The Communitarian Dimensions in Gandhi's Thought: A Philosophical Exploration

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Abstract

Gandhi is often described as an individualist thinker. The political ideals Gandhiji adopted during the Indian Independence Movement to protect the rights and freedom of the citizens from the monopoly and exploitation of British imperialism is surely a form of individualism. However, a deeper study of Gandhi's socio-political philosophy reveals that his conception of the ideal society corresponds to the new perspective of contemporary Western philosophy namely communitarianism. Fundamentally, it is an approach against deontological, individualistic and atomistic views of life and society. For them, strict individualism and self-interests i.e., the modern way of living are very harmful to social life and cohesion. It only brings rootlessness and isolation and therefore, destruction. In contrast, they believe in community values; prioritise collective interests over individuals and emphasise the revivalism of traditional cultural and community life. In Gandhi's philosophy, we find that along with individualism he also emphasises the value of tradition, culture, the sense of duty and community life to create a just society. Therefore, the main focus of this paper is to uphold the communitarian values Gandhi adopted in his description of the ideal state, or Swaraj, or Ramarajya

Keywords: *Gandhi, liberalism, communitarianism, Swaraj, and community.*

Introduction

Contemporary political philosophy gave rise to a new perspective in the sphere of social justice—known as communitarianism. It is an anti-individualistic approach that calls for the revival of community life by relating us to ancient cultural traditions. They were very much concerned about the decline of community life and increasing isolation, intolerance, and violence in modern society. For communitarians, the liberal individualistic approach to the individual and society is very harmful and responsible for social isolation. Hence, they argued that the only way to eliminate this social chaos is to emphasise community life. Only the vigorous revival of ancient cultural traditions in our social relationships can end this chaos and establish a just and harmonious social order.

Gandhi is often described as the proponent of liberal individualist thinking. There are strong reasons behind this consideration because, in Gandhi's thought, there are several examples of individual integrity from which it appears that he is truly a liberal individualistic thinker. In many of his writings, Gandhi considered individual freedom as supreme consideration. In his famous weekly magazine *Harijan*, Gandhi wrote "If the individual ceases to count, what is left of society? Individual freedom alone can make a man voluntarily surrender himself completely to the service of society. If it is wrested from him, he becomes an automaton, and society is ruined" (Gandhi, 1961, p. 31). In another monthly magazine, *The Modern Review*, founded by Ramananda Chatterjee, he states "It does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of all progress" (Gandhi, 1947, p. 77). Further, in the analysis of the village republic, a model for rural reconstruction, he considered individuals as 'everyone is (her) own ruler.' From the above views on individual freedom, it obviously appears that Gandhi was a true individualist.

However, Gandhi's conceptions of society which he expounded in his famous book *Hind Swaraj*, provide us with a different perspective on his social thought and obstruct the tendency to interpret him only as a liberal individualist. Throughout his book, he argued against liberal democratic society raised his voice in favour of the community-based approach to societies, and referred to those as the true type. Many scholars described Gandhi as a multiculturalist, constructive postmodernist, reformed liberalist, and also a true communitarian thinker. R. Chatterji opined that many of Gandhi's political approaches "resemble many of the strands of contemporary communitarianism" (Chatterji, 2013, p. x). Nicholas F. Gier considered Gandhi a 'constructive postmodernist' (Gier, 2003, p. 81). Gier equates constructive

postmodernism to communitarianism. For him, like communitarianism, constructive postmodernism is a combination of pre-modernism and modernism. It wishes "to reestablish the premodern harmony of humans, society, and the sacred without losing the integrity of the individual, the possibility of meaning, and the intrinsic value of nature" (Gier, 2003, p. 79). Gier argues that "When Gandhi said that Indians should study [their] Eastern institutions in [a] spirit of scientific inquiry…[to] evolve a truer socialism and a truer communism…this appears to be the synthesis of premodern and modern that we find in constructive postmodernism" (Gier, 2003, p. 81). Hence, Gandhi is a communitarian. Gandhi's philosophy was described as 'communitarian liberalism,' or 'reformed liberalism.' Gier argued that Gandhi's advocacy of both, the unity of world religions and at the same time 'an international police force to enforce the highest terms of peace,' the term reformed liberalism is appropriate for him (Gier, 2003, p. 82).

Gandhi was the first non-Western thinker to present an original and unique political philosophy in the context of his national culture against Western modernity. About this uniqueness of Gandhi, B. Parekh commented that "from a distinctly community-based Indian perspective, he highlighted some of the disturbing features of the modern state, detected its internal contradictions, and explored an alternative to it" (Parekh, 1989, p. 3). For Gandhi, "political life—the sense of belonging to a community and constituting a people—was inconceivable without an unconditional equality in moral and social relations" (Kumar, 2015, p. 2). Based on the tradition of the Indian culture of non-violence Gandhi committed himself to understanding the sources of violence in present modern society and offering an alternative that would reduce the hegemonic individualism into a doctrine of intellectual self-interest. As a result, uniting all the contradictory ideas he presented a principle of social unity.

Gandhi was always enthusiastic about reviving the political and cultural heritage that existed in ancient India. He believed that "true politics consisted in revitalising Indian society, culture, and character by working in the villages, fighting against diseases, hunger and local injuries, helping ordinary men and women acquire courage and self-respect, building up local communities and people's power, and in general devoting oneself to creating an energetic, courageous, cooperative and just country" (Parekh, 1989, p. 92). Gandhi believed that achieving the ultimate truth, which he linked to God, should be the goal of human existence. He believed that non-violence is the only path to realising this ultimate truth. He added that we must be collective and free from all forms of coercion to realise this ultimate truth. Gandhi envisioned all religions as separate branches of the same tree and asked the followers of religions to be friendly to each other. For him, "through such contract it will be possible for us all to rid our respective faiths of

shortcomings and excrescences" (Gandhi, 1961, p. 85). Gandhi's call to unite people of all religions transcends the ideal of liberal individualism.

This paper aims to present the communitarian values that Gandhi inherently embraced in his analysis of the ideal state or, *Ramarajya*. Our main argument in this paper is that the present-day communitarian thought was already present in Gandhi's idea of society. Although liberal individualism is at the heart of Gandhi's political thought, he also strongly advocated communitarian values. Indeed, he greatly focused on the value and role of the community in individual lives to establish a harmonious society. In the practice of his ideologies, Gandhi sought to transform Western liberal individualism into communitarianism, what he called *Sarvodaya*, or *Purna Swaraj*, or complete freedom. Finally, we will show that Gandhi's philosophy is a synthesis of both individualism and communitarianism. Through his ideal of *Satyagraha*, he resolved the conflicts between the two strands and proposed a unique idea of social order.

The Communitarian Approches

Goodwyn Barmby, the founder of the Universal Communitarian Association, first used the term 'communitarianism' in 1841. By the term, he referred to the public philosophy involved in developing purposeful and experimental communities. Subsequently, it has been used as a synonym for 'socialism' and 'communism.' However, since the meaning of those words becomes clear through various struggles, communitarianism is no longer discussed as synonymous with them. Philosophers were still struggling with the meaning of communitarianism. The reason behind this struggle was the incompetency in defining the term 'community.' Some philosophers began to opine that the term 'community' is rooted in the lexicons of mutual sympathy, tolerance, sincerity etc. As a result, communitarianism began to be interpreted as a communal or collectivist ideology based on shared identities and values i.e., 'we feeling,' 'face-to-face,' interaction among the members of a particular group. In Elizabeth Frazer's language, "communitarianism refers to a range of positions in social and political discourse, which, like other 'isms,' consist typically of sets of concepts which are tied to beliefs, propositions and theories about the world, values, and prescriptions about acceptable and appropriate strategies for realizing these values" (Elizabeth, 2006, p. 4). However, in the 1980s, the term communitarianism began to be used again in political philosophy with the publication of Michael Sandel's book *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (1982). Later, philosophers such as Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, Michael Walzer, Amitzai Etzioni, Philip Selznick, etc. developed communitarianism, referring to the nature of their doctrine.

In contemporary political philosophy, communitarianism has emerged as a reaction to liberalism. At the heart of communitarian thought was the critique of liberalism. Regarding the ideology of contemporary communitarian thought, W. Kyamlicka says that "a dominant theme of communitarian writings is the insensitivity of liberalism to the virtues and importance of our membership in a community and culture" (Kymlicka, 1989, p. 1). Explaining the communitarian focal point of the argument against liberalism Kymlicka further states that liberalism is a "misguided attempt to protect and promote the dignity and authority of the individual" that "undermined the associations and communities which alone can nurture human flourishing"(Kymlicka, 1988, p. 181). Their central argument is that "moral and political discussion can flourish only if more attention is paid to the shared understanding and standard of the various communities in which we participate, that is, traditions of meaning" (Wallach, 1987, p. 592). Accusing liberalism, communitarians say that in moral and political reasoning liberals seek to use 'trump card' principles that are inconsistent with human practice and therefore, unrealistic.

Let us briefly explain the common features of contemporary communitarianism. Nineteenth-century liberal modernisation brought people from a family-centred stable life to the modern urban and commercial unstable life. Although this urbanisation gives people freedom and affluence, it brings rootlessness and isolation to them. Reacting against this rootlessness and isolation, communitarians argue in favour of the revivalism of traditional cultural community life. For them, strict individualism and self-interest i.e., the modern way of living are very harmful to social life and cohesion; it will only lead us towards destructions. Liberalism advocates that individuals participate in a society or community through a contract to fulfil their self-interests. Contrary to this view, communitarians believe in community values; prioritise community or collective interest over individual interests and admit the role and responsibilities of the state. For them, society cannot be a result of any contract or agreement. Society always exists for some substantial good or values such as collective goods.

Each communitarian explains their doctrine diversely but all share some common features that reflect the core belief of their thought. Fundamentally, their main target was the deontological, individualistic and atomistic view of life and society. Their theories are mainly based on criticism of those perspectives. The arguments against liberal atomistic individualism and their ideology can be stated as follows: **Firstly**, arguing against liberal individualism they explain the social nature of human beings. According to them, the individual is a social organism and it is within the society the personality of each individual made up. Within society, individual behaviour is influenced, values are

constituted and life becomes meaningful from the solidarity with society. Communitarians regard individuals as members of a community whose common denominator is 'shared identity' i.e., 'we feeling,' 'shared values,' and 'face-to-face interactions' or at least some discourse, practice, or moral obligations that can be shared with others. **Secondly**, communitarians emphasise social values and do not see individuals as separated from society. For them, individuality and personality depend on social context and contribute to social reproduction and transformation. They also believe that collective education originates, spreads, and has social significance through like-minded people belonging to communities. Hence, they favour collective social interests over individual self-interests and emphasise the responsibility of society and the state to protect collective goods. **Thirdly**, communitarians justify political policies in terms of social distributive values. Arguing against liberals' non-existent universal principles as valid, they favour clarification of those principles in terms of the value and meaning of distribution.

Communitarianism, originating in the 1980s, is surely the youngest political doctrine in the realm of social justice with a limited number of thinkers and writers. However, the history of communitarian thought is as old. The seeds of it can be found in various strands of thought. M. K. Gandhi, one of the greatest social reformers in India, was one of the early sources of advocating communitarian values in his social thought. We shall now discuss his communitarian approach.

Gandhi's Critique of Modern Civilization

Gandhi was a "relentless critic of modern industrial civilization, and on more than one occasion, he described Western civilization as *Satanic*" (Lal, 2009, p. 281). Gandhi was very much concerned about the rise of modernity. For him, although the European Industrial Revolution emancipated people from feudalism and bigotry and modernity was achieved, it gave rise to mechanisms in individuals. Despite being liberated from dogma and slavery, people were increasingly entering into materialistic life; they were separated from social relations and the pull of pulse. In the latter half of the 19th century, Gandhi felt the threat of this kind of individualistic materialism and separation from social relations and warned about the future of modern civilisation saying that such a modern outlook would create misery and pain for the human future. He opined that if India or other developing countries follow this modernity, it will create a dangerous situation for India and the whole of mankind. He hoped that "God forbid that India should ever take industrialization after the manner of the West" (Gandhi, 1928, p. 422).

Among the early philosophers, Gandhi was the first who foresaw the precarious future of modern civilization and sought to prevent its encroachment on their nations and to an extent, the whole of mankind. From his participation in Indian politics, Gandhi involved himself in criticism of Western modern civilisation. In his book *Hind Swaraj,* he draws attention to the naked and fragile future of modern human civilisation and argues that it is so dangerous and detrimental to the world as a whole that it should be avoided for the sake of all mankind. Throughout his book *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi described the nature of self-interest and the material needs of individuals of modern civilisation as a threat to the human future. He argues that modern society embedded the seeds of destruction within itself. The ways of living of modern people will never be able to build a sustainable society. They carry such a colonial mentality that it doesn't care about the rights of others, consider themselves superior to others, and impose only their authority over the natural resources. In this context, consider the following remarks of Gandhi: "The incessant search for material comfort and their multiplication is such an evil and I make bold to say that the Europeans themselves will have to remodel their outlook; if they are not to perish under the weight of the comforts to which they are becoming slaves" (Gandhi, *Young India*, 30-04-1931).

Gandhi considered modernism as a doctrine of social atomism. He argues that the modern liberal state represents violence, power, and brute in a concentrated form. They do not entertain morality in the individual gathering but the only mechanism and the pseudo promise of individual empowerment. As Bikkhu Parekh states, instead of empowering the individuals, the liberal state takes away power from the individuals, uses it for the needs of the state, and returns it to the citizens in their abstract form. Instead of connecting or binding in the social thread, individual atomism is instrumental to separation. As Gier describes "Modernism is a form of thought that loves to dichotomize. It separates subjects from objects, the inner from the public, fact from values, individuals from their communities, rights from responsibilities, procedural justice from the good, and religion from science" (Gier, 2003, p. 78-79).

Gandhi also states that individualism is only conducive to individual freedom, rights, and needs; it has nothing to do with society. A true civilization can advance only through adherence to morality and non-violence, the constant practice of self-restraint and selfless action. Indeed, Gandhi sought to build a harmonious social order by uniting all religions and mankind. Hence, he described modernity in terms of morality.

Swaraj or Ramarajya—The Alternative to the Modern Civilization

Gandhi develops his idea of *Swaraj* or *Ramarajya* as an alternative to modern Western Civilization. As a spiritual reformist, he believed in values like morality, cooperation, coexistence, solidarity, and equality and based on those values always strived to create a peaceful society that would reflect unity in diversity. Gandhi always argued in favour of the limited states, because for him the large states always indulge in violence and coercion, and he was keenly interested in the small *village communities* to establish Swaraj or Ramarajya. He always believed in the power of community and collective action and favoured the constitution of small village communities. Gandhi considered the power of the community so strong that it could succeed in any social purpose based on the needs of its members and could build a society of harmony and peace. He argues that the development of the individual requires the development of the community, and the foundation of the community should be mutual understanding and shared values. For him, the all-round development of a society depends on the exercise of such values within the community. Therefore, he insists on the importance of the interdependence of small rural village communities for establishing a harmonious social order.

As a man of non-violence, Gandhi constantly supported actions that would undermine control over individuals. Through his tactics of decentralisation of power, he always promoted the formation of small village communities by ensuring their autonomy and independence. Regarding the centralised power of the state, Gandhi wrote: "The state represents violence in a concentrated and organised form. The individual has a soul, but as the state is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence" (Gandhi, 1935, p. 412). Therefore, Gandhi in his book *Hind Swaraj*, argues that power ought to be shared among the village communities and envisioned a state made up of the amalgamation of small communities. He wanted to see every community as a self-sufficient and independent republic capable of producing and distributing all its necessities. If there is any surplus of production, they will distribute it among the poor and consequently, a harmonious social system would be developed. It seems clear that Gandhi places more emphasis on communities over individuals to establish a just and harmonious society. It undoubtedly implies a communitarian outlook on life, as well as society.

Gandhi's concept of *Swaraj* is linked to both the individual and society. In his view, achieving individual freedom is essential to attaining Swaraj—"Swaraj has to be experienced by each one for himself" (Mukherjee, 1995, pp. 37-38). Every individual must be independent and capable of self-governance. The Swaraj of the individual is not only

the freedom from British rule but also the achievement of self-control without harming others and becoming his saviour. On the other hand, Ramarajya or social swaraj meant a system of governance in which there would be no existence of hegemony; only the *Satyagrahi* i.e., only the gathering of the disciplined individuals who have control over their lives. In Gandhi's words, in a real Swaraj or ideal state "each person will become his own ruler. He will conduct himself in such a way that his behaviour will not hamper the well-being of his neighbour. In an ideal state, there will be no political institution and therefore, no political power" (Mukherjee, 1995, p. 79).

Gandhi's articulation of social welfare, as reflected in his *Hind Swaraj*, is different from utilitarian ethics. He never saw social well-being in terms of economic or material prosperity. He upholds the idea of social well-being from an ideological point of view, known as *Sarvadaya*— 'uplift of all.' Gandhi argues that "utilitarianism shows a lack of human dignity" (Glyn, 1991, p. 74). Arguing against utilitarianism Gandhi said,

> A votary of *ahimsa* cannot subscribe to the utilitarian formula (of the greatest good of the greatest number). He should strive for the greatest good of all and die in the attempt to realize the ideal. He will therefore be willing to die so that others may live. He will serve himself with the rest, by himself dying. The greatest good of all inevitably includes the good of the greatest number, and therefore, he and the utilitarian will converge in many points in their career but there does come a time when they must part company, and work in opposite directions. The utilitarian to be logical will never sacrifice himself" (Gandhi, 1926, p. 432).

Gandhi, further states that,

> I do not believe in the doctrine of the greatest good of the greatest number. It means in its nakedness that in order to achieve the supposed good of 51 per cent the interest of 49 per cent may be, or rather, should be sacrificed. It is a heartless doctrine and has done harm to humanity. The only real, dignified, human doctrine is the greatest good of all, and this can only be achieved by uttermost self-sacrifice (Desai, 1932, p. 149).

He continues to say that,

> I do not believe in the 'greatest good of the greatest number,' nor can I agree that might is right. For human beings, the object in view should be the good

of all, with the weak being served first. We are two-legged men, but have still to cast away the nature of four-footed beast (Desai, 1932, p. 221).

Describing the nature of Ramrajya, Gandhi further states that it will be a state of mutual interdependency among the members of the state, that is, every individual will exist in a reciprocal relationship. Consider the following statement in this regard:

> Swaraj and *Ramarajya* are one and the same thing…The Concept of swaraj is no ordinary one; it means *Ramarajya*…We call a State *Ramarajya* when both the ruler and his subjects are straightforward, when both are pure in heart, when both are inclined towards self-sacrifice, when both exercise restraint and self-control while enjoying worldly pleasures, and when the relationship between the two is as good as that between father and son. It is because we have forgotten this that we talk of democracy or the government of the people. Although this is the age of democracy, I do not know what the word connotes; however, I would say that democracy exists where the people's voice is heard, where love of the people holds a place of prime importance. In my *Ramarajya*, however, public opinion cannot be measured by counting of heads or raising of hands. I would not regard this as a measure of public opinion…The *rishis* and *munis* after doing penance came to the conclusion that public opinion is the opinion of people who practise penance and who have the good of the people at heart (Gandhi, 1928, pp. 489-90).

Gandhi always favoured the revival of our ancient cultural village traditions. For him, our ancient village cultural traditions were the true examples of the real social order. According to Gandhi, our India mainly exists in lakhs of villages, not in cities. He wrote "I have believed and repeated times without number that India is to be found not in its few cities but in its 7,00,000 villages. But we town-dwellers have believed that India is to be found in its towns" (Gandhi, 1936, p. 63). Gandhi saw the prevailing modern urban Indian societies as a symbol of colonial control and degradation. Gandhi wrote: "Our country was never so unhappy and miserable as it is at present. City people may be getting big profits and good wages, but all that has become possible by sucking the blood of the villagers" (Gandhi, 1961, p. 4). However, he also pointed out some faults like the caste system and the practice of untouchability and wanted to abolish that practice saying that we all are the children of God and also refused to bind himself within a particular religion.

The basis of Gandhi's Swaraj was self-rule against all forms of authority. He sought to establish a state by educating individuals to self-restraint against any form of oppression. "Swaraj of a people means the sum total of the Swaraj (self-rule) of individuals" (Gandhi, 1961, p. 4). Gandhi further states that "By Swaraj, I mean the government of India by the consent of the people ascertained by the vote of the largest number of the adult population…that real Swaraj will come, not by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused. In other words, Swaraj is to be attained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority" (Gandhi, 1925, pp. 40-41).

Satyagraha as the means of *Swaraj* — 'The Communitarian Value'

In Gandhi's philosophy, the only way to achieve this *Swaraj* is through the *Satyagraha.* It is the only means of the transformation of the individual as well as society. For him, it is the only weapon through which one can learn self-restraint and change oneself by developing his spirituality and this change is always constructive and collective, and such a moral life will become an example to all others. Through his idea of Satyagraha, he wanted to end all kinds of internal conflicts and establish unity among mankind. Gandhi believed that the unity of mankind is the universal truth. Acknowledging this fact, at the end of his *Autobiography* Gandhi wrote: "To see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. That is why my devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics, and I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means" (Gandhi, 1940, p. 555). It is this individual self-governance, Gandhi states, which will ensure the swaraj of the society or nation.

Gandhi never considered the individual as an atomistic and isolated being. He always perceived *Brahman* within the individual and believed in spiritual transformation and interdependence of man. Gandhi believed that the harmony of society depends on the transformations of an isolated individual into a social being. Hence, he always asked individuals to relate to one another because according to him the manifestation of *Brahman* in the individual only happens when the individual transcends his 'I' and connects himself to others. Gandhi opined that it is the human ability to relate to one another. Each individual is a member of a particular community and committed to achieving a common goal through self-restraint. Since ancient times every society has been created out of mutual understanding and cooperation of individuals. For Gandhi,

Satyagraha is the only weapon for the transformation of the individual and for establishing social unity. It is the Satyagraha through which one can awaken spirituality within him and all forms of political and social violence can be reduced towards social harmony.

Gandhi always argued that morality is more valuable than religion. If we want to know the truth properly, we only have to follow the path of morality. It doesn't matter at all whether we are religious or not. Knowing the differences between religion and morality we should always adopt the path of morality. Only through the pursuit of morality, we can transcend our self-interest and grasp the ultimate truth. We as isolated individuals are incapable of knowing the ultimate truth. The only way to realise the nature of the ultimate truth is to understand other's ideas of truth and connect with them. It seems clear that in Gandhi's philosophy to know the ultimate truth all the moral people must unite together and this kind of thinking is similar to communitarianism.

Tolerance is another important aspect of Satyagraha. Gandhi believed that morality is the foundation of all world religions. For him, all religions of the world possess certain truths and share similar moral principles such as non-violence, respecting human dignity and the way of the best life etc. When people realise that not only their religion but all the religions of the world are based on some moral principles, they understand that all religions are equal. According to Gandhi "It is seen that the rules of morality, laid down in the world's great religions, are largely the same…if morality is destroyed, religion which is built on it comes crashing down" (Gandhi, 1968). This way of thinking by Gandhi suggests the equality of all religions. Gandhi's argument for the equality of all religions is that, as finite beings, our human capacity to know something is limited. As a limited being, we cannot claim to be superior to others. In the same way, with the limited knowledge of the truth of our religion, we cannot claim our religion as ultimately true. Like ours, all the other religions have certain truths. Hence, it is unjustified to draw any comparison between the religions. This certainly indicates the tolerance and plurality of all religions.

Concluding Remarks

From the above discussion of Gandhi's conception of the ideal harmonical society it distinctly appears that, for Gandhi, both the individual and societal relation are equally important for ensuring a harmonical society. Consider the following remarks of Gandhi in this context: "Individual liberty and interdependence are both essential for life in society" (Gandhi, 1961, p. 32). While giving the highest importance to individual freedom

in society, Gandhi laid equal importance on social relations and community life in social development and the formation of a harmonious society. Gandhi always prioritised individual freedom. For him, an individual without freedom is nothing but a machine— "No society can possibly be built on a denial of individual freedom" (Gandhi, 1942, p. 27). But he also makes it clear that without society an individual is empty. When he states that "A nation cannot advance, without the units of which it is composed advancing, and conversely, no individual can advance, without the nation of which he is a part also advancing" (Gandhi, 1931, p. 50). Indeed, he tries to explain the complementariness of both, individual freedom and society for the establishment of a harmonious society. In this context, consider the following statement:

> I value individual freedom, but you must not forget that man is essentially a social being. He has risen to the present status by learning to adjust his individualism to the requirements of social progress. Unrestricted individualism is the law of the beast of the jungle. We have learnt to strike the mean between individual freedom and social restraint. Willing submission to social restraint for the sake of the well-being of the whole society enriches both the individual and the society of which one is a member (Gandhi, 1939, p. 144).

Gandhi's view of individualism is different from the Western one. He advocates a type of moral individualism in which he regards individuals as moral and social beings who will voluntarily devote themselves to the interests of society. This will enrich both the individual and society. According to Gandhi, individuals and society are complementary to each other. Just as the development of the individuals depends on the society, the success of the society depends on the individual. The basis of Gandhi's moral individualism was Swaraj.

By religion what Gandhi meant is similar to the ethics of communitarianism. Communitarians believe that the values of individuals are shaped by the culture of the community in which they grew up and can never be separated. It is within the community that the context for an individual moral choice is made up. Similarly, Gandhi argues that religion also provides the basis for our moral choice. Like communitarians, he also believed that people are historically capable of making decisions about good and bad and shared values.

At last, from the above discussion of Gandhi's Swaraj or Ramrajya and the ideology of Satyagraha, it can be claimed that Gandhi made a synthesis of liberal individualism and communitarianism. Gandhi's ideology of Satyagraha can be seen as a

solution to the political conflicts between these two approaches. As an ideal, Satyagraha consists of the values of both perspectives. His statements, while discussing swaraj, that "Swaraj had to be experienced by each person…there was no question of swaraj being obtained by some on behalf of others" (Suhrud, 2011, pp. 79-80), and call for the individual to be 'the ruler of his own,' clearly denotes that individual should become capable of attaining the rights, freedom and values cherished by liberals and argues that these are the factors of self-realisation. On the other hand, the only way for an individual to become worthy of these rights and freedom is to know the truth lies in the traditions of their communities. An individual can learn his duties only within a community. When we realise that being a finite individual our capacity to know the truth is limited, Satyagraha awakens self-restraint and empowers us to become collective to increase our knowledge of the truth. For a *Satyagrahi*, the first grand ideal is to be non-violent. Non-violence doesn't alleviate isolation rather it makes individuals more interested in the opinions of others. This interest in the opinion of others awakens the consciousness of shared values and that we think of others as one with ourselves and think of it as our moral duty. Hence, Gandhi argues for the preservation and development of the communities to enable individuals to achieve their rights and freedom and make them conscious of their shared values. So, in conclusion, it can be claimed that Gandhi in his articulation of the ideal state advocated both, on the one hand, liberal individualism and at the same time considered community values such as constitutive ends and shared values as essential for social harmony.

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