ABSTRACT
Mahatma Gandhi, apostle of non-violence a great soul, Father of Indian Nation was a unique personality in the history of humankind. He always thought about life, truth, human relationship and non-violence. He was a moral giant, and known for his sincerity, sacrifice and non-violence. With the weapon of non-violence or soul force he gifted an Independent National from British Ruled India. He says non-violence should be the way of Indian life and should be guiding principle for the whole world. He was one of the greatest engaged spirituality to apply non-violence as paramount importance.

KeyWords: Non-violence, Ahimsa, Peace, Love, Truth, Evil, Active, Negative, Positive, Life.

MAHATMA GANDHI AND NON-VIOLENCE (AHIMSA)
Mahatma Gandhi was born on 2\textsuperscript{nd} October 1869 of a Bania family at Porbandar in Kathiawad India, on the west coast of Gujarat. In our country, he is reverently and lovingly called “Bapu” (father) and is officially honoured as “Father of Nation”, with his birthday on 2\textsuperscript{nd} October commemorated each year as Gandhi Jayenti, a national holiday. The United Nations General Assembly on 5\textsuperscript{th} June 2007 unanimously adopted a resolution declaring October 2 hereafter to be the International Day of Non-violence in Gandhi’s memory.

Non-violence according to Gandhi is the essence of humanity and it is therefore, indispensible for the existence of human society. It is the root of peace and the fruit of love without which law and order cannot maintain in human society. Maintenance of law and order by using force is against the principle of Gandhi’s non-violence as it is counterproductive and will lead to destruction of the society in the end. If we believe in force or violence as the law of life of man our world will become a world of struggle and in such a state of nature there can never be happiness in human life. In the absence of peace, positive development of human society also paralyses. If every human being, therefore, believes in non-violence and love and practice its laws, our world would become a world of peace and heaven. As Gandhi said, the “end of violence is surest defeat”\textsuperscript{1} but the “ultimate end of non-violence is surest victory.”\textsuperscript{2}
Gandhi said, “Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute. The spirit is dormant in the brute and he knows no law but that of the physical force. The dignity of man requires obedience to a higher law - the struggle of the spirit... Non-violence is a perfect state. It is the goal towards which all mankind moves naturally, though unconsciously.”

In a non-violent struggle, success can achieve only by truthful means. Truth exists while untruth does not. He says, “If untruth does not so much as exist, its victory is out of the question. And truth being that can never be destroyed.” According to Gandhi, “Ahimsa is a science; the word failure has no place in the vocabulary of science.” Therefore, “There is no such thing as defeat or despair in the dictionary of a man who bases his life on truth and non-violence.”

Gandhi adopted the English word non-violence for Sanskrit word ‘Ahimsa’, which he originally used as a moral weapon in his early fight against social evils. The literal translation of the Sanskrit word ‘Ahimsa’ in English would be ‘non-injury’ or ‘non-killing’. But instead, Gandhi adopted the word ‘non-violence’ which means refraining from use of physical force capable of causing injury or death to the opponent. The meaning of ‘Ahimsa’ includes non-violence in thought, word and deed. Gandhi explained the meaning of non-violence thus: “Non-violence is not doing, voluntary, and any injury to person or property. Thus, I would not punished or procure punishment even of general Dyer for his massacre, but I would not call it voluntary doing injury to him to refuse to give him pension, or to condemn his action in fitting language. It is no part of my duty to protect a murderer even though he may be my son or father. I hold it to be my duty to withdraw my support from him. I will not kill a snake, neither may I harbour it.”

M.P. Christianand Pillai has observed that: “Ahimsa was the central doctrine of Gandhi’s life and teaching. The concept, which was native to Indian soil and tradition, has made richer by an infusion of a wealth of meanings given to it by Gandhi. A single traditional concept has transformed into a triune concept, that is, three concepts united into one. Ahimsa, for Gandhi, meant three things: love (agape), self-suffering (tapasya), and service (seva). Agape, tapasya and seva are three different concepts but all are unified into one and is called Ahimsa by Gandhi.”

Non-violence, as perceived by Gandhi is of two types: Negative and positive. Non-violence is literally negative in meaning, that is, non-killing and non-injury. According to Gandhi, the negative aspect of non-violence consists in refraining from causing pain or killing and life out of anger or from selfish purpose or with the intention of injuring it. Thus, “Non-violence means avoiding injury to anything on earth in thought, word or deed.” In its negative sense non-violence does not means merely non-killing and more insidious form of non-violence. However, it includes harsh words, ill will, anger, spite, cruelty, the torture of men and animals, the starvation and exploitation, the wanton humiliation and oppression of the weak and killing of their self-respect, etc.

In its positive sense, non-violence means the largest love, the greatest charity. A follower of non-violence must love his enemy. This active non-violence necessarily includes truth and fearlessness. It is non-violence if one merely loves those that love him but it is non-violence only when one loves those that hate him. For Gandhi: “Ahimsa is not merely a negative state of harmlessness but it is a positive state of love, of...”
doing well even to the evil-doer. One should not help the evil-doer in continuing his act of wrong doing but resisting the wrong doer by dissociating from him even if it offends him or injure him physically.”

Non-violence for Gandhi “is an active force of the highest order. It is soul-force or the power of God-head within us”. Prof. Stuart Nelson has observed that: “For Mahatma Gandhi non-violence is not a simple virtue or a simple quality of life; it is a congeries of qualities or virtues; it is a spirit, a way of life, a religion or, as he would say, the law of one’s being. In Gandhi’s moral structure, there are two basic pillars Truth and Ahimsa that is non-violence or, as he called at, love. Truth is the end; non-violence is the means. Nevertheless, the end and the means are bond irrevocably to each other, for a vision of truth is dependent upon the realization of non-violence. As truth is God, so also love is God. Love surely, is not a single virtue; it, too, is a way of life.”

Non-violence in its dynamic condition also means conscious suffering. Ajay Shanker Rai observed, “It does not mean submission to the will of the evil doer, but it means putting one’s whole soul against the will of the evil doer. Being a potent force, non-violence begins with mind. Non-violence of the mere body without co-operation of the mind is non-violence of the weak without any potency. It is in fact not in any shape or form of a passive or inactive method, but essentially an active movement, much active than the use of sanguinary weapon.” Cowardice is therefore, wholly incompatible with non-violence. Between violence and cowardice, Gandhi preferred the former to the latter. For to him, a cowardly man is worse than a violent man is.

Gandhi was not the originator of the doctrine of non-violence. He inherited it from the different religious philosophies of the world. Indeed, he himself admitted that the idea of non-violence as a religious tenet found in all human religions. Non-violence found as a basic doctrine in the teachings of Lao-tzu of China in the sixth century B.C. He said, “Requite injury with kindness. To the good, I would be good; to the evil, also I would be good in order to make them good. With the faithful, I would also keep faith, in order that they may become faithful. He who has no faith in others will find no faith in them.” In the evolution of Ahimsa three stages of the progress made in human societies can note, “In the progress of societies three stages are marked. The first where the law of the jungle prevails, we have the operations of selfishness and violence. Second, we have rule of law with courts, police and prison. Third, where we have non-violence and unselfishness, where love and law are one – the rule of the jungle, the rule of law and the rule of love – these mark three stages of progress. The last is the goal of civilized humanity.”

Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity was also one of the greatest champions of non-violence. He said, “But say unto you that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also... Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you, and persecute you.”

In Islam, also the idea of non-violence has found as an integral part of its teachings. It advocates forgiveness, benevolence, and returning of good for evil. The teachings of Islam in this regards summed up thus: “Seek again him who drives you away, give to him who takes away from you, and pardon him who injures you.”
Apart from these popular world religions, the religious philosophies of India are finding to have the most profound influence on Mahatma Gandhi regarding his acceptance of non-violence. It has well known that India is a land, which has a rich religious philosophical heritage. Among her popular traditional religions are the Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. To all these religions, non-violence is a common doctrine. Nevertheless, non-violence has found the highest expression in Hinduism. “The Hindu creed is search for Truth through non-violent means. The essence of Hinduism does not consist in observing rules of eating and non-eating; it consists in right conduct, in correct observation of truth and non-violence. Non-violence is the essence of Hinduism, the Hinduism of the Gita, of the Upanishads, the Yoga Sastra.”20 It is a necessary observance for spiritual elevation and self-realization as mentioned in the Upanishads and the Gita. It is the highest duty of the Hinduism.

Non-violence can regard to be the essence of Jainism and Buddhism also. In Jainism, non-violence is the highest law. Buddha said that hatred cannot wipe out by hatred, nor can anger soothe by counter anger. Non-violence can neutralize hatred and it is by non-anger that one can conquer anger in others. According to the teachings of Buddha, violence leads to destruction or failure, whereas non-violence is the means of construction and success.

Gandhi made it clear that non-violence is not means only for the rishis and saints, but it is means for the common people as well. It is a power, which can wield equally by children, young men and women or grown up people provided they love all equally. Gandhi has said, “Non-violence must first be practiced in one’s person and his relation with others. Non-violence like charity must begin at home. Non-violence must practise against persons who act violently towards you. It is only when you meet resistance that non-violence is put on trial. Our greatest field for practice is our own home in all our relations with parents, wife, children, servants etc.”21

REFERENCE:
2. Ibid.
5. Harijan, 6.5.1939, p. 113.
7. The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, (New Delhi: Publication Division Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India), Vol. 23, p. 5 (To be referred hereafter as CWMG)
18. The bible, Mathew 5:39.