



International Journal of Recent Development in Engineering and Technology
Website: www.ijrdet.com (ISSN 2347-6435 (Online) Volume 15, Issue 03, March 2026)

Concept of Man According to Mahatma Gandhi

Dr. Md Najibur Rahman

SACT-I, Sagardighi K.K.S. Mahavidyalaya, MSD, WB, India

Abstract-- Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) the father of India, was a freedom fighter through non – violence and is well known for his love towards the nature. Thousands of books are written on Gandhi and by him, are available to know insights and teachings of Gandhi. He developed a system peaceful co- existence of reality in social, political, economic, cultural and religious fields. His concepts of non – violence, Satyagraha, Sarvodaya etc. have a perennial value. This article provides Mahatma Gandhi's views on man and humanity. We can estimate and understand him by studying his thoughts and observing his actions. All his thoughts are related to the care and love for the poor. The aim of his thoughts is for the upliftment and development of the individual and society. He is a seeker after truth which can be attained only by means of non-violence. Gandhi's view on human nature is basically based on his idealistic cosmology. He believes that man is a complex being consisting of both physical and spiritual aspects. Every man is a mixture of the body and spirit. Initially the physical aspect of man is more prominent and later on the spiritual aspect becomes more and more prominent. He calls it the evolution of spiritual from the physical aspect of man. It aims at realizing spirituality which is the destiny of man. Gandhi tries to exhibit that in every man there is an element of Divinity Spirituality, Humanity, Social Good, Truth, and Ahimsa etc. This article provides Mahatma Gandhi's views on man and humanity.

Keywords-- Humanity, non – violence, equality, divinity. Spirituality, Social Good, Truth, Ahimsa etc

I. DETAILS

Every philosophy, every religion, every political system represents at bottom a theory of the nature of man. Great thinkers, like compete, Marx, Sartre and many others have made attempted to understand human nature. Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) the father of India, was a freedom fighter through non – violence and is well known for his love towards the nature. Thousands of books are written on Gandhi and by him, are available to know insights and teachings of Gandhi. He developed a system peaceful co-existence of reality in social, political, economic, cultural and religious fields. His concepts of non – violence, Satyagraha, Sarvodaya etc. have a perennial value. Gandhi also gave much importance to man. The whole philosophy of Gandhi shows that man is the measure of all things and he is a manifestation of God. The essence of his teachings is the glorification of man as the centre and goal of all social and political action.

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In the history of philosophy, there have been many thinkers who have given thought and attention to the question regarding the nature and the status of man. Some of these thoughts are influenced by Psychology and some of them are expressions of metaphysical insight. Freud and the Freudians, for example, try to paint a complete picture of man on the basis of their analysis of unconscious urges and impulses. Some other psychologists, taking their cue from these thinkers, seek to reduce man to some original and native impulses, desires and emotions. Then, there are thinkers like Hobbes who seek to determine man in terms of a social drive of a self-centred nature. Man basically is conceived as a selfish individual, who, for the sake of his own pleasure, feels the need of making adjustments with others, and consequently enters upon, what can be called, a social contract. Then, there are certain sociologists who try to explain the nature of man entirely in terms of social conditions. According to them man is essentially and basically a social creature; apart from society he cannot even exist. These people, therefore, emphasise the importance of social factors and seek to reduce man entirely to his social conditions. Then, there are some metaphysicians who believe that explaining the nature of man means discovering the common and essential characters of man. Aristotle, for example, describes man as a rational animal suggesting that this description represents the characters that every man necessarily shares with every other man.



Then again, there are some Humanists and Existentialists who appear to be convinced that the description of man in terms of his class-characters cannot be an exact description of man for the simple reason that in the case of man his peculiarities are by far more important than the common characters. Every individual man is unique in his own way, and as such, possesses certain characters that are peculiar to him alone. According to the Existentialists, in particular, no description of man can be adequate unless it gives due regard to the peculiarities of man. Thus, these have been some of the prominent conceptions about the nature of man in history of thought. But, Gandhi would say that these pictures of man are superficial and partial because they do not emphasise the basic truth about man. It would appear to Gandhi that these pictures of man, are in fact, pictures of the apparent man only. Gandhi feels that all such accounts of man are based on partial or superficial analysis of man's external behavior and conduct. It does not mean that the bodily aspects of man do not have any reality or that the apparent picture of man is essentially a false picture. Gandhi is aware of the importance and value of this aspect of man, but he believes that there is another aspect of man which is much more basic, which gives nourishment even to the bodily aspect and which is, more or less, neglected or forgotten by all psychological or psychoanalytic or sociological theories about human nature. This, according to Gandhi, represents the true nature of man.

Gandhi feels that man is a complex being. The bodily man is the apparent man; his body is natural in so far as it is akin to other objects of nature. The body grows and decays according to the laws of Nature. But, this aspect of man represents merely the physical aspect. Man is not merely a physical being He has many other characters which are not just physical. He has consciousness, reason, conscience, will, emotion and similar other qualities. He has an aesthetic sense, a feeling-sensibility, and an insight into the nature of good and bad. These are not just physical activities; these are all expressions of the real man-of the spirit or soul present in him.

In fact, Gandhi's conception of the nature of man is based on his metaphysical conviction. Gandhi, metaphysically speaking, is a monist, he believes in the reality of one Supreme God. As such, he has to believe that whatever we come across is an expression of the one God. Man, therefore, is also an expression of that one reality. Thus, both the bodily and the spiritual aspects of man are expressions of God, Even so, Gandhi feels that the spiritual aspect of man represents man's superior and true nature simply because it is akin to Divine nature.

Gandhi accepts that every individual is a mixture of the bodily and the spiritual. He also believes that initially the bodily and the physical aspects were more predominant and that the spiritual went on becoming more and more prominent as the evolutionary process progressed. Evolution, according to him, is a change from the physical to the spiritual, aiming ultimately at the complete realisation of spirituality, that is, Divinity. This also shows that in spite of the fact that the bodily aspect of man also has its own importance and value man's essential nature consists in his spirituality.

Thus, it is apparent that there is an element of Divinity present in every man. This is expressed in various ways. The presence of reason, conscience, free-will etc. is an evidence of the presence of this element in man. Gandhi asserts that if these Divine elements are used in the right manner, man can bring heaven on this earth.

In fact, the most illuminating description of this aspect of man that Gandhi very frequently gives is that it is the aspect of the essential goodness present in every man. Although outwardly man appears to be selfish and even brutish, inwardly and essentially he is good. He says, 'I refuse to suspect human nature. It wills, is bound to, respond to any noble and friendly action. "In the application of the method of Non-violence, one must believe in the possibility of every person, however depraved, being reformed under humane and skilled treatment" This is possible only because of the essential presence of such an element in man that is responsive to spiritual stimulation- an element which is it spiritual.

This belief in the essential spirituality and goodness of every man leads Gandhi to believe further in the essential unity of mankind. He says, 'I believe in absolute oneness of God and therefore also of humanity... though we have many bodies, we have but one soul. The rays of the sun are many through refraction, but they have the same source." This unity is ex-pressed both in the life of an individual and in social life. The spiritual law is constantly working behind all kinds of activities, individual, social, economic and political, and is, in fact, running through and unifying them all. He clearly says, "I believe in advaita, I believe in the essential unity of man, and for that matter of all that lives."

II. CONCLUSION

The whole philosophy of Gandhi shows that man is good. He is the beautiful creation on earth. Hence, he becomes the measure of all things in Gandhian philosophy what he said and wrote about man is very meaningful and significance.



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Gandhiji in his scheme kept people at the center and all his programmes and policies were designed to ensure the full participation of people enabling them to develop the capacities in them to work as members of one inter related community. However, Gandhiji was of the opinion that a moral and an immoral society cannot co-exist in harmony. In short, Gandhi provides new vision and space for the people to live sustainably, to share nature's resources equitably, to live without violence, fear, oppression or alienation, in spiritual harmony and peace.

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