

MAHATMA GANDHI (1889-1948) ON SOCIOPOLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF PEACE AND NON-VIOLENCE

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the conditions for Socio-political peace and nonviolence from the perspective of Mahatma Gandhi, an Indian scholar and social activist. To maintain Socio-political peace and non-violence has been a perennial concern for individuals, communities and scholars. Several options for keeping peace and living non-violently have been offered by both theoreticians and social order crusaders. The problem, however, is on the durability and effectiveness of these options. Our objectives here are to explore Mahatma Gandhi's perspectives on socio-political peace and non-violence, analyse the implications, with a view of suggesting ways of perfecting them for global socio-political order. To achieve this aim, we shall apply the philosophical methods of analysis, critical evaluation, reflective and speculative prescriptions. By this approach, it is hoped that this study would benefit all those engaged in the debates for global peace and socio-political order, either theoretically or practically. The study promises to ignite fresh light of understanding of the issues and contribute to the knowledge of restoration of global peace and order.

INTRODUCTION

Humanity and entire creation live in a new era — an era of fear, insecurity, unrest and possible total annihilation. Peace has eluded creation right from Adam's times, and violence has characteristics human relationship, since the days of Cain. But the mode of exhibitions and manifestations of these twin-evils of unrest and violence in our supersonic information, communication, and hyper-technological (ICT) society are unprecedented. We live and move with terrorizing technologies, and sleep and rest on destructive missiles. Human social existence and relationship, designed for the good of man and his environment of living, have been turned into a battlefield and theatre of chaos. In the wake of all these, anarchy has become the order of the day, Sociopolitical Peace has been turned asunder, and wisdom is defined in categories of confusion.

In an attempt to proffer solution to the cacophony of chaos, Thomas Hobbes and people in his colony of mind, taught that the original nature of man was pugnacious — "Homo Lupus Homini" (man is a wolf to fellow man). Machiavelli, an expert in superficiality, with his clan of thinkers, taught that lies, double-standards and pretenses can be solutions to the inferno of unrest, violence and Sociopolitical disorders. Karl Marx and like minds, in their ferocious thinking, taught that unity of the oppressed (proletariat) against the oppressors (bourgeoisie) is the end of the anti-thesis of social injustice, exploitation and man's inhumanity to man.

However, some other thinkers, like John Locke, have differed in their opinion about man in the state of nature. Locke would hold that man was created in peace and his natural state was peaceful and orderly; it was living with others and other Sociopolitical exigencies that brought chaos. Consequently, the remedy was to think aright and inculcate those principles that can foster social and democratic existence. Before Locke and most of these divergent theorists, Emmanuel Christus, the Lord and master of the universe, has come to expose the master-plan and principles that under-guide global peace and Sociopolitical orderliness. Other theoreticians that labour in the arena of peace, justice, and social order either align with, agree or disagree in some respects, or totally ignore and disregard this wisdom in understanding the truth of Sociopolitical order and peace. Mahatma Gandhi, an Indian prince, scholar and political activist, contributed immensely in respect of non-violence, peace and justice in Sociopolitical existence.

MAHATMA GANDHI: THE BIRTH OF A NEW ZEAL

Mahatma Gandhi was born in Porbandar on 2nd October 1869, the youngest of the three sons of Karamchand Gandhi (alias Kaba Gandhi) and Putlibai, "a saintly and deeply religious woman." "The Gandhis belong to the Bania Caste" in India, who probably were grocers but rose to become "Prime Ministers in several Kathiawad States" in India (Gandhi 3). Mahatma Gandhi's zeal for Sociopolitical peace and nonviolence must have been both hereditary and acquired, since his father, Kaba Gandhi, "was a member of the Rajastanik Court" that "was a very influential body for settling disputes between the chiefs and their fellow clansmen" (Gandhi 3). His father was a dependable man of character, ability and zealous for the welfare of his state. He possessed native wisdom and common sense, although "not formally educated, he rose to a position of considerable power in the local government and was known for his loyalty and deep identification with the state" (Nojeim 59).

His mother, Putlibai, also deposited in the young "Mohandas, who was affectionately called Moniya as a boy" (Erikson in Nojeim 59), strength of character, devotion and commitment to duty. "She said prayers before every meal, went to temple every day, and fasted frequently during Hindu holy periods" (Nojeim 59). Mohandas birth and early childhood was in Porbandar, "located along the coast of the Arabian Sea in the Kathiawar," where several nationals, racial backgrounds, religions, traders, and merchants played hosts. This must have contributed to Mohandas "renowned reputation for tolerating, even encouraging and including various religious expressions" (Nojeim 58).

His serious journey and experiments with the truth started in his second year as a Law student in England, when two Theosophists brothers persuaded him to read the original "Gita," as, "They were reading Sir Edwin Arnold's translation in The Song Celestial" (Gandhi 67). After reading some verses in the second chapter, Mohandas has this affirmation to make: "The book struck me as one of priceless worth. The impression, has ever since been growing on me with the result that I regard it today as the book par excellence for the knowledge of Truth" (Gandhi 67). Again, his meeting with a good Christian from Manchester about this time, who neither ate meat nor drank wine, got him acquainted with. the Holy Bible, especially the New Testament's "Sermon on the Mount." These verses struck deep impression on him:

But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And

if any man take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke (sic) too (Gandhi 68).

He was later to note that his readings of the Gita, the Light of Asia by same Sir Edwin Arnold and the Sermon on the Mount, convinced him that "renunciation was the highest form of religion" (Gandhi 69). His reading of Carlyle's Heroes and hero Worship, taught him "the Prophet's greatness and bravery and austere living," thus, confirming his convictions in theism and the futility of atheists' position, as he "(I) had already crossed the Sahara of atheism" (Gandhi 69). All these influences were to come to light of truth in the experiments and demonstrations of his theory and principles of peace and non-violence in sociopolitical affairs.

Earlier, he had some recollections of his childhood days which include that: he never "told a lie," he was "very shy and avoided all company," never "copied" anything-from other pupils, had "respect for his teachers and elders," never "scanned their actions," always did his home work, had devotion to his parents and wanted to be as truthful as "Harishchandra," a character he watched in "a play performed by a certain dramatic company" (Gandhi 6 – 7). These helped in charting his future struggles to establish peace and non-violence.

Again, his acquaintance with Narayan Hemchandra during his studies in England must have been of tremendous influence. Both were vegetarians, and they share such qualities as: truthfulness, frankness, simplicity, humility, frugality (including financial), ambition and determination.

4. MAHATMA MOHANDAS GANDHI: Perspectives on Sociopolitical Philosophy of Peace and Non-Violence.

Peace is the condition of tranquillity, state of equilibrium, rest, harmony, stability, and complete well-being. Peace is the end-point of all existential strivings and struggles including social and political. A peaceful socio-political situation is one of stillness, quite, freedom, absence of war, no violence, no chaos, and no anarchy. The Chamber's defines peace as "a state of quite, freedom from disturbance, freedom from war, cessation of war, freedom from contention, ease of mind or conscience: quite: stillness and silence.." (Kirkpatrick et al, ed. 936). Sociopolitical peace is devoid of violence, oppression and injustice in all their manifestations. Uduigwomen, notes that "Peace is opposed to antagonistic conflict, violence and war" (228). Though our social nature may necessitate conflicts and disagreements in some issues, the proper methods of the resolution of this anti-thesis may not be through violence, unwise

decisions, lawlessness or brute expression of anger and grievance. Through the length and breadth of history, great personalities have arisen to show the light of resolution of sociopolitical conflicts, disagreements and sociopolitical in-equilibrium. Some, arguing from negative perspectives, have reasoned that if one wants peace, one should be prepared for war. Some others, especially pacifists, are opposed to violence and brute expression of grievance, anger or disagreement, reasoning that an eye for an eye will leave the whole world blind. In the second camp belong the Lord of the Universe, Emmanuel Christus, and such noble men as St. Augustine, Martin Luther King Jnr., Albenaby, and Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi, whose ideas shall engage us in the meantime, has a developed theory of non-violence, conflict resolutions and sociopolitical management.

The methods Gandhi applied in the face of injustice, oppression, intimidation, neglect and suppression of his people, the colonized Indians, was "non- violence but non-cooperation", otherwise known as "Satyagraha" and "Ahimsa."

SATYAG RAHA

The concept of Satyagraha was born in Johannesburg, South Africa, and is the theoretical concept and framework that expresses the nature of Gandhi's practical struggles... "my life (Gandhi's) in South Africa, and especially of my experiments with truth in that sub-continent" (Gandhi 319). The concept of Satyagraha designates a method of sociopolitical action in the face of struggle, fighting or conflict. "The idea of Satyagraha" is one of Gandhi's main theoretical contributions to philosophy, social theory and political praxis" (Edet 21). Gandhi used the concept as a movement or a form of Sociopolitical action in contest of conflict.

Indeed, Satyagraha is a coinage of two Sanskrit words, Satya (meaning Truth) and "Agraha" (meaning holding fast to). Combined together, the two words mean "holding fast to truth," Mahatma Gandhi often translated it to mean "truth force." It was Maganlal Gandhi who coined "the word Sadagraha" (Sat-truth, Agraha — firmness), but Mahatma Gandhi modified it to Satyagraha "which has since become current in Gujarati as a designation for the struggle" (undertaken by the Indians for political liberation under M.K. Gandhi's leadership) (319). This word is important because it was coined to distinguish the non-violent resistance of the Indians of South Africa from the contemporary "passive resistance of the suffragettes, and others." In its Orthodox English usage,

“passive resistance” is “a weapon of the weak” which excludes “armed resistance.” Sometimes, the concept (passive resistance) is applied only to “Christian Martyrs,” at other times, it includes “the resistance of the Non-conformists” (Somerville and Santoni 500).

However that may be, the concept of “passive resistance” may be misleading if the intention, purpose, goal, and the method(s) of the resistance is not properly analysed, assessed and evaluated. In the light of the above, suffice it that Gandhi’s resistance to oppression and injustice is regarded (by him and others) as “active resistance.” Gandhi views conflict as an enduring character of society not a matter of individual scuffles. Like Thomas Hobbes and Karl Marx, he saw persistent struggle and class conflicts as the defining character of the society, and the greatest challenge facing socially responsible individuals, institutions, establishments and societies. But, unlike Karl Marx, Gandhi insisted that conflict can be made moral, that is the process of fighting and its goal can be made virtuous. This insistence is from his inner recesses; Gandhi is convinced that morality is the basis of things, and that truth is the substance of all morality. For Gandhi, “The difference between an immoral conflict (unethical one) and a moral (an ethical) fight (one) is whether the fight involves truth (Satya) or “untruth” (destructive action and negative motives)” (Edet 21).

Truthful fighting requires the fighter to suppress his/her own narrow position or inclinations in favour of something global, universal and more inclusive. Truthful fighting involves a principle that is Divine — human-oriented and can guarantee genuine peace to all contenders. It has ascent for life and concern for the preservation of the environment for meaningful human existence. Thus, the best methods/ways of conflict resolution, human/environmental management, societal proper ordering for Gandhi, as well as the Lord of the Universe, Emmanuel Christus, are through the establishment of truth. Truth, in turn, can be established by rational and sincere discussions, dialogues, and appeal to the spirit and conscience of all concerned. Through wise persuasions, reasoning and actions, the embers of truth are enkindled for the glow of peace. This naturally leads to another related concept to truth which Gandhi employed for the struggle against oppression, opposition and injustice — AHIMSA.

AHIMSA

"Ahimsa" is a related term to Satyagraha 'for the struggle against unfreedom and injustice. "Ahimsa means, literally not-hurting, nonviolence" (Gandhi footnote 25). Indeed, it is the negation of the Sanskrit word, "Himsa" which means "harm, injury, or violence." By placing an "a" in front of "himsa," the term becomes negated (just like in English, when "non" is placed before "violence," it negates the term, "violence"). "Ahimsa, thus, means non-harm, non injury, or nonviolence (Nojeim 98). The closest expression that translates the depth of this "concept" (Ahimsa) in relation to injustice is "love of one's enemy."

Ahimsa is creative, positive, progressive and uplifting. It builds up Sociopolitical relationship and binds together all engaged in the Sociopolitical' union called the commonwealth or citizenship. The concept, "Ahimsa," emphasises integralness and co-operation in human existence generally, and soda-political living particularly.

Ahimsa ... is more than the absence of violence. It is the affirmative presence of peace, love and justice. ... Involves conduct based on actIon that uplifts and benefits others through loving and peaceful works (Nojeim 98).

The concept of Ahimsa is opposed to any form of separation, segregation, selfishness, disunity and anarchy.

Moreover, real ahimsa means that you cannot harbour an "uncharitable thought," even towards one you might consider an enemy. Harboring feelings of resentment, hatred, or ill will is a departure from the doctrine of ahimsa" (Bondurant 26 in Nojeim 99).

Ahimsa is all-inclusive, all-embracing, accommodating and not self-seeking. Apart from being "non-hurting" or "non-killing," Ahimsa involves "...giving up concepts of "otherness," "separateness," "selfishness," and "self-centeredness" and identifying oneself with all other beings" (Shashtri and Shastri 67 in Nojeim 98). One with "ahimsa" disposition can very easily forgive others and readily understands the concept of mercy. Without the practical application of these concepts, social living can become pariah, unbearable and nauseating. In such a situation, man becomes a wolf to himself (according to Thomas Hobbes), and his living, becomes "nasty, poor, solitary, brutish and short." It is to avoid this

unpalatable condition that Christian Philosophy advocates for peace and non-violence.

... interpretation of the Christian doctrine of turning the other cheek, ... meant that someone resisting injury must be willing to show courage and absorb repeated violent blows — neither striking back in kind nor giving in — to the point when this self-suffering has a positive and wondrously transformative effect on the person inflicting the blows (Nojeim 99).

But even if the person inflicting the blows does not have a change of heart, it is still a brave act to march injustice with love. Moreover, squaring violence with violence, injustice with injustice, would leave the world impoverished; for “an eye for an eye” leaves all blind, and “a tooth for a tooth” leaves all toothless.

Gandhi believed that self-sacrifice in the form of nonviolent resistance was morally, as well as practically superior to violence because the force contained in the emotions of love and compassion was stronger than those contained in hate and vengeance (Dalton 37 in Nojeim 100).

But one may ask: what is the practical evidence of this contention of the strength of love over hate. We may just proffer the reason that the emotion of love is creative, refreshing, building and can guarantee peace and tranquillity both of mind and body, as well as of the soul; while emotions of violence or hate create internal and external division, unrest, agony and in-equilibrium. These emotions and their outcomes in themselves are retrogressive actions, unproductive and destructive.

Unlike Machiavelli, and his disciples who would contend that “the end justifies the means,” Gandhi exalted means over ends since he was actually more concerned about living a life devoted to the philosophy of nonviolence and less concerned about political goals” (Nojeim 100). Indeed, even though he desired his country Indian, to gain political independence, he was more concerned about Indians, behaving non-violently towards themselves and the entire world. For him, right and “pure means” should be used in achieving right and “pure ends.” He does not support the use of impure means of violence, dishonesty, deceit and hate,” in any political action, or in achieving any political goal/objective (Nojeim 101). In other words, the intention of an action, its objective and aim must tally with its end, or goal. Thus, it is only right intention, right

aim and objective as well as right means that can justify an end or goal. Hence, here is the meeting point of Gandhi's two principal concepts — "Satyagraha" and "Ahimsa."

Sociopolitical fight or struggle for freedom must not only be just and peaceful, but must be to establish truth. Thus, for Gandhi, as well as Christian philosophy, the best method of conflict resolution is the establishment of truth, through rational discussions, persuasions, dialogues and appeal to the spirit and conscience, of all concerned. The relevance of rational discussions in Sociopolitical affairs is that one steps into another shoes, looks at the subject in question from another's perspective and circumstance, appreciates the force of another's arguments and arrive at a view, based on the insights of both parties, which is acceptable and in accord with Divine principles.

Gandhi advocates for rational discussions in Sociopolitical affairs on three grounds viz; **Absence of Absolute Truth**: since the parties in a dispute do not possess **Absolute truth**, they should enter into discussion in a spirit of humility and with open — mindedness. **Different Perceptions**: Since truth is **perceived differently** by all, each disputant in a Sociopolitical conflict, should make sincere efforts to understand the other in his/her own terms and endeavour to appreciate why he/she saw the matter differently. This disposition would eliminate selfishness, hatred and ill-will, which are the bane of social harmony. Open **Heartedness**: **Objectivity** in truth requires **open heartedness** which implies that one should enter within the range of another's Sociopolitical action with sympathy, forming part of the other's emotional and moral universe. In other words, sympathy, love and good-will are necessary preconditions for rational Sociopolitical discussion, and only universal love guarantees objectivity in truth. Gandhi believes that if these three preconditions of rational discussions are met, they could ensure peace.

Nevertheless, even if total peace does not ensue with rational discussion, mutual understanding could be deepened; thus, reducing hostility and suspicion. Consequently, the way is paved for working out a tentative and mutually acceptable condition for coping with the conflict or misunderstanding. Gandhi has no doubt that "truth force" (Satyagraha) and "love force" (Ahimsa) were more potent and effective in handling and managing conflict situations than "physical force or force of arms" (violence and retaliation).

IMPLICATIONS OF GANDHIAN PERSPECTIVES ON PEACE AND NONVIOLENCE

Through the length and breadth of history, the position of Mahatma Gandhi on peace and non-violence has always generated two streams of thought and their tributaries. In other words, the non-violent but peaceful perspective to Sociopolitical living has always had a negative or positive welcome. We shall evaluate these two views by looking at some of their contenders and their contentions.

We have earlier mentioned that there are those who are opposed to a peaceful and non-violent resolution of social and political conflicts. Some believe that social reforms and changes are not possible on a platter of gold that is, through the so-called passive resistance or peaceful dialogue. Some argue that following the Christian principle of "turning the other cheek" will give the "so-called enemy" an advantage over one and moreover, reduce one to a weakling. They reason that even knowing that one's opponent is not going to resist him/her will give the oppressor more inspiration and motivation to do more harm and damage. Those who belong to this school of thought are many and they keep increasing with the ongoing global Sociopolitical precarious situations. In this school of thought are such persons like: Karl Marx, Mao Tse Tung, Frantz Fanon, Malcolm X, Lord Byron etc. Although there are variations in their thesis, the central contention seems to be that violence should be countered with violence and force matched with force.

Mao Tse Tung of China was one who keyed into the idea of violence for violence. Being influenced by the revolutionary theories of Karl Marx, Engels and Lenin, he formed the Chinese Communist party in 1920 and with his armies, "drove the Chiang Kaishek nationalists from mainland China, and ... became Chairman of Central Government Council" in 1947 (Edet 27). Mao The Tung was famous for his guerrilla warfare and resisted any idea of peaceful co-existence and compromise. In his book — **The People's War**, he puts up his revolutionary ideas thus:

The object of war is specifically, "to preserve oneself and destroy the enemy" It should be pointed out that destruction of the enemy is the primary object of war and self preservation the secondary, because only by destroying the enemy in large numbers can one effectively preserve oneself. Therefore, attack, the chief means of destroying the enemy, is primary, while defence, a supplementary means of destroying the

enemy and a means of self preservation, is secondary (Mao 214 — 215 in Edet 27).

We may observe that Mao Tse Tung expressly addresses the person with whom he has conflict or misunderstanding as an "enemy." Again, he accords "attack," rather than "defence," pride of place in his own method and ideology. We can then understand why he encouraged guerrilla warfare.

In his writings and speeches, the American born Malcolm X expresses similar ideas of violence. He says:

I am non-violent with those who are nonviolent with me. But when you drop that violence on me, then you have made me go insane, and I am not responsible for what I do (Malcolm X 35 in Edet 28).

This American contemporary of Martin Luther King, .Jnr., went further to say:

Any time you demonstrate against segregation and a man has the audacity to put a police dog on you, kill that dog, kill him, I am telling you, you kill that dog. Then you'll put a stop to it ... (Malcolm X 35 in Edet 27).

In other words, Malcolm X is not only advocating an eye for an eye but, as an "irresponsible insane," one could completely destroy an opponent or even do graver things. The only justification for one's atrocities or any such excesses would be the provocation to violence.

In his revolutionary work, "The Wretched of the earth," Frantz Fanon also argues that violence could only be destroyed by violence. He reasons: "By violence colonialism maintains itself, and only by greater violence can it be destroyed" (Edet 28). Fanon was of the opinion that liberation from the crutches of colonialism could only be got through violence. However, the nations that secured their independence through justifiable means, not by violence, stand in antithetical opposition to Fanon's views.

Furthermore, drawing his strength from Heraclitus' theory that war and strife are the necessary conditions for peace and progress, Karl Marx contends that it is only a revolution generated by the working class (the proletariat) that can secure their freedom from the exploitation of their task-masters, the status quo or the Bourgeoisie. He called workers to unite for their freedom.

Karl Marx's thesis has the merit of calling for unity of purpose. However, the violent prescription for wresting (taking over) power from the "status quo" has not always been very successful. Moreover, the fact that socialism never ended in communism, as Karl Marx predicted, is an indication that Marx's interpretation of history may not have been very correct.

There are other thinkers who have expressed ideas of violence in different and subtle manners. For instance, Lord Byron had asserted that a man that must be free, must strike that blow himself, he must be bold to take the violent step to liberate himself" (Edet, 28). Coming nearer home, Prof. Wole Soyinka asserted in his book, *The Man Died*, that the man who keeps silent "in the face of oppression and tyranny" is dead in himself and "others like him" (Edet 28). In Cuba, Fidel Castro, who led a revolution that later saw him as Head of State, was then of the opinion that ".\ it is not lawful for one to be law abiding in a lawless society" (Edet 28).

Be that as it may, the arguments in favour of peace and nonviolence seem more persuasive than those of hate, unrest and violence, especially in the practical realm. The advocacy for peace and non-violence has louder voice in the different religions of the world that contend for unity of creation, including humanity, in God as the maker and creator of all in existence. It stands to reason that if all is united in one God, as the author, maker or creator, as ampiy demonstrated by the metaphysical principle of "unity in diversity," then, the real nature of existence or creation is unity, peace and love, and not division, anarchy and violence. If so then, hate, violence and unrest are secondary in existence and creation; consequently, they (hate, violence and unrest) are not the substantial and determining factors of existence. Thus, Karl Marx's historical — materialistic interpretation of existence and Sociopolitical processes may, have been standing on faulty premises; and therefore, needs urgent reversal.

Christianity is one of the world religions that champions the cause of "justice and peace" as a prerogative of Divine wisdom. The church following her leader — Christ, bears witness to the dignity of the human person and the communion of all persons in one God. In her Social doctrine, the church clearly teaches "... the demands of justice and peace in conformity with divine wisdom" (Compendium [3] 4; Catechism [2419] 515). In these teachings, the efficacy of the aphorism — "united we stand, divided we fall," is effectively underscored. Surely, a divided, unsettled

and violent humanity can hardly make much progress in the sciences, technologies, arts, cultures, politics and other fields of human endeavours.

Apart from her Social Doctrines, Christianity, following Christ her leader, has a number of rules, laws, precepts, teachings, principles and preaching that under-guide her social and political relationships among men. The 5th commandment, for instance, forbade killings in all their ramifications. Indeed, killing is one of such social and political issues that has dove-tailed into moral considerations. The church, in line with her leader — Christ, who extended the commandment, “You shall not kill” to “the proscription of anger, hatred and vengeance,” considers life as sacrosanct. In respect of abortion and other killings, the church teaches: “Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception” (Catechism [2270] 489). So even in cases of double — effect, such as self-defence, the church cautions: that the intention and the action must be right, judicious, proper and appropriate. **The Catechism of the Catholic Church** (2265) states: “The defence of the common good requires that an unjust aggressor be rendered unable to cause harm” (488). The term “be rendered unable to cause harm” is interpreted as repelling the aggressor(s) from doing damage(s).

One great concept which fosters peace and non-violence is unity. Different religions, scholars, institutions, organizations and societies emphasize the indubitable values of unity. Christ, the founder of Christianity, actually prayed for the unity of peoples that “...there will be one flock, one shepherd” (John 10:16 in Zinkuratire 1804) and indeed, paid the supreme price of death in order “to gather into one the scattered children of God” (John 11:52 in New Community Bible 1910). The value of unity is that it discourages all divisiveness, exploitation, separation, segregation, oppression, suppression, discrimination and alienation tendencies that keep humanity asunder. The knowledge and consciousness of the brotherhood and sisterhood of all (man and woman) in the fatherhood of God, according to Prof. Udo Etuk, will foster our willingness and eagerness to work co-operatively and harmoniously for our common purpose and good.

For Etuk, “To recognize Him (God) as the father of us all is to recognize in each human being, whatever his or her race or status, the image of God which bestows inestimable value and dignity” (167). To recognize Him (God), is to lay oneself open to His love and grace, which in turn can enable His children to love even the unlovely and the unlovable” (Etuk 167 — 168). Under these conditions, the foundation of peace, non-violence lasting development and progress are made.

Furthermore, Prof. Godfrey O. Ozumba has given credence to this idea of unity in his concept of "integrative humanism." For Ozumba, "Integrative humanism is the philosophical orientation that sees reality as having both physical and spiritual dimensions, past and present, as well as harmonized framework in which seemingly opposed variables unite without contradiction to achieve progress and epistemic wholeness" (27). In other words, Ozumba sees unity in all existence "both physical and spiritual." "... since all things were in the beginning one, all that exists existed in the bosom of God — the Creator" (Ozumba 27). The seeming contradictions we have in nature is the result of "externalization of things inherent in the Creator" or the "unbundling" of composite but united reality" (Ozumba 28). However, the seeming contradictions are (not really so) but contraries which can be harmonized. Thus, "we can provide answers to most of the questions (issues) that confront us in our daily lives," such as ethical, religious or Sociopolitical, "through physical and spiritual insights" (Ozumba 27). In that case, what could bring violence can lead to peace and unity, making way for justice and love to prosper or grow for prosperity and development of the society.

CONCLUSION

The nature of existence, especially human sociopolitical existence, makes peace an imperative for its growth and continuation. The culture of violence, hate and unlove is not only a limiting culture but a hindrance to genuine development and progress. It is perhaps in recognition of this that Mahatma Gandhi toed the line of non-violence and peace in human sociopolitical relationship. He aptly emphasized the roles of truth, love and non-violence (in his choice words of Satyagraha and Ahimsa) in human social and political existence or survival. His ideas and practice clearly go contrary to those who think that conflicts and misunderstanding cannot be settled, peacefully and amicably.

In the course of our excursion, we have pointed out that peace and non-violence are not only possible in the theoretical and practical realms, but that renowned authorities, scholars and several institutions lend their heavy weight to this position. We also noted that dialogues, truthfulness, unity, forgiveness, mercy, reconciliation, justice and peace are wiser options in situations of conflict, misunderstanding and anarchy. Thus, Mahatma Gandhi and like minds, who labour for peace and non-violence foster the culture of integrated humanity that can guarantee true development in all (its) ramifications.

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