. Gandhi said repeatedly that his aim was to spiritualize politics. Significantly, these three leaders are essentially men of religion. It is history now how these three became “*the voice of the voiceless*” and the rallying point of hope to millions of peace and freedom-loving citizens all over the world.

Soka Gakkai as a people’s Movement

To President Dr Daisaku Ikeda, world peace, global well-being and empowerment of the weakest and individual happiness through human revolution have been important aspects of his concern. The strategies Dr Ikeda evolved were mostly based on his profound understanding of the power of dialogue which according to him was much more than two individuals talking to each other in an attempt to understand each other or sort out outstanding differences of opinion. The dialogues of masters like Socrates and Plato in ancient times offered precious insights into the complex nature of what constitutes human behavior vis-à-vis human aspiration which many later visionaries and social activists interpreted in the light of the evolving socio political scenario.

Importance of having a Mission in life

Dr. Ikeda gave a new direction, infused great enthusiasm and hope in millions around the world. This was phenomenal. It was possible because he has a mission and he wants every Bodhisattvas of the earth to realize the great mission each one may have in his/her life.

The youth vitality displayed by Dr Ikeda continues to wave magical spells around millions of followers across the globe. The invisible path of the mentor and disciples in enriching the fiber of one’s character and contour of one’s life and mission is the cementing factor between him and his disciples, admirers and friends around the world. The philosophy of hope he assiduously promotes goes straight in to the heart of every one and the message of “be positive and strong” in order to achieve resounding victory in one’s life and in kosen-rufu are important spokes in the eternal wheels around which Dr Ikeda develops his philosophy of life and action.

The Ikeda Wheel of Human Revolution

Ikeda's life, work and philosophy reveal a consistent world vision, based on the philosophy of Nichiren Daishonin and the teachings of the Gosho. The astute thinker in him also taught him that he has to be realistic in order to become conscious of the emerging realities and challenges of times and should not get stuck up in the morass of conventional thinking. One has to be progressive with one's roots and feet dug deep in traditions and values. The eternal wheel of time keeps on moving and every visionary – reformer realizing the need of time puts his stamp of personality on the Wheel as the wheel moves on. And Dr Ikeda has been very successful in this also.

Lessons from Dr Ikeda's Strivings

The various initiatives undertaken by the Soka Gakkai International under Dr Ikeda offer several valuable lessons.

Dr Ikeda's role in inspiring youth and winning their confidence and making them the frontline fighters for ushering societal and individual changes has very few parallels in human history. Similarly, recognizing the role of women in society and earnestly trying to bring them into the mainstream of life has been a masterstroke of Ikeda's leadership. Recognizing the role of education to effect societal change and various measures that were undertaken by the Soka Gakkai clearly speak volumes of the visionary in him. Here again, the emphasis on children and their welfare including education reveal the master strategist in him.

As a challenger and unifier

Dr Ikeda is both a challenger and unifier. Without diluting and compromising on the core principles of Nichiren Buddhism or the principles of the Soka Gakkai, he transformed it into a modern International Movement for peace and human solidarity and survival. He has also offered very valuable insights and lessons to his admirers and followers through several innovative instruments of individual accomplishments. Without becoming a cult or a sect the Soka Gakkai today serves a beacon to cleanse public, individual, national and global life.

From a dogmatic bind Dr Ikeda lifted the religious sphere of activities to a secular level of common good as Gandhi wanted religions to become. Like Gandhi he infused fresh air both in the field of religion and politics. The prismatic purity of his personal life and the inspirational spiritual leadership he offers encourage the members throughout the world to become individual agents of human revolution. It can be said that Dr Ikeda has succeeded in bringing about a silent revolution at the individual level of over 12 million people directly in 192 countries and territories of the world. He entered the very lives of these people at moral, spiritual and to a large extent material level too and there by effecting a qualitative change in their life style guidance of their dear Sensei. This is a great Human Revolution which probably very few in known history could claim. That he

could win the confidence of such a large number of citizens all over the globe speaks volumes of his great qualities.

Dr Ikeda influences global thinking

The volume and magnitude of Ikeda's work for human survival, abolition of nuclear weapons, fostering of friendship among nations and his earnest strivings for a new global citizenry elevated him to the center stage of global thinking and today Dr Ikeda is one of the most influential thinkers, statesmen and spiritual leaders of the 21st century. He has influenced quite a few statesmen, scientist, artists, social activists, human rights champions, scholar and others across the world through his dialogues annual peace proposals cultural exchange of programs. The amazing number of dialogues for peace and change he has held (over 1500 dialogues during the last five decades with remarkable felicity and élan) with the world leaders and leading thinkers, artists and activists of different categories) is all time record.

This speaker too have had the privilege to dialogue with this great man of destiny and I found in my interactions, both short and long, that he is a very engaging conversationalist and has great sweep of mind. His erudition will simply amaze anybody. His great analytical mind is a store house of amazing knowledge and wisdom. I have found that one very attractive aspect of every dialogue of Ikeda is the highly creative manner in which he is able to discuss the various issues from different perspectives without revealing even a trace of repetition- a remarkable aspect of maser-brain. Dialogue became in the hands of Dr Ikeda a powerful medium to promote peace and understanding.

Recognition from different parts of the world

Dr Ikeda's contribution to several aspects of our life as well as sustainable world peace is widely recognized world over and the large number of honorary doctorates and other civilian recognitions that have been conferred upon him is a proof of the great role he has been playing to promote world peace. With the latest honorary doctorate coming from South Africa, he has in his kitty an amazing number of 337 honorary doctorates and other civilian honors from around the world.

(IV)

Lessons from Gandhi for the 21st century

Gandhi at no stage claimed that he was trying to teach anything new. In fact, he himself said more than once that he was not involved in any such mission. Truth and nonviolence, he said, are as old as the hills and he was only trying to appreciate and understand the marvel and majesty of both.

Emergence of Nonviolent People Power

When we look at the various successful social and political reform movements of the past 100 years across the world— civil rights, environment, women’s rights, labor, racial equality and, and so on — every one of these issues, seemed to have been influenced by an unprecedented assertion of nonviolent people-power. As was expected, the no- changers, orthodoxy and governments in power strove to prevent any social change that might possibly upset their interests. Notwithstanding these oppositions the nonviolent people-power initiatives triumphed convincingly and forced both government and society to fall in line. The power released by nonviolent collective action has a telling, cascading and multiplier effect and it looks unstoppable now.

The different strategies Gandhi employed and later King and his nonviolent fighters adapted such as petitioning, awareness creation campaigns, filling the jails, marches, rallies, civil-disobedience, boycotts, strikes, public meetings had electrifying effect both on the campaigners and those to whom these modes of protests and fights were directed against.

Gandhian passion for workable Alternatives

Gandhi was a revolutionary with a difference in the sense that he aimed at changing certain social and political structures but the means he adopted were not the usual violent methods associated with revolutions.

Gandhi emphasized credible alternatives which the proponents of the present day corporate values assiduously seek to strengthen. Let us look at some of the principles Gandhi believed are of paramount importance:

1. *Against the multiplication of wants, Gandhi suggested limitation of wants.*
2. *Instead of diffusion of large scale technology, Gandhi was in favor of large scale technology in few sectors co-existing with small scale technology and handicrafts in others.*
3. *Against mass production, Gandhi favored production by the masses and small scale production except in a few sectors where mass production is unavoidable.*
4. *Gandhi was not in favor of centralization of economic power. He favored limited state ownership, wide-spread village ownership and trusteeship.*
5. *Rapid urbanization did not find favor with Gandhi. He advocated self-governing village republics, self-sufficient in basic needs.*
6. *Inequality of all types’ particularly in wages, social justice and in gender reflects where there is denial of natural justice according to Gandhi.*
7. *As against increasing specialization, Gandhi favored universal physical labour.*

By no stretch of imagination can anyone say that these are moral prescriptions by an orthodox social reformer? On the contrary, they reflect the profound understanding of a revolutionary thinker, philosopher activist, whose vision in life was steeped in pragmatism, love, compassion and change with consent.

Gandhi's insistence on

- nonviolence to violence;
- persuasion and reconciliation to end hostilities;
- use of alternative source of energy, appropriate technology etc;
- trusteeship to end economic injustice;
- improvement of the lot of the depressed sections by abolishing factors that perpetrate social iniquities;
- ending man's tyranny on nature by respecting nature as the protector of human race; and developing equal respect for all religions

constituted the essence of his humanistic approach. The Gandhian humanism thus was not restrictive but transcendental and scientific. To describe it as revivalist reflects the closed minds of those who try to put all creative and revolutionary ideas and efforts in straight jacket and condemn them as reactionary.

An ardent practitioner of truth that he was, Gandhi showed to humanity that these are workable alternatives which will be creative and sustainable. The only thing in this is that we have to muster courage to accept it, for it demands self and collective discipline of various kinds. It is not the gratuitous and condescending offer of a bit of whatever we are willing to part with that is required, but a willing and spontaneous readiness to share with the less privileged fellowmen and women what one has in excess and to work for happily ushering a new order.

It is said in certain quarters that Gandhi was successful only to a limited extent that too his impact is felt only in certain cultural context. There is no denying of the fact that Gandhi was deep-rooted in his cultural and religious traditions. The phenomenal success Gandhi registered in the far-away South Africa, fighting for human rights and civil liberties in the first two decades of the 20th century and later the adoption of the Gandhian techniques, if not fully, by Nelson Mandela and the subsequent revelations made by the former South African President Mr. De Klerk that he was also influenced by Gandhi in adopting the path of reconciliation and forgiveness, certainly show that Gandhi had not spent twenty-one years in South Africa in vain.

In the American continent, Martin Luther King's heroic fight for civil liberties on the Gandhian lines and his own admission that it was from Gandhi that he learnt his operational tactics also is not an isolated instance of the relevance of the Gandhian tactics. The manner in which the Greens, particularly in Germany, adopted Gandhian techniques to arouse human consciousness and how they operationalised their strategy, and the bold assertions made by Petra Kelly about the way they were influenced by Gandhi, also indicate that it is not the cultural traditions of a country or continent that would make the efficacy of certain philosophy or attitude viable, but it is the willingness and readiness of people to react and respond that matters. One can give quite a few instances from almost all parts of the world to show how in different measures the Gandhian vision and approach is found to be an effective weapon in the hands of freedom fighters and social reformers.

Growing violence and dehumanising hunger

What would Gandhi have done in the face of widespread violence, hunger, inequality are questions often asked. Communication is critical and yet it seems to be missing despite the technology at hand. This shifts the focus back to Gandhi. As a communicator he would have gone to the people, is one answer. He effortlessly united people across barriers of literacy, language, ethnic identity, class, caste and privilege. Somewhere in this answer could be clues to transgress the social divisions that are threatening the whole world or at least this are the hope inspired by Gandhism. Such enquiries, however hesitant, bear testimony to the vigor and insight that informs the quest for a new vision being shaped by the Mahatma.

Global human family and respect for pluralism

It is widely acknowledged now that Gandhi, who through his innovative approaches and daring initiatives, succeeded in initiating a new era in human history, an era which signifies man's immense potentiality to rise above narrow considerations and to strive for ushering in a new level of achievement. The new methods, strategies and ideas Gandhi successfully demonstrated influenced not only the freedom fighters and social reformers of most of the continents but also those who are involved in the serious search for alternatives in their efforts to sustain all what is dear to humanity. The Gandhian vision of holistic development and respect for all forms of life – nonviolent conflict resolution embedded in the acceptance of non-violence both as a creed and strategy – were an extension of the ancient Indian concept of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. The much talked about concept of global human family and humanity's effort to dismantle manmade barriers among nations peoples and the Indian ideals of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* as enshrined in the Vedic and Upanishad wisdom, are almost the same. It is true that Gandhi always began at the micro level, but then, his vision surpassed the exigencies of local or national barriers. Gandhi said, "It is impossible for one to be internationalist without being a nationalist... I do want to think in terms of the whole world. My patriotism includes the good of mankind in general. Therefore, my service of India includes the service of humanity".

The Gandhian vision of society does not recognise man-made barriers but at the same time as Gandhi often insisted while we should welcome all that is best in other traditions when we allow the winds of other cultures to blow in, we should refuse to be swept off our feet. This indicates that one cannot be internationalist without being a nationalist. Gandhi once said,

"My mission is not merely the brotherhood of Indian humanity. My mission is not merely freedom of India, though today it undoubtedly engrosses practically the whole of my life and the whole of my time. The true realization of freedom of India, I hope, would realise and carry on the mission of the brotherhood of man. My patriotism is not an exclusive thing. It is all embracing and I should reject patriotism which sought to mount upon the distress or the exploitation of other nationalities. I want to realise

brotherhood or identity not merely with the being called human, but I want to realise identity with all life, even with such thing as that crawl on earth”.

It is this vision of Gandhi and the ceaseless strivings he undertook through the numerous experiments he conducted which endeared him to millions of his countrymen and others who joyfully threw themselves into the vortex of one of the glorious movements in human history.

Freedom from Fear

Gandhi knew no fear and he released his country from fear and inducted into his countrymen fearlessness and offered them brave initiatives for social transformation which saw India taking courageous steps in the dismantling of some of the age-old customs and practices such as untouchability. The manner in which a vast majority of Indians, who were segregated in the name of this dehumanising practice and how they came up in life in the post-independence era, speaks volumes of the impact Gandhi created on the Indian psyche to initiate steps to ensure social justice.

Purity of Means and Ends

Gandhi's contribution to the political awakening and freedom movement in different parts of the world and adoption of nonviolent strategies, which help both the opposing groups respect each other's sentiments and accommodating the views of others has much in common with UNESCO's decision to propagate the message of tolerance for human survival. Asia and the African continent particularly have seen peaceful transition of power and social change, thanks to Mahatma Gandhi's initiative which included different methods. One important thing that keeps apart Gandhi's teachings and strategies is the utmost importance Gandhi attached to pure means to attain lasting ends. Gandhi's attempts to make politics value based were part of a new world vision. He emphasized that politics bereft of spiritual and ethical consideration will not sustain humanity.

Spiritual vs. Material Living

Spiritual living is responsible living. Gandhi said, “I am responsible not only for myself but for all of you just as all of you are responsible for me.” When we live truly selfless life, we never think in terms of personal profit or pleasure but always in terms of global prosperity and world peace. For even these grand goals ultimately depend not on government but on selfless efforts of the little people like you and me of the long run, friendly persuasion is the only effective teacher. Human beings can always grow”. If the man gains spirituality, Gandhi said, “the whole world gains with him”.

Gandhi used a number of symbols and concepts in his long public career in both South Africa and India in his efforts to usher in a new era of clean politics and orderly development. There was no pretension or hypocrisy about him. He never asked others

to do anything which he did not to, it is history how he conducted his affairs. He never treated even his own children in any special manner from other children. In the Ashram settlements they also grew up along with the other children, sharing same kind of food and other facilities attending the same school. When the scholarship was offered to him for one of his sons to be sent to England for higher education, instead of giving it to his own children, Gandhi gave it to some other boy. Of course, he invited strong resentment from two of his sons and there may critics who believe that Gandhi neglected his own children and he was not an ideal father. The voluntary abdication of his highly attractive income from his legal profession and taking to a simple life and his profound conviction of equality of all men and women show the essential Gandhi who grew into a Mahatma.

Truth: greater than all worldly possessions

It is widely accepted now that the core of the legacy Gandhi left for humanity is that he taught us that truth is greater than all worldly possessions, and that slavery, violence, injustice and disparities are inconsistent with truth. What Gandhi left is not a set of theoretical formulations, on the contrary, a carefully evolved vision of an organically sound and mutually supportive and respecting independent world order. It is generally believed that Gandhi opened a new era by convincingly demonstrating that there is an alternative to the politics of confrontation, violence, manipulation and to the disregard of human sentiments--love and compassion in action.

He also showed that in the non-violent form of protest and fight he was leading there was no room for hate, violence and one should be able to stand up courageously and fight without hating those against the fight is directed. He said again and again that his fight was only against the British system which allows imperialism and exploitation and not against the British. The way India and Britain parted company in 1947 speaks volumes of Gandhi's influence on both the rulers in Britain and the Indian nationalists fighting for freedom. It was the first-ever happy parting of ways in recent times between the masters of a colony and the nationalists who were fighting for freedom. Gandhi was the unquestioned leader of the Indian masses who but for Gandhi would have resorted to the extreme form of violence in realizing the goal of freedom. There is no parallel in human history of several hundred millions of freedom-loving people marching towards their cherished goal without shedding blood. It was the triumph of human will over forces of oppression and injustice. It was an indication that human revolution is possible through dynamic leadership and that a true revolution need not be violent.

Care for the lost and lowest

Gandhi's identification with the masses and his concern for the poorest of the poor was well known. It may be of use here to remember in this context the advice Gandhiji gave to the new rulers of India, which is now known as Gandhi's Talisman. Gandhi said in his advice:

"I will give you a talisman, whenever you are in doubt or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test:

Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen and ask yourself of the step you- contemplate is going to of any use to him, Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to Swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions?

Shanti Sena (Peace Army):

Gandhi was a great innovator of social action and his passion for developing workable alternatives makes him distinct. With the precision of a scientist he analysed each issues of vital human interest and his concept of Shanti Sena (Peace Army) was a seminal concept.

Gandhi had given serious thought to the formation of a nonviolent army to meet the threat of organized violence. He was convinced that citizens trained in practicing nonviolence in private and public would be able to play a very big role in promoting peace, and good will in society. He mooted the idea of the formation of Shanti Sena (Peace Army) at a Pacifist Conference held at Wardha, a few months before his assassination.

The Shanti Sena of his dream is a Peace Brigade, which with emphasis on service will arm the nation with inner strength. With a broad based peace plan it would be possible to achieve a nationwide peace brigade which could be extended to the other areas of conflict in other parts of the world. The ultimate aim of such a taskforce is to train every member to be a peace soldier. Gandhi wrote, "a very small part of the preliminary training received by the military is common to the nonviolent army. These are disciplines, drill, singing in chorus, flag hoisting, signaling and the like. What is required for a nonviolent army is an immovable faith in god, willing and perfect obedience to the chief of the nonviolent army and perfect inward and outward cooperation between the units of Army."

The War Resisters International which held its Conference in Gandhigram in south Indian December 1960 decided to organize an International Shanti Sena. AJ Muste was elected to organize it in the American Region while Jayaprakash Narayan and Michael Scott were chosen to lead the Asian and European units respectively. They also decided to train an international Peace Brigade which could be sent to the areas of conflicts. This could be an effective alternative to the soldiers of war. Vinoba Bhave, the walking saint and considered to the spiritual heir of Gandhi found in the ideal of the Peace Army of Gandhi the potential of a great instrument that could be effectively

harnessed and that would eventually emerge as a strong integrated component of the great revolution for the promotion of which he has dedicated his life.

Vinoba Bhave formally launched the Shanti Sena (Peace Army) in 1957 at a village called Manjeswaram in Kerala in south India. Though initially several thousand volunteers were trained and the Shanti Sena played a very effective role in effecting nonviolent problem solving in several major and minor conflicts in India, it failed to take off as Gandhi had dreamt. One of Gandhi's disciples G. Ramachandran made a heroic effort to integrate nonviolence training and concept of Shanti Sena at the Gandhigram complex of institutions which he founded along with his wife Soundaram Ramachandran. The initiative continued to flourish many years.

This speaker had the privilege to work with G. Ramachandran who had put me in charge of the Shanti Sena training programme in the University. I derived great satisfaction and trained over 10000 volunteers in the next 20 years in the university alone. After relinquishing my assignment there a centre of Shanti Sena training and Research has been established at the place of its launch by Vinoba Bhave in 1957 and youth and children are being exposed to the ideal in a systematic manner. At a place called Vedchi Shanti Sena training is also being given by senior Gandhian Narayan Desai.

This year (2013) incidentally happens to be the 50th anniversary of my active involvement in the training programme of Shanti Sena volunteers both in the Gandhigram University and elsewhere. Gandhi had great hopes about the Shanti Sena, but many of his disciples and countrymen seem to have lost their faith in it for a variety of reasons. At international level too I doubt whether it could play any effective role as was planned though I would not dispute the comparatively small roles the International Peace Brigade and the recently started Peace Force have been playing now.

Let us remember our survival, the future of humanity and the entire ecosystem that support us demand that respect for life, respect for each other and respect for tradition are essential conditions to ensure peace and peaceful societies. Let us ask the following questions to ourselves:

- *Can there be peace without justice?*
- *Can there be peace without eliminating poverty, illiteracy, and malnutrition and gender inequality?*
- *Will there be peace with stockpiling of arms?*

Gandhi demonstrated that change is possible, so also several other great pioneers who shared the Gandhian vision and adapted Gandhian techniques to suit cultural and political scenario of their respective societies.

The breathtaking developments in the second half of the 20th century proved that Gandhi was correct as Martin Luther King (Jr.) said,

"If humanity is to progress, Gandhi is inescapable. His life, thought and action are inspired by the vision of a humanity evolving towards a world of peace and harmony. We may ignore him at our own risk".

"I will continue to speak from my grave", Gandhi said. In many respects, yes, Gandhi continues to influence the course of human history. Gandhi transformed Ahimsa or Nonviolence which was a spiritual concept into a political instrument whose qualities will be guided by ethical and moral principles.

Obama at the Wakefield High School speech in Sept 2009 said that his biggest inspiration came from Mahatma Gandhi. To a question 'who was the one person, dead or alive, that he would choose to dine with?' His quick reply was 'Gandhi!' He continued *"He's somebody I find a lot of inspiration in. He inspired Dr. King with his message of nonviolence. He ended up doing so much and changed the world just by the power of his ethics".*

We should go forward innovating and working out alternatives and sustainable models for peace in order to avoid the risks Martin Luther King (Jr) and President John F. Kennedy warned of.

Will Durant wrote of Gandhi:

"He does not mouth the name of the Founder of Christianity, but he acts as if the Sermon on the Mount were his perpetual guide. Not since St. Francis of Assisi has any life known to history been so marked by gentleness, disinterestedness, simplicity of soul, and forgiveness of enemies. It is to the credit of his opponents, but still more to his own, that his courtesy to them has been so consistent that it has won from them a fine courtesy in return; the Government sends him to jail with the most profuse apologies. He has never shown rancour or resentment. Three times he has been attacked by mobs, and been beaten almost to death, not once has he retaliated; and when a leading assailant was arrested he refused to make any charge against him. . .

Like Buddha and Miranda, he has suffered with those he has seen suffer; he has taken all the tribulation of his people upon himself, fighting for their freedom and fasting for their sins. And so a nation that would never have been thrilled by a purely secular call, has put itself trustfully into his hands, has accepted his hard doctrine of peaceful resistance, and has appointed him at its leader and prophet, its Mahatma, or Great Soul. We have the astonishing phenomenon of a revolution led by a saint. He is above all an idealist, not a realist. . . ."

Conclusion

It has been a great honor for me to address today's illustrious group in this hall and join the great masters who had earlier delivered the Dag Hammarskjold Lectures.

With respectful regards and folded hands let me express my profound sense of gratitude to all the wonderful peace-makers who are with me in this hall today for your great patience.

Let me close by reminding all of you of what President Kennedy said,

...(war) can no longer serve to settle disputes. It can no longer concern the great powers alone. For a nuclear disaster, spread by wind and water and fear, could well engulf the great and the small, the rich and the poor, the committed and the uncommitted alike. Mankind must put an end to war — or war will put an end to mankind.

So let us here resolve that Dag Hammarskjold did not live, or die, in vain. Let us call a truce to terror. Let us invoke the blessings of peace. And as we build an international capacity to keep peace, let us join in dismantling the national capacity to wage war. (John F. Kennedy, in a Speech to the General Assembly of the United Nations (25 September 1961)

I leave the hall today remembering the words of Hammarskjold:

***“The longest journey
Is the journey inwards.***

I do hope all of you will agree with me when I interpret these lines of great Dag Hammarskjold as an invitation to join him in the quest to discover the interior landscape of every individual. This is the way to peace and happiness. As Gandhi said, *“there is no way to peace, peace is the way”*.

I also thank the organisers of this wonderful event today. I thank all of you who gave me a patient listening.

May you be all blessed with peace and all success in your creative work for peace and happiness.

THANK YOU ALL.
