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BA THESIS

The Application of Gandhi's Philosophy in Contemporary
Czech Society

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Abstract

This BA thesis analyses Gandhi's philosophy and its application in contemporary Czech Society with the emphasis on personal practice. The first section is an analysis of the main aspects of Gandhi's philosophy and the premises and acitons coming with them. It reveals that the core of Gandhi's philosophy lies in satya (Truth) and that ahimsa (nonviolence) is a way how to attain satya at the individual level. The pursuit of satya then expands to the socio-political level through satyagraha and results in sarvodaya (the welfare of all). Satya can be best attained in Ashrams following the twelve wovs. In Czech society, Gandhi's philosophy can find numerous applications in work, consumerism, social relations of people and socio-political activism. It is argued that nonviolent lifestyle is more sustainable and thus brings about an alternative to the materialistic way of life. At the same time, with the employment of satyagraha, it can set an example for the masses and lead to sarvodaya in Czech Society.

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1 . Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi's life achievement stands unique in political history. He has invented a completely new and humane means for the liberation war of an oppressed country, and practiced it with greatest energy and devotion. The moral influence he had on the consciously thinking human being of the entire civilized world will probably be much more lasting than it seems in our time with its overestimation of brutal violent forces. Because lasting will only be the work of such statesmen who wake up and strengthen the moral power of their people through their example and educational works.

We may all be happy and grateful that destiny gifted us with such an enlightened contemporary, a role model for the generations to come. (Albert Einstein¹)

Although Albert Einstein paid a great tribute to Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and even former Czech president Václav Havel acknowledges the influence of Gandhi on the Charter 77 and later the "Velvet Revolution" of 1989², in contemporary Czech Republic, Gandhi is not very well known. For instance only 6 books written by Gandhi in Czech language can be found in the National Library, while Gandhi has written around 100 books that are now collected in 98 volumes of *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*. Similarly this thinker is not present in the history syllabi of Czech schools and there are no institutions dealing with Gandhi's philosophy. This situation suggests that Gandhi's philosophy is not very important for Czech society. Naturally in Gandhi's

¹ Einstein Archives Online. <http://www.alberteinstein.info/db/ViewImage.do?DocumentID=20795&Page=1>, translation taken from <<http://streams.gandhiserve.org/einstein.html>>

² http://old.hrad.cz/president/Havel/speeches/1994/0802_uk.html

homeland, India, this situation is much different as there are still many institutions conversant with Gandhi's philosophy, they publish articles, periodicals, books, held seminars and do other activities to spread the awareness about Gandhi's message. This shows that Gandhi's ideals continue to inspire people's actions there and are applied in various ways. The aim of this work is to show whether or not these ideas can be applied to the context of contemporary Czech Republic. This work thus aspires to draw attention to this thinker and present the main aspects of his philosophy as well as its possible applications in contemporary Czech society.

At the beginning it is essential for the reader to understand that Gandhi's view is unique and very much antipodal to today's mainstream thought. Although each of the aspects of Gandhi's philosophy may be considered on its own, the great strength and revolution lies in all of them put together and applied. Gandhi's philosophy is not any theory that tries to explain how people should live to achieve happiness; rather it is a practical set of principles, which were already put into practice with interesting results³. Therefore it is important for the reader to put aside any prejudice and ready judgments for particular aspects of Gandhi's philosophy. What is on the other hand needed is to attend to this text as to an attempt to present an alternative perception of world, which if taken into account could contribute to the evolution of society into a nonviolent one.

The aim of this work is to analyze Gandhi's philosophy from a viewpoint of a contemporary Czech citizen and find ways of its application in contemporary context. The main aspects of Gandhi's philosophy will be presented so that the reader would understand on which foundation it stands, how it is to be applied in the personal life, in

³ Gandhi and his followers plasticized these principles and were able to carry out several satyagraha campaigns with the aim to achieve independence of India from the British rule. India then finally gained independence on 15th August 1947. Activists like Martin Luther King, Jr. or Nelson Mandela were inspired by Gandhi's philosophy (Kamath 195).

socio-political activism and how it could lead to welfare of all the people. The main contribution of this work, however, lays in the demonstration of practical application of Gandhi's philosophy to everyday life of contemporary Czech citizen. Issues like spirituality, work, consumerism and relations with other people will be elaborated. Furthermore, it will be shown how the use of Gandhi's principles in personal life of Czech citizen can lead to welfare of all through the use of nonviolent means.

2 . Gandhi's Philosophy – An Analysis

An analysis of Gandhi's philosophy, and its implications in personal life and socio-political activism requires examination of the main aspects of Gandhi's philosophy which are *satya* (Truth), *ahimsa* (nonviolence), *swaraj* (self-rule), *satyagraha* (resisting untruth by truthful means) and *sarvodaya* (welfare of all). The definitions of the basic premises as well as the conditions and actions that come with them, clarify how and why Gandhi's philosophy encompasses literally the whole world. For example, Gandhi is noted for saying, "I hope to realize and carry on the mission of brotherhood of man" (*The Collected Works* 45: 199). The key to his approach is that the pursuit of satya starts at the individual level and then naturally expands to the social relationships of individuals, groups, communities, and whole nations. It can be even further applied to international relations. *For graphical explanation of Gandhi's Philosophy see the diagram in Appendix A and for better orientation in the basic terms, see Glossary in Appendix B.*

2.1 Ahimsa – Pursuit of Satya on Personal Level

Stephen Murphy in his essay "Brief Outline to Gandhi's Philosophy" explains that

the two fundamental principles of Gandhi's philosophy are satya (Truth) and ahimsa (nonviolence), and that it is difficult to grasp the real meaning of these two words once translated into English. "For Gandhi, truth is the relative truth of truthfulness in word and deed, and the absolute truth - the Ultimate Reality. This ultimate truth is God (as God is also Truth) and morality - the moral laws and code - its basis" (Murphy 1). To define Gandhi's conception of God, following quotation of Gandhi will be used:

God is that indefinable something which we all feel but which we do not know.

[...] To me God is truth and love; God is ethics and morality; God is fearlessness.

God is the source of Light and Life and yet He is above and beyond all these. God is conscience. He is even the atheism of the atheist. For in His boundless love God permits the atheist to live. He is the searcher of hearts. He transcends speech and reason. He knows us and our hearts better than we do ourselves. He does not take us at our word for He knows that we often do not mean it, some knowingly and others unknowingly. He is a personal God to those who need His personal presence. He is embodied to those who need His touch. He is the purest essence.

He simply Is to those who have faith. He is all things to all men. He is in us and yet above and beyond us. (*The Collected Works* 30: 334)

With ahimsa or nonviolence Gandhi means the opposite to himsa or violence and ahimsa can also be translated as active love. Gandhi's concept of ahimsa stands on two basic points. The first is that ahimsa is the ultimate positive and persistent force that makes everything into being. It must be more powerful than himsa because if it was not more powerful then humankind was already gone for centuries as himsa would destroy everything. Mankind is still here and so ahimsa must be the superior force to himsa. The second basic point of ahimsa is that all life was created by God and so all life is one as

Gandhi noted, “I believe in absolute oneness of God and, therefore, also of humanity“ (*The Collected Works* 29: 209), thus any violence directed outwards is also violence towards oneself (Murphy 1). This analysis will present all the premises and actions from these two fundamental points.

When it is supposed that satya is God, who is the only perfect one, one should pursuit and follow satya to achieve perfectness or *moksha* (liberation). Gandhi claims that in his pursuit of satya he found ahimsa, which could thus be understood as the action. Ahimsa is a personal concept as it sustains the soul and so should be practiced on personal level, while satyagraha, to be explained later, may be regarded as the action on social level. As both Tahtinen in the second chapter of his book *The Core of Gandhi's Philosophy* and Bilgrami in his essay “Gandhi's Integrity” point out, ahimsa requires practical experience and can not be attained by reading books. According to Gandhi, “It is only our own moral experience which is capable of being Truth” (Bilgrami 62).

Gandhi's view was that every person should try his best to attain satya through swaraj (self-rule) and on this path one would be able to realize for oneself that the best way to achieve this goal is through ahimsa. For Gandhi swaraj is the mean through which one may attain inner freedom “from vices such as injustice, dishonesty, greed, aggression, possessiveness, and envy” (Parel 210). One might however never be able to achieve swaraj through cognitive knowledge of satya or morality. “To observe morality is to attain mastery over our mind and our passions” (Prasad 161). Without swaraj it is very difficult to eliminate violence, which is often driven by people's passions and the above mentioned vices. So even when one “knows” that violence is not moral or right thing to do, without self-control one might never get rid of violent behavior. That is why Gandhi claims that the pursuit of satya should be based on an individual's own experience. Throughout the

whole compilation of Gandhi's writings, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, there are references to Gandhi's own life and practices that demonstrate the fact that everything Gandhi recommends he practices himself. His philosophy, therefore, is practical and is not at all meant to be theoretical as Gandhi puts no interest on form and logical structure of his thoughts (Tahtinen 25). Gandhi's sole objective is the attainment of satya and so he recommends to the reader "when anybody finds any inconsistency between any two writings of mine, if he has still faith in my sanity, he would do well to choose the later of the two on the same subject." (*The Collected Works* 61: 24).

The pursuit of satya needs to be based on individual experience through swaraj and on the listening to one's inner voice, which he defines as follows, "for me the Voice of God, of Conscience, of Truth, or the Inner Voice or 'the Still Small Voice' mean one and the same thing" (Gandhi, *The Collected Works* 61: 219). The inner voice is the result of a deep connection of one with one's own inner self that was perfectly created by God. So for Gandhi it is the way how to connect with God or satya. The realization of ahimsa, therefore, also largely depends on the ability to hear one's own inner voice which should then guide one in every situation. However, the individual needs training to be able to hear the inner voice. Gandhi calls the training self-purification, which is also largely connected with swaraj, by which he means a set of inner policies that one should take. One should, for example, reduce oneself to a zero and completely shed one's ego in order to start thinking about oneself last, and other people first. "If we could erase the 'I's' and the 'Mine's' from religion, politics, economics, etc., we shall soon be free and bring heaven upon earth" (Gandhi, *The Collected Works* 36: 345). One should not judge anyone but love other beings as one loves himself. One should also be tolerant and do not think badly about other people, as well as do not think that other people think something bad

about one. Apart from self-purification one should also realize one's limitations, which are connected to one's attitudes, bad thoughts and motivations. The realization of one's limitations enables one to rid oneself of excessive ambitions and develop one's qualities. "Whatever I might have been able to do in my life has proceeded more than anything else out of the realization of my own limitations" (Gandhi, *The Collected Works* 29: 265).

"Truth is superior to man's wisdom" (Gandhi, *The Collected Works* 28: 252), refers to the belief that one should trust one's inner voice even if it goes against one's wisdom. This is because the wisdom is gained from the outside, while inner voice gives one a pure connection with satya. Gandhi was very much influenced by *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* and its notion of self-sacrifice that could be found in its second chapter, refers to the subjection of body by the mind. Gandhi's secretary Mahadev Desai stresses that "fundamental condition of non-violence is love, and pure unselfish love is impossible without unsullied purity of mind and body" (Gandhi, *The Selected Works* 3:73). Similarly, "our anger controlled can be transmuted into a power which can move the world" (Gandhi, *The Collected Works* 21: 252), indicates that one can use one's anger in a more productive force. Other important conditions of ahimsa are fearlessness and faith, which is "a living, wide, awake consciousness of God within" (Jayabalan 2).

Gandhi's philosophy is one of religion because God, or satya is in its core. He, however, do not mean any particular religion but the belief in satya and ahimsa as the creative force of everything. In 1938 Gandhi has written "Truth is my religion and ahimsa is the only way of its realisation" (Parel 207). This philosophy is underlying all the formal religions like Christianity, Hinduism or Islam and when one takes its path, it can bring one directly to God or let's say that one can directly attain satya. From this also stems Gandhi's "moral includes spiritual" (*The Collected Works* 66: 326) and that is why he judges

everything from the moral standpoint, which comes from his inner voice and thus faith in God. God then is the ultimate law-giver who guides our actions and whose will is fixed and changeless. Gandhi believes God to be ultimately good and so men should realize ahimsa in order to become good as well. Still there is the problem of different conceptions of God and difficulties in realization of ahimsa. Because of this, no absolute morality exists but one should judge everything from one's own moral standpoint or inner voice, while acknowledging the possible different moral standpoints of other people.

As Hans Ucko in his essay “Considerations for Inter-religious Cooperation” summarizes “It is challenging to see that the truth of the other is part of my own wandering. I can never grasp the truth of the other but multiple truths enable me to see doors open to a universe I would not have seen otherwise. No one has the truth and not even, when we are all together, will we have the truth.” (189). Thus, nonviolent seeker should be humble when it comes to his own morality and should acknowledge wide diversity of religions which are different roads leading to the same end. Ucko further explained that Gandhi had no problem affirming and being astonished by religious plurality as “religion defines the sensibility and taste one has towards the infinite” (188). Gandhi explains:

I do not foresee a time when there would be only one religion on earth in practice. In theory, since there is one God, there can be only one religion. But in practice, no two persons I have known have had the same and identical conception of God. Therefore, there will, perhaps, always be different religions answering to different temperaments and climatic conditions. But I can clearly see the time coming when people belonging to different faiths will have the same regard for other faiths that they have for their own. I think that we have to find unity in diversity. (*The*

Collected Works 63: 85)

Arun Gandhi in his essay “Community – Weaving a Universal Thread” remembers that in one of Gandhi's sermons he said that “religion is like a tree. The trunk represents spirituality, the branches are the various religions of the world” (1). This concept is called *Sarva dharma samabhava* and implies that all religions lead to the same goal and teach same moral principles, therefore Gandhi was tolerant of all the religions and rejected the view that some religion might be superior to another.

William Jackson in his essay “Gandhi's Art” points out that “ahimsa needs to be comprehensive, encompassing routines of daily life like eating and drinking, an ethos encompassing all our interactions”(41). Yet Gandhi on 2nd March 1940 in an issue of *Harijan* further adds that “non-violence matters not for mere individual practice but for practice by groups and communities and nations. [...] Ahimsa is the attribute of the soul, and therefore, to be practiced by everybody in all the affairs of life” (*The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi* 23). This means that while all the conditions and actions needed for pursuit of satya on personal level apply to the individual, nonviolence can be practiced also on other levels. Although one's actions may theoretically be separated to different fields, once one is able to listen to one's inner voice, one has the necessary guidance for all the actions one takes in different fields. Like this nonviolence penetrates to the social, political and national affairs. It only follows that once people adopt truly nonviolent thinking and acting they will necessarily find out that they need to challenge violence hidden in the social and political sphere.

That is when satyagraha comes to the scene but still it is needed to remember that there can be no satyagraha on social level for example without being nonviolent on personal level as well. “There is a saying to the effect that the outer is only the reflection

of the inner. If you are good, the whole world will be good to you. On the contrary, if you feel tempted to regard anybody as evil, the odds are that the evil is within you” (Gandhi, *The Collected Works* 90: 227). This is a very important statement as it implies that one should not disapprove other people but rather try to understand their particular situation. This does not mean that one should not disapprove bad or violent actions of people, but Gandhi puts more emphasis on the distinction between the man and his deed. He believes that the root of the hatred in the world is because people do not observe the modified Christian proverb “hate the sin, not the sinner” (Gandhi, *An Autobiography* 144).

This takes us to another condition as Tahtinen in one section of his book expands Gandhi's nonviolence to the criterion of harmony. This means that one should search for satya with one's whole personality, not only with one's knowledge. This search should include the harmony of one's thoughts, feelings and action. He then claims that economical, political, social and religious activity can not be divided and that “political activity is fundamentally religious” (29). Gandhi also emphasizes that people are social beings and so the harmony also applies to wider social context as harmony of oneself leads into the harmonization of social conflicts and there can not be either harmony in one's private life or social life as these two need to go always together. “Ideally there should be harmony between thought, word and action. In this way the outer life becomes a true reflection of the inner, and a mental harmony is also achieved” (Murphy 4). With this notion is however connected Gandhi's belief that men are good (Tahtinen 29). This belief is based on the idea of value-metaphysical unity, which stresses that “human nature is basically one, in its basic essence it is in everyone uniform and identical” (Tahtinen 45). Gandhi's belief in the goodness of God then determines his belief in the goodness of men who were created by God.

As was already noted Gandhi's mission was to teach by example and as Bilgrami claims Gandhi rejects the link between moral judgments and moral criticism⁴ that is so traditional in Western moral philosophy. According to Gandhi there is no need to criticize others who have different values than one has, rather one should resist them with a pure heart (Bilgrami 7). Gandhi does not aim at universality of principles like Kant does but rather at setting an example for everyone. By this he presents a plausible alternative to the Western tradition of moral principles. Bilgrami further explains why Gandhi did not make only constitutional demands in his nationalist efforts against the British and why he used satyagraha instead. According to Bilgrami it was because Gandhi wanted to mobilize the whole Indian nation with the satyagrahis (the nonviolent activists and seekers of satya) setting a moral example for the masses and doing so by their own means that would be independent of the British. Only once all the people of India would achieve personal swaraj would a true *Hind Swaraj* (Indian home rule) be achieved. "Without Swaraj as self-rule Swaraj as self government can degenerate into state oppression even in the so-called liberal societies" (Prasad 156). From this followed all the campaigns and actions taken under Gandhi's nonviolent leadership. Gandhi however explains his basis for satyagraha much more deeply and spiritually than Bilgrami does as Gandhi's deep belief in satya and nonviolence led him to the invention of satyagraha.

2.2 Satyagraha – Pursuit of Satya on Social Level

Murphy broadly defines satyagraha itself to be "a whole philosophy of nonviolence" and narrowly to be "a technique or tool of nonviolent action" (4). It will

⁴ "The connection between moral judgment and moral criticism, the connection which, in our analytical terms, we would describe by saying that if one judges that 'X is good', then we are obliged to find morally wrong those who, in relevant circumstances, judge otherwise or fail to act on X" (Murphy 7).

now be explained how Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence expands from the personal level into the social and political level. It is mainly thanks to one's pursuit of achieving moksha or spiritual liberation that one starts to be nonviolent. When one wants to really find God or satya, then "one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself... A man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life" (Jackson 44). This explains why one starts to work for the community or nation and Gandhi again showed and propagated this by setting an example for the masses. As Gandhi explains; "my mission is to teach by example and precept under sever restraint the use of the matchless weapon of satyagraha; which is a direct corollary of non-violence and Truth" (*The Collected Works* 32: 78).

It was already mentioned that the division of the life of people into "watertight compartments such as religious, political and other" (Gandhi, *The Collected Works* 93: 25) can be only theoretical. People should live in harmony with their thoughts and feelings, because their life is one and they should judge everything by one's own moral standpoint. But this principle holds true not only because of harmony but also because everything is one as Gandhi says "I could not be leading a religious life unless I identified myself with the whole of mankind, and that I could not do unless I took part in politics" (*The Collected Works* 74: 307). He further stresses that politics should be done for the social and moral progress of the people.

Satyagraha thus can be adopted to pursuit some political end as Gandhi puts it "satyagraha in its essence is nothing but the introduction of Truth and gentleness in the political, that is, the national, life" (*The Collected Works* 19: 451). It is also important to note that the task of satyagraha is also to educate public opinion as it should cover all fields of the society in a state and sometimes even beyond it. One should however always

have in mind that satyagraha is very powerful and should not be used any time one wants to but rather only when all other means have been tried and did not work. It also needs to be limited only to just cause as there is “no place for fraud or falsehood, or any kind of untruth” (Gandhi, *The Collected Works* 83: 196). Satyagraha is only the weapon of the truly nonviolent people who follow all the above mentioned conditions. As Gandhi explains “satyagraha is essentially a weapon of the truthful. A satyagrahi is pledged to non-violence, and, unless people observe it in thought, word and deed, I cannot offer mass satyagraha” (*The Collected Works* 44: 439). It only follows that the intention of satyagraha is not to conquer, harm or embarrass the opponent as it is the case by violence. But to appeal on the heart of the opponent, which should be converted and he should be changed into a friend. Satyagraha then ends in a peaceful transfer of power as the satyagrahis have found the root of the problem and a way how to solve it or change the conditions so that it would not occur any more (Gandhi; Jackson 42; Tahtinen 89). Compromise is thus a condition that should be searched for and satyagrahi should never miss the opportunity to make compromise on honorable terms.

The appeal to the heart of the opponent is done by active love of the satyagrahi who should love the enemy as if he were his relative (Jackson 41) and “should not, even in his heart, feel hatred towards the opponent” (Tahtinen 89). This condition among others follows from the already mentioned Gandhi's belief in the ultimate goodness of human nature. His explanation again follows from his religion “My trust is solely in God. And I trust men only because I trust God” (*The Collected Works* 29: 408). This also explains why satyagrahis should trust their enemies and be prepared to forgive them as forgiveness is much more difficult and manly than punishment and it does not create any resentment.

Gandhi further offers a set of recommendations for the best qualifications of the

satyagrahis. First of all satyagrahi should have courage and no fear. Gandhi often claims that he mostly hates cowardliness and that he prefers violence to cowardliness. This is because according to him apathy is the worst possible behavior while nonviolence the best. Fearlessness is truly essential for satyagraha also because the satyagrahis need to trust in the positive outcome of their actions in order to achieve their goal and for satyagraha to function. Similarly they need never to be afraid of trusting the opponent. Courage and fearlessness can be reached through discipline or swaraj as “satyagraha is a process of self-purification” (Gandhi, *An Autobiography* 144). Similarly to the physical training of a soldier in a military, a satyagrahi needs to undertake a mental training that prepares him for nonviolent actions or satyagraha. To be able to better imagine how such training would be done, Gandhi offers the idea of satyagraha brigades in every village or block in a city and also the Ashram where the satyagrahis of his time were trained and where they lived simple life by Gandhi's example. The concept of discipline includes great strength of mind as “one must learn the art of dying in the training for non-violence” (Gandhi, *The Collected Works* 79: 153).

The basic premise of satyagraha - self-suffering or law of suffering only follows. “There is certainly no swaraj without going through the fire and suffering“ (Gandhi, *The Collected Works* 26: 169). Satyagrahi should be always prepared to suffer for a just cause, even when there is some dangerous situation where violence is committed, satyagrahi should step in and nonviolently resolve the situation even if he could be injured or killed in the situation. The suffering is thus conscious and should lead the satyagrahi to understand and realize the fundamentally important things in life on which he or she can not arrive by reason alone. Self-suffering also follows from the fact that the enemy should be converted through sympathy and patience, which however involves self-suffering. It is

thus better to inflict the suffering on oneself rather than upon the opponent. “Self-sacrifice of one innocent man is a million times more potent than the sacrifice of a million men who die in the act of killing others. The willing sacrifice of the innocent is the most powerful retort to insolent tyranny that has yet been conceived by God or man” (Gandhi, *The Collected Works* 30: 248). Gandhi vastly believed in the superiority of law of suffering and even said that “satyagraha and its off-shoots, non-co-operation and civil resistance, are nothing but new names for the law of suffering” (*The Collected Works* 21: 134).

These are the basic premises of satyagraha, which stems out of religious belief in God and satya, encircles the personal life of people and spreads itself to the socio-political life as well. In this way Gandhi believed a nonviolent society would be formed by gradually overcoming the violence in society and politics through satyagraha and violence in the people by the adoption of nonviolent lifestyle (ahimsa). He however believed that there should be uplift of the society of a whole and he thus rejected utilitarianism⁵ that is so common in western life of thinking.

2.3 Sarvodaya – Gandhi's Social Philosophy

Gandhi was to a great extent influenced by Leo Tolstoy and particularly John Ruskin's book *Unto This Last*. Ruskin's book gave basis to what Gandhi later named Sarvodaya or the welfare of all. This social philosophy of Gandhi is based on these principles, which Gandhi strove to put into practice:

1. The good of the individual is contained in the good of all.

⁵ Gandhi defined utilitarianism as set by Jeremy Bentham or John Stuart Mill, “the greatest good of the greatest number” (*Sarvodaya* 6) and meant the fact that this concept is central ethical value in classical liberalism and serves as justification for laissez-faire economics.

2. A lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's in as much as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.
3. A life of labor, i.e. the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is a life worth living. (Gandhi, "The Collected Works" 44: 313)

Sarvodaya was very important for Gandhi because he believed that utilitarianism leads to oppression of minorities and is always done at the expense of somebody. Gandhi thus believed it to be "a heartless doctrine [that] has done harm to humanity". He continues that "the only real, dignified, human doctrine is the greatest good of all, and this can only be achieved by uttermost self-sacrifice" (*The Selected Works* 5: 198). Gandhi believed that through sarvodaya equal distribution could be brought about by nonviolent means. Since sarvodaya is only an extension of ahimsa in the realm of the whole of humanity, a votary of ahimsa has to believe in "the greatest good of all and die in the attempt to realize the idea" (Gandhi, *The Selected Works* 5: 198).

The principles of sarvodaya clearly articulate the doctrine but still some practical examples of how sarvodaya is to be achieved should be mentioned. The influence of *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* on Gandhi can be very much seen in his emphasis on self-restraint in all areas of life. In the words of Gandhi's follower Vinoba Bhave "everyone must take part in physical labor and put a limit to his possessions". Vinoba believed *sharir-shrama* (physical labor) and *apigraha* (non-possession) to be the twin laws of right life (Gandhi, *Sarvodaya* 26). Physical labor is necessary because of the belief that all is one and that people are given nature not to exploit it but to live in harmony with it. Gandhi claims that those who does not engage in physical labor, steal from the Earth as they only take and does not give anything back to it. In his view everyone should engage in some type of physical work for some time during the day in order to produce food, clothes or other

things, train the mind and the body and relate to the deprived people of the planet. Gandhi explains that “if all worked for their bread, distinctions of rank would be obliterated” (*Sarvodaya* 10).

It might be asked what about those people who have good economical skills and are able to raise lots of money. Gandhi would answer that those people should use only as much as they need from their riches and for the rest they should act as trustees to be used for the society. This is called trusteeship, behind which lays the belief that each person has certain abilities that were given to him by God to be used for the good of the society. One should be able to meet one's needs through one's abilities or talents but anything that one gains and does not need, one should use for the good of all.

Gandhi believed that through trusteeship the eternal conflict between capital and labor would be abolished (*Trusteeship* 15). If only the labor would realize its strength against capital, since labor is capital, then the labor might use nonviolent means (satyagraha) such as nonviolent non-co-operation and civil disobedience to convince the capitalists to become trustees of their surplus (Gandhi, *Trusteeship* 25; *Sarvodaya* 13). Furthermore Gandhi explains that “I shall bring about economic equality through non-violence, by converting the people to my point of view by harnessing the forces of love as against hatred” (*Trusteeship* 16). People who believe in Gandhi's philosophy would naturally become trustees and the others should be convinced by satyagraha of the former ones. It is however very important to understand that contrary to socialism or communism in achieving sarvodaya through trusteeship there is no room for violence of any kind! This is because of the great emphasis put on interrelatedness of means and ends. Gandhi noted that “the means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree” (*Sarvodaya* 7) since the means determine the end, if one adopts violent means, one ultimately gets violent ends. Gandhi

however does aim at a completely nonviolent society where the welfare of all would be practiced and to achieve such end only nonviolent means can be adopted.

2.4 Ashrams – Training Institutions for Votaries of Ahimsa

Even though the interrelatedness of means and ends may seem very clear, the achievement of sarvodaya may still seem difficult or even impossible. It is important to take into account what was previously noted about the practice of ahimsa on personal level; the emphasis on one's inner voice, that is trained through self-purification and reduction of one's ego, the way one should love all the beings as one loves oneself, the self-sacrifice, tolerance, fearlessness, faith and harmony of one's thoughts, feelings and deeds. All of these qualities are important in the pursuit of satya on individual level and are the basis of all satyagraha, sarvodaya and trusteeship. Gandhi realized the importance of establishing institutions where people may devote their life towards the pursuit of satya and train themselves to nourish the right qualities for this pursuit. In these institutions Gandhi could also serve as an example to follow even though he never regarded himself perfect and always emphasized his imperfection and humility in face of God.

Gandhi called such institutions Ashrams and he started some of them even during his stay in South Africa. Later he established two Ashrams in India, which had twelve given observances. These observances should not be taken as some strict rules of a dictator but rather as the best way how to realize swaraj, train oneself to hear one's own inner voice, to attain satya, practice ahimsa and better both oneself and the society. All of the observances are very much interrelated as they stem from the basic premise of the unity of all beings. The first two observances are obviously satya and ahimsa which were extensively described at the beginning of the analysis. Gandhi in his book *Ashram*

observances in action remarks that he does not believe in punishment and rather favors bodily penance (fast) of the wrongdoer and the worker in charge of the ashram. This have then effect not only on the two people undertaking the fast but even on all other people in the ashram. On the other hand fasting must be taken “as the exercise of control over all the organs of sense with a view to the purification of oneself and others”. So it is not sufficient to only give up food but to contemplate about one's actions or have compassion for the wrongdoer. (Gandhi, *Ashram Observances in Action* 1-7) Not that the penance would be seen as a punishment but rather as a path to a deeper understanding of one's self, one's motivations and conduct so that one could become a better person each time one fails in his way to attain satya.

Since satya and ahimsa are at the core of the ashram's life, it is important to remember its importance and design a best way how to attain them. Therefore there were morning and evening prayers held everyday. The goal of the prayers was to pave the way to God and so satya forms everyday basic on which nonviolent actions can be build during the day. “Only he can observe ahimsa who holds nothing as his own and works away in a spirit of total detachment” (Gandhi, *Ashram Observances in Action* 23). To practice such rule needs training of mind achieved through deep meditation or prayer

As was already mentioned, the importance of self-restraint was taken from the *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* as a path towards God and was one of the observances in the ashram in form of *Brahmacharya* or chastity. Brahmacharya is often understood to mean celibate but in reality it involves control of all organs of sense in “thought, word and deed” (Gandhi, *Ashram Observances in Action* 24). In this way ashramites sought to rid themselves of desires, passions and attachments to worldly pleasures, while at the same time attain mastery over their mind. The control of palate is part of Brahmacharya but is a

separate observance since it is considered to be a precursor to it. Once there is control of one's palate, one can exclude dishes that stimulate passions and Brahmacharya is then easier to observe. Brahmacharya is very much connected to total detachment and another ashram observance, which is non-possession. "We may keep necessary things but should be ready to give up everything including our bodies"(Gandhi, *Ashram Observances in Action* 31), best describes the widest sense of non-possession. It is important to understand that non-possession is very much connected to the fact that everything that is on this planet was created by God and has some special use for the society in total. Therefore everything is everybody's and nothing is only one person's. This was already explained in case of one's abilities and talents and so it is important to understand that this idea holds true for everything that was created by God. Of course non-possession is difficult to put into practice in the outside world, but in the ashram, people are trying to observe this rule so that they could get farther to the realization of God within themselves.

Non-possession is also connected to non-stealing as Gandhi held stealing not only in the ordinary sense of the word, but more broadly as any unnecessary consumption. The observance of this rule naturally leads to a greater generosity and compassion – love for all beings. This is because once one stops thinking only about oneself and one's own needs or desires and start thinking about how the thing one desire could be used by other people, one naturally becomes more connected and intimate with other people (Gandhi, *The Collected Works* 14: 384).

Another observance, bread labor as was already explained, also very much relates to non-stealing in that "he who eats without offering sacrifice eats stolen food" (Gandhi, *Sarvodaya* 9). Therefore ashramites engage in bread labor, having agriculture as the ideal since it brings about self-sufficiency to the Ashram. At the same time, bread labor is a way

to emphasize the dignity of labor and to identify with the deprived poor millions of people who are tilling the ground. Gandhi believed in both training the mind and the body at some time of the day. There were no employees in the Ashram and all the works that needed to be done were done only by the ashramites.

Swadeshi, the seventh observance stands for the local order of the world. Since people live on some place, they should purchase local products and bear in mind the best interest of people near to them. “There is no place for self interest in Swadeshi, which enjoins the sacrifice of oneself for the family, of the family for the village, and of the country for humanity” (Gandhi, *The Essential Writings* 116). Swadeshi implies the interrelatedness of the whole world in that if one follows it, one serves the world in large - “whoever tries to achieve his private ends without serving others harms himself as well as the world at large” (Gandhi, *Ashram Observances in Action* 37).

Fearlessness is a separate observance since it is a necessary condition for the other observances. One should not fear anything if one really wants to attain satya. One can for example never defend someone in danger if one is afraid. The last three observances are removal of untouchability, *Varnashtama Dharma* (no caste distinction) and tolerance. The former two very much stem from the latter one in that ashramites should tolerate not only different religions but even different people. Therefore the distinction of race or caste has no place in the Ashram, where all the people believe in the equality of all human beings.

The whole complexity of Gandhi's philosophy was presented in the above chapter and it can be already seen that every single premise on which it is build may guide people to positive outcome of everything they are doing. The sacrifice of self for the society is a very alien concept in today's individualistic and self-interest driven world, and yet it brings about a fresh look on the existence of human beings even today. The Ashram

observances were mentioned in order to show the practical every day side of Gandhi's philosophy. Even today there are many Ashrams in India still observing the twelve vows and so it can not be said that they are impractical or impossible to attain. For people outside the Ashram they may serve as a form of ideal nonviolent conduct on which one who beliefs in nonviolence can gradually modify one's own conduct. In the next chapter the way how Gandhi's philosophy can be practiced today in the Czech Republic will be elaborated.

3 . Application of Gandhi's Philosophy

In a world fed up with
 politics without principle,
 wealth without work,
 pleasure without conscience,
 knowledge without character,
 commerce without morality,
 science without humanity and
 worship without sacrifice,
 Gandhiji has become a beacon light. (Prabhath xvi)

These seven social sins as described by Gandhi are very much characteristic of contemporary society where selfishness, individualism and greed are the order of the day. Most of the 48 authors of essays in the compilation *Gandhi Today* argue that Gandhi's philosophy provides a guidance from the recent immoral system, which is driven by self-interest, profit and multiplication of wants. Gandhi criticized modern civilization as early as in the year 1909 in his *Hind Swaraj* (Indian Home Rule) and G. Prasad in his essay “Gandhi's Hind Swaraj: Its Relevance for Today” points out that “civilization [that] makes bodily welfare or the material possessions, wealth as its objective of life pursuits, will

necessarily be built on exploitation of nature and people” (Prasad 160). An article of Japanese professor of peace studies Kazuya Ishii “Gandhism in the Age of Globalization: Beyond Amartya K. Sen's Criticism” points out the same thing. Contemporary world order is built on exploitation of nature and people from the poor regions. In order to sustain the environment and achieve global equality, the citizens of the developed countries have to voluntarily reduce their needs (111-112). Too often Gandhi's quotation “The Earth has enough for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed” (Sodhi 118) appears in the essays in *Gandhi Today*. Simply put, more and more people are pointing out that present system is absolutely unsustainable and mankind needs to find new ways of living on this planet. Professor G.Palanithurai in his essay “Where is Neo-Gandhism?” stresses that even representative democracy does not function in the way it was designed and is manipulated for the advantage of the elites. That is why people does not believe in the system any more and are rather looking for other alternatives. “Since both the liberals and the Marxists have failed one option is available with us to experiment – the Gandhian framework of human life” (235). At the same time many people are pointing out that Gandhi's philosophy was very much prophetic and ahead of his time. Like Gandhi's statement “civilization, in the real sense of the term, consists not in the multiplication, but in the deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants” (Ishii 103). Should not this give the mankind a guidance for the future?

Gandhi's philosophy is ultimately based on practical experience. That is why this kind of morality might be more successful than the one based on cognitive knowledge. It is easy to understand something cognitively but to put it into practice requires practical experience. For example one might very well understand that it is bad to harm other people but once one is able to experience the contact with the inner transcendental

unity⁶ of one's own being and all other living creatures, one is much more sensible to all forms of violence in one's own conduct and actions of people around one.

Furthermore Gandhi's philosophy offers a simple way towards God or Profound that one may follow in order to find one's own meaning of life, morality and right conduct. This is extremely important since about 60% (Český statistický úřad⁷) of the Czech population doesn't believe in God. Majority of people might thus find themselves without any basic moral standpoint on which to base their conduct. Then only follows that they are much more prone to individualistic and selfish way of life without any care for other people. Gandhi's philosophy might then offer Czech person a way how to get into contact with one's inner depth without the need to observe any particular religion. This is thanks to the fact that it contains not only the best of all major religions but also those aspects that are common to all of them. That is why Gandhi's philosophy can be plausible to people of different religions as well as atheists. A survey of public opinion among European countries done by European Commission, has revealed that although only 19% of Czech citizens believe in God, some 50% Czechs do "believe there is some sort of spirit or life force" (Special Eurobarometer 9). From this it can be understood that Czechs do believe in spirituality and thus may be attracted to Gandhi's philosophy. Spirituality⁸ is in this work regarded as a very important part of one's life and happiness as also Fukuyama and Sevig argue in their book *Integrating Spirituality into Multicultural*

Counseling: "from a holistic perspective, people's psychological well being is inextricably

⁶ Connection with the oneness and interrelatedness of self and all the creation. Will be further explained on page 26.

⁷ <http://www.czso.cz/csu/2003edicniplan.nsf/o/4110-03--obyvatelstvo_hlasici_se_k_jednotlivym_cirkvim_a_nabozenskym_spolecnostem>

⁸ In their chapter on Spirituality in the *Handbook of Positive Psychology*, Pargament and Mahoney define spirituality as "a search for the sacred" (615). The inmates of Brahma Vidya Mandir ashram in their pamphlet (see Appendix C) extend its definition to "the oneness of spirit. Spirituality invites us to unite with our surrounding, with the adjoining animate and inanimate world. The spirit calls us into unity with nature, with the animal and plant kingdoms, with our wider human society, and with ourselves. It teaches us to live a life of wholeness." (4)

intertwined with their spiritual well-being” (83) and that “psychological health and spiritual health may be coexistent and collaborative” (101). People should therefore pay attention and cultivate their spirituality as their happiness is very much linked to it.

J.R.Kokandakar in his book *Material Civilisation and Spirituality* further explains; “The triple ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity must first be realized in the inner life of humanity before they can be realized in the outer life. Nothing can be real in life, says Sri Aurobindo, that is not made real in the spirit. The spiritual change, the inner transformation is necessary if freedom, equality and brotherhood have to be secured in the outer human life” (22).

“As a guide to action, Gandhian philosophy is a double-edged weapon. Its objective is to transform the individual and society simultaneously (rather than in sequence, as Marxism describes), in accordance with the principles of truth and nonviolence” (Murphy 2). Following the Gandhian line of thought, in the next chapter practical implications of Gandhi's philosophy will be analyzed with the emphasis on a daily life of an individual. The same form as in the previous chapter will be utilized, firstly elaborating the application of ahimsa and life in the ashram today, then moving onto the application of satyagraha and finally of sarvodaya. The aim of the following chapter is not to produce a comprehensive guide for nonviolent life that would include all aspects of life of an individual but rather to spell a few examples to give the reader an idea about how could a lifestyle of a person, who chooses to follow Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence, look like. It is important to understand that the nonviolent lifestyle rests mainly in putting into practice Gandhi's principles and as these very much stem from him following the inner voice and realizing the unity of all beings, one should firstly learn how to listen to one's inner voice and realize that all is one. Then one would be in the condition

to decide for oneself what actions are nonviolent and what behavior one should choose. Since each person is different, the inner voice of each person would be different as well and would lead one to live a unique nonviolent life style according to one's own convictions.

3.1 The Application of Ahimsa

The application of Gandhi's philosophy needs to be built on its basic point, which is satya or God. Since majority of Czech population is atheist in this chapter it will be referred to this concept as satya rather than God. The pursuit of satya in Czech Republic might be difficult mainly because of the absence of major religions. A person who wants to pursue satya would either have to follow only Gandhi's recommendations on how to achieve swaraj and hear one's inner voice or might look for alternative spiritual currents that lead to the same end – unity of all beings. Since Gandhi stressed the practical experience, one should not only read Gandhi's books and try to understand his philosophy cognitively but should also meditate about the concepts that should help one to hear one's own inner voice.

As Somik Raha points out in his essay “Sarvodaya and Development”: “The ancients asked us to meditate-when the mind breaks off its preoccupations with a narrow self, it has the width to expand and connect to a much larger capacity. It is this connection that unties the knots in our heart and results in love for all humanity” (99). The love for all humanity is a result of the realization of unity of all beings and should guide all conduct of one as it is in a form of inner feeling and might well complement one's own inner voice. To remember what recommendations are needed to observe in order to hear one's

inner voice, see the summary diagram of Gandhi's philosophy in Appendix A. The self-purification itself might be a difficult goal to achieve but the feeling of unity with all beings can very much help one to for example start thinking about oneself last, and think about other people first. Apart from meditation, one should also try to observe the recommendations in one's daily life. For example one should not only meditate about tolerance but should make it a point to remember it in one's daily actions. In a chat with friends when a friend has different opinion, one should remember to tolerate different views and again connect with the feeling of inner unity of all beings that should help one to overcome the obstacles in tolerance.

What one might also learn from Gandhi is the use of penance every time one fails on one's way towards the realization of satya. There are various forms of penance but Gandhi in particular favored bodily penance in form of fasting. In practice every time one for example starts shouting at someone, one should immediately realize one's mistake or ask other people to help him realize one's mistakes. Once one realizes that one acted violently, one might fast for the rest of the day and every time one feels the pain or hunger in one's stomach, one should remember the violent situation and imagine a positive reaction in a similar situation in the future. Like this one is able to experience the suffering one induced on oneself through one's violent actions and help oneself to get rid of one's vices and violent behavior. As Gandhi noted in *Hind Swaraj* "we shall become free only through suffering" (*The Collected Works* 10:310). It is however very much important that one decides for oneself and voluntarily that one wants to undertake the fast, with even a slight coercion this form of penance can not be successful. In these ways self-purification, humility, avoidance of judging other people and realization of limitations should be developed. For example each week one may choose one of the

recommendations, like humility and read what Gandhi has written about it, meditate about it and try to remember it in one's everyday actions. The next week one may choose another observance and like this one may slowly develop a nonviolent personality. What one is looking for is a total inner transformation that would allow one to integrate ahimsa in all the conducts, thoughts and words of one.

3.1.1 Work

Obviously one needs to meet one's basic needs and has to work either to produce one's food, which is Gandhi's ideal, or to earn money to buy food, pay for the housing, health care and other necessities of life. It is important to bear in mind that Gandhi stresses the importance of bodily labor while today bodily labor is at the bottom of social recognition. Czech citizens even do not want to take jobs which require bodily labor since these are poorly paid and exhausting. That is why there are so many immigrants from Eastern countries, who are willing to accept the low paid jobs. Such system according to Gandhi can not work and requires a fundamental change in the values of the society. What else should be honored than work, which directly produces food without which people are unable to live? A true follower of Gandhi's philosophy would thus try his best to find a land and start producing his own crops. If it is not possible for one to become a full time farmer, one might nevertheless try to grow as many crops as possible and have it as a hobby besides having a full time job. In Czech Republic the phenomenon of gardening is very much spread and so it should not be difficult for a Czech citizen interested in following Gandhi's philosophy to engage in bread labor for some time of the day. Bread labor is also connected to the self-reliance of homes. One should therefore try to produce

as many things as possible by oneself. This obviously includes the already mentioned farming, but even spread to production of one's own clothes as will be explained later.

If farming is not possible as a full time occupation, one should search for such a job through which one might serve others or in another words use one's abilities or talents for the good of all. As Somik Raha also points out, service "is the most direct way of experiencing the greatest spiritual truth that is proclaimed from every tradition" (100). Thus through service one might achieve the feeling of unity with all beings and what is better than having this feeling all the time during work? So service is an important aspect one should look for in one's job, still when this is not possible for one to achieve, one has other options. As will be described later in the section "Application of Satyagraha", one might perform service also through volunteer work when one is not able to do so as part of one's job. Yet it is very much important to thoroughly examine the job one is doing and go to the deepest roots and with honesty look for any harm one might perform through doing some job. If one finds that one is harming someone through performance of one's job and one wants to be a truly nonviolent person, then one should definitely cease performing such job and look for some other one. It is often very difficult to go into the deep consequences of one's conduct but once one learns to do this, one frees oneself from the bonds of suffering as any suffering one inflicts upon others is as if one would inflict on oneself. Following principle of freedom set by Mario Rodriguez Cobos, penname Silo, in Silo's Message very much implies the benefits of conscious action; "when you harm others you remain enchained, but if you do not harm anyone you can freely do whatever you want" (18).

The great Gandhian economist who was educated in the USA, J.C.Kumarappa in

his book *Economy of Permanence*⁹ very much criticizes today's system of work for wages. According to him, "since the appearance of the wage system, the emphasis had shifted from the function of work to the product of work, so much so that today the product holds the field to the exclusion of the function" (98). This leads to great degradation of work as people are ignoring their talents and function of the work and are doing jobs that earn them most money. Kumarappa claims that work has to be wholesome, employing all the faculties of man, as only then it "provides our body with energy, health and rest just as a well balanced diet does" (88). Therefore one should seek for a work which gives one the possibility not only to serve others and use one's talents but also gives space for the utilization of creative and higher faculties of one as well as expression of one's personality. Only such work is wholesome and leads to happiness and satisfaction of one. The monetary wage system is however accompanied with the complex lifestyle people in the Czech Republic are used to lead and thus the change of one's work definitely has to be accompanied with the change of values and lifestyle.

J.R.Kokandakar points out in his book *Material Civilisation and Spirituality* "we all want to be famous people- and the moment we want to be something we are no longer free. Whether in this world of politicians, power, position and authority, or in the spiritual world where you aspire to be virtuous, noble, saintly, the moment you want to be somebody you are no longer free" (33). This is because if one's actions, thoughts and feelings are in harmony, that is if one does what one wants to do and serve other people by one's conduct, then one doesn't need to be somebody to be content with one's actions. The realization of this law of freedom needs a total change of values in today's society where the so called "stars" determine what is right or wrong without having any moral

⁹ Kumarappa in his book in greater detail explains the nature of economy of permanence and even provides a full scheme of actions that could ultimately lead to sarvodaya.

values themselves. Most of the Czech people realize that to be famous doesn't ultimately mean to be happy yet they realize this only cognitively without having any inner experience of the rightfulness of this saying. That is why they still strive to be rich and famous in their life and when not rich and famous then at least to have as many nice things as the rich have, enchaining themselves in the process of multiplication of needs and wants. Therefore to bring about the real change of values in oneself, it is needed to have a deep spiritual experience of unity of all beings and love for all. Once this is realized then one understands what real happiness and freedom is about and doesn't need to search for it in the external world.

3.1.2 Responsible Consumerism

Kokandakar's principle of freedom that was mentioned in the last paragraph of previous chapter, is very much useful even for consumerism. Once the ideal of complete self-sufficiency cannot be met and one has to purchase food, clothes and other necessities of life, another problem of nonviolent conduct appears. This problem mostly lays in the choice of the right products that should be purchased. Swadeshi definitely gives one a rule as one should try to buy mostly locally made products. In reality this is becoming much more complicated since the multinational corporations (hereafter referred to as MNCs) are spreading their products all over the planet even to the Czech Republic. When taken the grocery stores as an example, in the cities there are mostly chains of supermarkets, which are owned by foreign MNCs. Swadeshi would rule one to go even to a more expensive shop, which is owned by someone living in the locality. However nowadays in the cities it is even difficult to find out by whom is the shop owned and where does the person live.

Furthermore many of the smaller grocery stores owned by local people simply disappeared and in many places the supermarket is the only choice. In that case one should at least try to observe swadeshi through the choice of local products. On most of the products there is written the place of manufacture and although it might take time and be more expensive, one should choose those products manufactured in the Czech Republic, preferably even in the region one lives in. Here comes yet another problem since many products are produced in the Czech Republic but the whole brand is owned by a foreign MNC. This is the case of for example Opavia owned by Kraft or Orion and Maggi owned by Nestlé. To purchase products from the MNCs is not only a breach to swadeshi but even to the spirit of decentralization so much proposed by Gandhi. The policies of the MNCs are in total contrast to Gandhi's philosophy as they are driven solely by the profit motive. So one has to be really attentive in what products one is buying and should carefully examine each package. It might be a good idea to do a little research about the products and brands before one buys them, as some of the brands even though they are local, might have policies that are exploitative either to the people or to nature. Products tested on animals are a good example of such violent policies of some manufacturers. Practically from all that was stated above, the so called “Bio” groceries and products are the best choice. Still one should examine the products one buys even if it has the “bio” certification. Another option for one, might be the so called “farmers markets” (“farmářské trhy” in Czech language) that are held on particular places three times a week. Here various farmers from the districts sell their products and therefore it is a good opportunity for observers of swadeshi to support local farmers directly and obtain needed products.

Another topic is buying meat and dairy products. Gandhi's philosophy definitely

implies vegetarianism since killing animals for food might be seen as a violent act. Moreover vegetarianism is also much less exploitative to the environment. As Bhoomikumar Jegannathan stresses in his essay “As If Gandhi Had Foreseen Today's Global Health Crisis”, “animals reared for meat emit 21% of all the carbon dioxide that can be attributed to human activity in the world” (Jegannathan 269). The dairy products purchased should be also of the “bio” quality since in that case the fair treatment of animals is assured. In other cases one cannot be sure in what conditions the animals are kept. It is a well known issue that hens in mass breeding factories are kept in terrible conditions with lack of space and air. One should therefore never buy eggs produced in such places. In the village these problems might be easily overcome by buying eggs, milk, vegetable and fruit from local farmer. It is not possible everywhere but one should try to find the nearest option and support local farmer for example through the “farmers markets”.

Then there comes the clothes in which case there are similar problems as in the case of grocery. Many of the Czech brands are owned by the MNCs. An ideal should always be home-spun khadi but in Czech Republic to buy a chakra might be almost impossible. It should however be remembered that it was not that long ago when the chakra (“kolovrátek“ in Czech language) was present in every household. One should look for a manufacturer of clothes nearest to one's place of residence and find as many information about the producer as possible. In general, the rules for consumerism should be swadeshi, non-possession and non-stealing. One should own only those things that are essential for one's every day life and shouldn't aim at amassing things and indulging oneself with things that one doesn't really need. Therefore even in the case of clothes, one shouldn't buy clothes just for pleasure or to make impression on somebody. The ideal is to

have as few items as possible and one should always carefully consider whether one needs something or not. Like this a true simplicity in lifestyle can be achieved. Once one has a simple lifestyle, one doesn't need that many things to maintain it. Simple lifestyle then also much easier follows the laws and spirit of nature.

Let's take buying a computer as an example. Today computer and internet may be considered a necessity for many people as they need it for their work. Therefore once there is the need to buy a new computer, one should think about not only the performance of the computer, but also about the policy that the manufacturer of the computer follows. One should find as many information about the particular manufacturer or brand as possible and make sure that the company doesn't exhibit exploitative practices. If one is replacing an old computer, one should think about how to deal with the old one. If the computer might be reused by someone with fewer requirements then one should definitely try to sell it. Otherwise it is always needed to find the best way how to recycle it. These steps can be followed in nearly every article one needs to purchase.

A truly nonviolent person should try to conserve the nature and don't waste natural and other resources. Recycling definitely has its important place in a nonviolent lifestyle. One should also try to use renewable natural resources in one's home, prefer to travel by trains, bicycles, hybrid cars and the like rather than by vehicles powered by gas. If it is impossible to avoid these, one should use them as little as possible and not use them redundantly. The same applies to the use of electricity, water, paper, and so forth. Switching off the light in the room when nobody is there, not letting water pour excessively, using the paper from both sides, these practices were common in past decades among the Czech people. In some movies displaying those times, scenes might be seen, where it was common not to flush the toilet when another member of the family wanted to

use it right after. These practices were very much eliminated with the arrival of capitalism and material surplus. Yet these practices not only save our money but also nature and that's why people should simplify their lifestyle and reduce their needs.

3.1.3 Relations with Other People

With the spiritual awakening and the realization of essential unity of all beings, one might be able to develop beautiful relationships with other people. One gets rid of the need to own people and ceases to regard other people as being there for one. Rather one is able to express unconditional love to all beings, without the need of getting anything in return. A truly nonviolent person should never be rude to other people, shouldn't raise one's voice nor use physical violence. One should definitely always tell the truth and shouldn't be afraid to say what one really thinks without being afraid of the consequences. One should think only positively about other people and avoid judging them. This might be particularly difficult in today's society where the gossip is one of the main themes of conversation among people. Yet this can be for example transformed into positive gossip, that is pointing out positive qualities, conduct, and so forth of other people. At the same time it is important to weed out the negative thoughts about other people from one's mind. This can be done firstly by becoming aware of these negative thoughts and then trying to change them into positive ones. This gives one a completely new perspective of the world around one. The positive thinking is also very much connected to the avoidance of judging other people and rather judging their actions.

A nonviolent person should by any price avoid competing with other people and should rather seek opportunities for cooperation. When one is a witness of some violent

actions of some individual, one should definitely take action rather than passively observe the violence or ignore it. For example if one sees someone committing an act of physical violence, one should call the police immediately. Similarly, there might be other forms of violence present around one. These include psychological violence like coercion or abuse, discrimination or economic violence like exploitation. To all of these forms of violence one should not be oblivious but rather point them out, help the victim and talk to the perpetrator. All these stem from the basic point of satyagraha, which is noncooperation with injustice. Therefore not only that one should not be oblivious to violence, one should resist it with all one's might. More than anything else, in this case is valid the notion that one's actions should serve as an example for one's surroundings. One should not try to make people behave nonviolently through words or coercion; rather one should set an example that might be followed by the people around one.

3.2 Life in Ashram Today

The primary reason Gandhi started his first ashram, was to create a place where he could carry out his experiments with satya, later it even became a training institution for satyagrahis and centre from which the various campaigns of satyagraha were organized. The ashram consisted of people who wanted to follow Gandhi's philosophy and attain satya. All the inmates were equal, there was no distinction of caste or religion but it was compulsory for them to follow the twelve observances. The ashramites were equally doing various daily chores from gardening, cooking and sweeping to cleaning and exaltation of toilets. In ashrams, one could fully concentrate on the pursuit of satya without having the need to make trade offs between satya and work or satya and

consumerism. In general one is able to live an ideal life according to Gandhi's principles only in ashrams since in normal life it is difficult to completely simplify one's lifestyle and practice non-stealing and non-possession in their full extent. The author of this work has visited "Brahma Vidya Mandir"¹⁰ ashram in Paunar near Nagpur in India, which was started by Gandhi's disciple Vinoba Bhave in 1959. The inmates of this ashram are mostly women who followed Vinoba on his *Bhoodan Yantra* (Land Gift Movement) and they are still living in accordance with the twelve observances as set by Gandhi. They are producing their own food through bread labor and spinning their own cloth. The whole ashram is from some 70% self-sufficient and independent. The inmates of the ashram are active from 4am till 8pm, having prayers three times a day (at 4:30am, before lunch and at 7pm), doing chores like gardening, sweeping, cooking or laundry for most of the day and being able to meditate, read or study for given hours in the afternoon. There is no manager in the ashram and all the decisions are made unanimously by all the inmates of the ashram.

For more information about this Ashram, see their pamphlet in Appendix C.

In the Czech Republic there is no such institution, which would be based solely on Gandhi's principles, but for example Hare Krishna have their own communities where people live together, grow their own vegetable and devote their life to Krishna. They sustain these communities by several means like selling their own products, private contributions of people or by running several vegetarian restaurants in Prague, selling vegetarian meals on various festivals in the summer and by other activities. On this example it can be seen that starting an ashram in the Czech Republic may be possible, the only condition is that there have to be enough people willing to start one. Once there

¹⁰ "Brahma Vidya Mandir is the temple (Mandir) where one seeks the wisdom and experience (Vidya) of the Absolute (Brahma)" (2).

would be enough people, they might start a public collection of money or think of some income raising activities to make money to buy a land and construct buildings. Nowadays the construction of buildings may be done in a nonviolent way as well.

A nice example of completely self-sufficient and nonviolent architecture is the work of Michael Reynolds. This architect devoted his life to search for a completely self-sufficient building, which would give the mankind a new way of life in the future. He named this type of building “Earthship”. The buildings are built from garbage such as old tires, cans or glass bottles. The use of renewable resources like solar or wind power ensures electricity in the house. The house collects rain water and then reuses it some four times before it goes to the sewage system. Thanks to the way the house is built, one can grow one’s own vegetable right in the house and this option brings about a new dimension in self sustainability. Furthermore the Earthships are built from recycled materials such as old tires, cans or glass bottles and can be built by everyone, which greatly reduces the costs of the construction. The resulting price is the same as by a conventional house with the difference that the plot is cheaper as it doesn’t need the provision of networks of electricity, sewage and water and that there are no further costs connected with the house. One doesn’t have to pay for the power, water, sewage nor gas. Thanks to projects like these, a simple nonviolent lifestyle is much more possible to attain than by conventional housing. Therefore the construction of several Earthships for the inmates of an ashram in the Czech Republic may be a good solution. Yet it is needed to remember that Gandhi always implied identification with the poor and total detachment to be important aspects of ashram life. Therefore if there should be an ashram built in the Czech Republic, its inmates should consider these two principles and devise their lifestyle accordingly.

3.3 The Application of Satyagraha

The pursuit of satya on socio-political level can be very much applied on any problem Czech society faces. Recently there was a good example of satyagraha in the Czech Republic with the case of American radar base. In 2006, more than 50 organizations created an initiative called “NeZákladnám“ (No to bases), which was nonviolently protesting against the placement of the US military bases in Czech lands. The protesters firstly needed to get the attention of media and spread the awareness about the problem so they have organized many demonstrations, a bus tour around major cities in the Czech Republic, conferences with academics and politicians from the Czech Republic and abroad and had done other related activities. Furthermore the activists of “Hnutí nenásilí“ (Nonviolent Movement) were very much inspired by Gandhi’s boycott of foreign cloth and started a boycott of American goods. Since the politicians haven’t paid much attention to the protests, two activists from the Nonviolent Movement went on a hunger strike in June 2008 to put pressure on the Czech government to held a referendum about the issue. Most of the activists were unpaid volunteers and the activities were either self-financed by the activists themselves or later financed by public collection. The success of the nonviolent protests was mostly in that they created public awareness about the issue and put pressure on the government. Even though the Czech government has already signed a bill with the US government, US President Barack Obama finally canceled the whole system and in his speech given on Prague Castle in May 2009 even called for nuclear disarmament.

Although the above mentioned example wasn’t a complete satyagraha by Gandhi’s example, still most of the aspects were present there. It was applied to a just cause as the people rejected not only the military bases in the Czech Republic but even the whole

system of US National Missile Defense as an attempt to put weapons into the space. The protests also reflected the will of majority of Czech people while the government, which favored the placement of the bases, was acting against the will of the electorate. The Nonviolent Movement was even aiming at the root of the problem, pointing at the issue of the US military-industrial complex making profits on these new technologies. The activists who went on the hunger strike did have some qualities of true satyagrahis, as they had lots of courage, were fearless and had discipline. Still they lacked a greater training mostly in the spiritual components of nonviolent struggle and didn't follow Gandhi's philosophy of satyagraha completely. The protests themselves for example lacked some essential components of satyagraha such as love for the enemy and aim of changing the heart of the enemy. The lack of deep understanding of the spiritual component of satyagraha is one of the main weaknesses of recent examples even in other countries. Yet without the deep realization of the unity of all mankind and unconditional love for the enemy, satyagraha in its true sense cannot be complete.

Recently there is a big need of satyagraha to be started in the Czech Republic in order to bring about the much needed change of values and spiritual awakening of Czech society. Without this awakening no progress is possible, yet Czech people very much deserve to be happy and satisfied with themselves. Therefore those activists, who have already realized the spiritual unity of all beings and are following satya in their daily life, should unite and start activities to bring about the awareness of the need of revival of spiritual values. As J.R.Kokandakar points out "it is tragedy of the modern world that it has forgotten or overlooked the truth that the highest good which is to be attained is self realization or realization of one's spirituality" (26). Such satyagraha should be fundamentally spiritual and should rest on volunteerism and exemplary life of the

satyagrahis.

From the personal perspective, a person who wants to be nonviolent should think about how he could contribute to the well being of all the people. The choice of activities and field should rest upon one's interest. One should always be guided by one's own purpose and interest in order to achieve harmony in one's actions, thoughts and feelings. As Chitra Naik points out in his essay "Gandhiji: The Great Synchronizer"; "organizations would have to understand and practice his [Gandhi's] principles to motivate people to grow both in spirit and action, to become constructive" (Naik 243). Gandhi's philosophy has the strength that it teaches people to become instigators of their own life and to think about ways through which they could help others. Therefore by following Gandhi's philosophy human intention can utilize its entire potential.

There is unlimited number of activities within the socio-political field and so only a particular general example of satyagraha from the personal perspective will be given. The easiest way of communicating one's beliefs and opinions is through writing, so one can for example start a blog about one's own experiences with Gandhi's philosophy and spirituality through which one might inspire other people to follow one. Once one would get some followers, they together can start or join a non profit organization, which would have as its aim the spread of spiritual values among Czech population. In order to spread the general awareness about the need of spiritual awakening, one's organization may realize happenings, cultural activities or social forums. To further educate people in Gandhi's philosophy, self realization and spirituality, one may organize seminars on these topics and should offer people a set of practices through which satya can be attained. The wise utilization of the media should follow. What is however important is the financial independence of the organization one joins or sets up. To sustain it, one may either

organize fund raising activities, start public collection or the members may finance the organization by themselves. Only in this way, the organization might develop activities of its own choice without any disturbance from the outside. Membership of such organization should be based on Gandhian principles of tolerance, non-discrimination, volunteerism, exemplary life, unity and love of all beings. Naturally such organization would be best run from the ashram where the members could live an exemplary life and would have a background where they could organize the seminars, and so forth. The greatest aim of such organization carrying out satyagraha should be sarvodaya – the welfare of all people. The reader may ask how it would be possible to spread the ideas and principles of Gandhi's philosophy to all the people in the Czech Republic. To such question Gandhi would answer "you and I have nothing to do with the others. Let each do his duty. If I do my duty, that is, serve myself, I shall be able to serve others" (*The Selected Works*, 3:166). Therefore one should firstly identify one's mission and duty, through self-purification and ability to hear one's inner voice. Once one is able to do that and attains swaraj, one serves oneself. Naturally one would then realize what one's mission regarding the rest of the world is. Through this mission one may do one's best to inspire others and attain sarvodaya and swaraj of the masses.

Yet it is needed to be understood that it is more difficult to apply satyagraha today than it was in Gandhi's times. This is because at the beginning of the century the "enemy" of India was clearly resting in the exploitative practices of the British Empire, while today it isn't that clear who is to blame for the current state of things. It can indeed be said that all the people in the Czech Republic and the West are somehow contributing and cooperating with the system that is based on self-centered values and profit motive. So how could the satyagrahis replace such system? Gandhi's philosophy defines a path

through which one or the whole society might go in order to realize swaraj and sarvodaya. Satyagrahis play in it the chief roles of those who are inspiring others, setting examples to be followed and creating a setting and background for a new social order. They may even start parallel decentralized system of institutions and organizations like schools, cooperatives, groups, non profit organizations, and so forth. Like this they may slowly build an alternative social order to which more and more people would profess.

3.4 The Application of Sarvodaya

J.C.Kumarappa explains that one is very much able to help the masses through mere identification with them and their needs. This notion stems from the principle of unity of all beings and once there is a realization of this unity, one is ready to perceive the whole world as one's own family. Once one is able to feel other's suffering as one's own and identify oneself with others, one is able to devise ways of how to relieve such suffering. One can be happy for the happiness of other people and sorry for the sorrow of others, trying one's best to help all who need it. In fact it works as by a usual family where one is trying to protect and support it, only that this support and protection would be spread to the rest of the humanity (66). This way sarvodaya should be achieved. As Kumarappa further points out:

The life of the people in general has to be planned and ordained, not from the point of view of individual interest based on *laissez-faire* principles, but from a selfless, detached and long range point of view. When so planned, each member of the society, however humbly he may be placed, will have full opportunities to make his own contribution for the good of all. [...] Life so planned will not only meet

individual and sectional needs, but it will also be set as to lead to the happiness of all and open up wide fields of opportunities for personal development and expressions, which will not fall foul of the welfare of one's neighbors. (67)

The above paragraph sets an ultimate principle of life for the individual who wants to contribute to sarvodaya. Yet in the whole third chapter of this work ways how to contribute to sarvodaya were elaborated. As examples serve the bread labor or the use of one's talent for the good of all so much stressed in one's work and the principle of non-possession stressed in consumerism. The life according to the principles outlined above directly leads to sarvodaya also because the means used reflect the end that is to be attained. Therefore all the aspects of daily life of one are puzzles from which sarvodaya can be formed.

The application of trusteeship to today's context is one of the missing puzzles in application of sarvodaya today. A person who is wealthy and wants to follow Gandhi's philosophy should definitely consider becoming a trustee for the surplus one has. Yet firstly such a person should acknowledge whether or not he is using nonviolent means to gain his wealth. If not then he should definitely abandon his profession and seek some other one. Like an example of someone who has made lots of money through nonviolent means again the architect of Earthships, Michael Reynolds, can be mentioned. He is also helping to construct modified Earthships in places hit by catastrophes like tsunami in Andaman Islands or earthquake on Haiti. He is using his knowledge, talent and money to design and construct such buildings. Like this he is teaching people in these places how to build small Earthships, which may withstand future earthquakes or tsunamis and at the same time are self-sufficient, utilize local resources and are cheap to build. So this is a nice example of how one's talents can be used for the good of all and at the same time of

trusteeship since the architect uses money he gets by building Earthships in USA and Europe to help people to regain shelter in poorer regions, which were hit by the catastrophes. In Czech Republic there are many examples of wealthy people setting up charities and so it shouldn't be that difficult for trusteeship with its integrity and spiritual component to be applied here.

When a wealthy person thinks about the whole humanity as of his own family then it follows that he should provide for it. According to swadeshi he should start at his immediate surroundings, if living in a village, then inspecting the problems faced by the people in the village and trying to provide a solution for them. For example if there isn't enough public transport connections going from the village to nearest town, one may buy a hybrid minibus and hire a driver and provide more connections on the most needed times. One should judge the needs and problems of the people in one's neighborhood by following one's inner voice, realizing the unity with all beings and talking to one's neighbors about their needs. So if one can't find any noteworthy problems in one's neighborhood or if one has already provided solutions to all the problems there, then one might expand the circle to a greater neighborhood like a district or country. Like this a really wealthy man might encircle the whole world and may start to provide a relief for people in Africa and so. Nowadays the world is much more united than it was in Gandhi's times and so it is difficult to say whether one should help only in one's immediate surroundings or should for example try to help starving people in other regions of the planet. Yet if one is to follow one's interest and inner voice, one should realize for oneself where one's money are needed the most. One may also either support an already existing non profit organization, which is trying to solve some problems of the society or one may set up an organization of one's own. Like this someone who is mostly concerned with

non-discrimination can support an organization, which is already working in this field. It is however important not to confuse the various charities set by MNCs with trusteeship since many of the MNCs have exploitative practices and then use their charities to improve their public image. This is in no way trusteeship as if these MNCs would change their practices and would rather promote decentralization of their profits, they would benefit the world in large much more than through setting up charities with a selfish aim. This is also because the charities still channel only a negligible fraction of profits made by the MNCs. Therefore the first thing a wealthy person should think of is where does his money come from and only then he should think about becoming a trustee for his wealth.

Although more and more wealthy people might realize the need of nonviolent attitude in their life and would naturally become trustees of their wealth, there are still many of those who either don't know anything about Gandhi's philosophy in general and trusteeship in particular or aren't willing to give up their wealth for the benefit of the society. This is mostly because the people today have antipodal values and way of life to the ones set by Gandhi as they believe that self-indulgence and wealth lead to happiness. They also lack spirituality and don't realize the unity of all beings. Because they put most value on their own family, and not the rest of the mankind, they tend to amass as much money as possible to be used by their children. This is however to be changed through the means of satyagraha of followers of Gandhi's philosophy. So for example an organization set by people following Gandhi's principles, may be inspired by the mission of Vinoba Bhave and may try to persuade wealthy people to become trustees of their wealth which may then be for example used to provide shelter for homeless people. Furthermore the satyagrahis could help the exploited workers realize their strength and teach them nonviolent methods of action. Like this united workers may start non-cooperation and

civil disobedience against their employers, calling for more equal and decentralized social system and economics. Alternatively, the workers may start their own cooperatives based on Gandhi's principles of swadeshi, nonviolence and equal distribution.

So sarvodaya should be achieved through the nonviolent lifestyle adopted by the satyagrahis and ultimately by most of the people in the society, trusteeship and satyagraha of those who have already realized the unity of all beings and are on their way to attain satya. The means of satyagraha adopted may be various and depend mostly on the interest and creativity of the satyagrahis and people involved. The only restriction is that they have to be nonviolent and should serve the whole mankind and nature. The creation of parallel institutions as describe at the end of the chapter Application of Satyagraha is a vital component of satyagraha and should be also adopted if sarvodaya is to be achieved. Yet it is fundamental to understand that the personal change is the only way through which the real sarvodaya and swaraj of the masses can be achieved. Each person has to realize for himself the need of nonviolence and unity of all beings. Each person has to realize his own spirituality and adopt his own nonviolent lifestyle. However this is difficult, Gandhi provided the seekers after satya with a following hint:

I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and yourself melting away. (*The Collected Works* 96: 311)

4 . Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to present Gandhi's philosophy and demonstrate its plausibility even when applied to the context of contemporary Czech citizen. The plausibility of Gandhi's philosophy lays on many factors. Firstly, thanks to the deep transformation of each individual, it is permanent and gives a solid ground for any social policy along Gandhian lines. Therefore it is not for example only theoretically nonviolent to nature, but its votaries deeply feel the link between people and nature and thus are naturally conserving it. Secondly, it stands for complete decentralization of production and political power, which may bring about more just social order. Thirdly through sarvodaya nobody could be oppressed, there is no rule of thumb, always everybody has to prosper. Thanks to this and other notions, Gandhi's philosophy once put into practice in its integrity, can never lead to oppressive regimes. The satyagrahis would serve only to set an example, but would never judge or criticize anybody and wouldn't take any violent actions against their opponents. Rather through satyagraha they would resist the views of the opponents and would make their best to change the hearts of the opponents through their unconditional love for them.

It has been shown that Gandhi's philosophy can be very much plausible among Czech population, because although it is deeply spiritual, there is no need for one to believe in any particular God. All one need is to believe in satya or Truth and search for it within oneself. Like this one may gain one's spirituality and may experience the unity of all beings. This spiritual awakening can then lead one to greater happiness and satisfaction with one's action and at the same time guide one in one's everyday life. From the particular examples of nonviolent lifestyle that were given in the fields of work, consumerism and relations with other people, it was obvious that it is very much possible

for one to change one's habits and be more attentive to the products one buys, the way one behaves and the consequences of one's actions in general. It was even demonstrated how one could set an example through one's own nonviolent lifestyle for other people to follow. Like this one may slowly become a true satyagrahi, gain followers and expand one's actions to the socio-political sphere. From the recent example of "Ne Základnám" it is obvious that methods of satyagraha aren't alien to Czech people and therefore it shouldn't be impossible to carry out a full satyagraha with all its aspects in order to bring about firstly spiritual awakening and swaraj of the masses and ultimately lead to sarvodaya.

Although it is clear that the values and standards of Czech people today are very much antipodal to those stressed by Gandhi, the search for happiness and satisfaction is still present in every individual. Therefore Czech people might see Gandhi's philosophy as an alternative to the material way of life. In practise, for people there may be problems with the apparent complexity of Gandhi's ideas and difficulties in putting them into practice. However, if one has the right motivation, one should try only some components of it, maybe tolerance or positive attitude and observe the changes that come with the adoption of such idea. If there would be some positive change in one's life, one may move onto another idea and like this maybe one day one realizes that one is moving towards the attainment of satya. Central is the idea of personal change that has to be brought about before any greater change can occur. This personal change of each of person can never harm anyone and may lead towards great results even in one's own community.

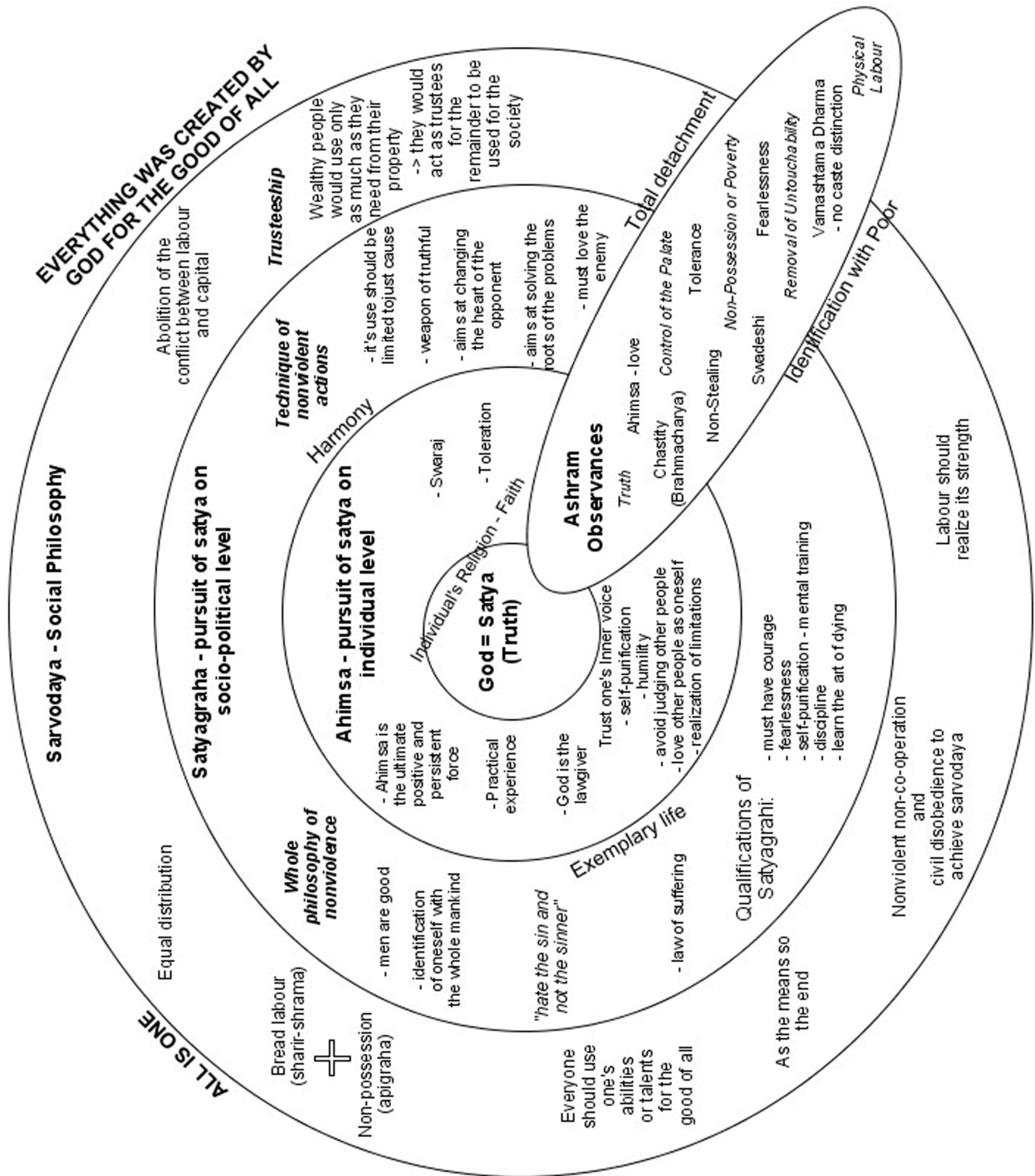
Lastly it should be stressed that everyone should have the right to choose in which conditions one wants to live. In no way people should be coerced to believe and apply Gandhi's philosophy. So the problem with the application of Gandhi's philosophy today is

that it has to be convincing for the people to follow it. People has to have the right motivation, which often lies in their spirituality and realization of the unity of all beings. The motivation may even lay in the need to bring about a new more sustainable alternative for the future. Yet a much bigger problem with the application of Gandhi's philosophy lays in it's absence from general discourse in the Czech Republic. Nobody can follow it if nobody knows about it. Yet it is fundamental for people to be able to imagine a nonviolent society with equality and justice. Once there would be the image, it will be much easier for people to bring about such society. But without the idea of how such society might look like, nothing could be done. This work therefore also aimed at inspiring the imagination and showing a practical way that might lead to such society.

“Only those who are moved by great spiritual ideals can achieve the new world of peace, freedom and safety for all, which we aspire” (Kokandakar 23).

Appendix A

Summary Diagram of Gandhi's Philosophy



Appendix B

Glossary of the Main Terms

Ahimsa (Nonviolence) - opposite to himsa or violence, can also be translated as active love. Gandhi's concept of ahimsa stands on two basic points. The first is that ahimsa is the ultimate positive and persistent force that makes everything into being and the second is that all life was created by God and so all life is one (Murphy 1). Ahimsa is a personal concept as it sustains the soul and so should be practiced on personal level.

Apigraha (Non-possession) – involves consideration for others. It requires one to limit one's possessions to the bare minimum.

Ashram – a place where Gandhi could carry out his experiments with satya, later it became a training institution for satyagrahis and centre from which the various campaigns of satyagraha were organized.

Brahmacharya (Chastity) – a way of life that leads one to Brahma (God). Such way of life entails a complete control over senses and is to be secured in thought, word and deed. It is to be observed in three ways – in mind, speech and body.

God - “God is truth and love; God is ethics and morality; God is fearlessness. God is the source of Light and Life and yet He is above and beyond all these. God is conscience. [...] He transcends speech and reason.[...] He is the purest essence.” (Gandhi, *The Collected Works* 30: 334). In Gandhi's philosophy Truth is God, so for more information see also the term “Satya (Truth)”.

Inner voice - “the Voice of God, of Conscience, of Truth” (Gandhi, *The Collected Works* 61: 219). The inner voice is the result of a deep connection of one with one's own inner self that was perfectly created by God. So for Gandhi it is the way how to connect with God or satya. Each person should find his own inner voice through swaraj that can be achieved through self-purification. This inner voice then guides one's actions.

Moksha (Liberation) – A state in which the spirit becomes and remains independent of physical existence. (Gandhi, *The Collected Works* 35:44). Also referred to as perfectness, which can be achieved by following Satya through ahimsa.

Sarva dharma samabhava – all the religions are different paths leading to the same goal. The moral principles were the same in all the great religions of the world.

Sarvodaya (Welfare of all) – Gandhi's social philosophy based on these three principles: 1/ The good of the individual is contained in the good of all. 2/ A lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's in as much as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work. 3/ A life of labor, i.e. the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is a life worth living. (Gandhi, "The Collected Works" 44: 313) Sarvodaya is only an extension of ahimsa in the realm of the whole of humanity.

Satya (Truth) - truth is the relative truth of truthfulness in word and deed, and the absolute truth - the Ultimate Reality. This ultimate truth is God (as God is also Truth) and morality - the moral laws and code - its basis (Murphy 1).

Satyagraha - broad definition: “a whole philosophy of nonviolence” and narrow one: “a technique or tool of nonviolent action” (Murphy 4). “Satya” (truth) and “agraha” (firmness) mean resisting untruth by truthful means. Civil Disobedience or Recourse to truth-force or soul-force or passive resistance (<http://www.mkgandhi.org/gsr.htm>).

Satyagrahis - the nonviolent activists and seekers of satya

Spirituality - “the oneness of spirit. Spirituality invites us to unite with our surrounding, with the adjoining animate and inanimate world. The spirit calls us into unity with nature, with the animal and plant kingdoms, with our wider human society, and with ourselves. It teaches us to live a life of wholeness.” (Brahma Vidya Mandir 4)

Srimad Bhagavad Gita - a Hindu scriptural work in Sanskrit verse, composed some centuries before the Christian era, in which Sri Krishna sums up the essence of Hindu religion and philosophy (<http://www.mkgandhi.org/gsr.htm>).

Swadeshi - stands for the local order of the world. Since people live on some place, they should purchase local products and bear in mind the best interest of people near to them. Swadeshi implies the interrelatedness of the whole world in that if one follows it, one serves the world in large.

Swaraj (Self-rule) - political independence of the nation but also inner spiritual freedom of the citizens. Through swaraj the free citizens should strive to attain inner freedom “from vices such as injustice, dishonesty, greed, aggression, possessiveness, and envy” (Parel 210).

Trusteeship - each person has certain abilities that were given to him by God to be used for the good of the society. One should be able to meet one's needs through one's abilities or talents but anything that one gains and does not need, one should use for the good of all.

scientific age. Many spheres of life have undergone total or considerable change during this age. Researchs in scientific field have changed and continue to change the face of society. Now, Science in itself is neither good, nor bad. But if people lack pure motivation and deep insight, they will misuse science, as we are witnessing daily. Who or what can save us from the misuse of science? It is spirituality that can give proper guidance to science. Spirituality shows direction, while science gives speed. Speed without direction may ruin the world. For that, it is essential, to have spiritual laboratories too. Brahma Vidya Mandir is one such laboratory.

The question arises : What is spirituality? The heart of spirituality is oneness of spirit. Spirituality invites us to unite with our surrounding, with the adjoining animate and inanimate world. The spirit calls us into unity with nature, with the animal and plant kingdoms, with our wider human society, and with ourselves. It teaches us to live a life of wholeness.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THE ASHRAM GATE WILL BE
CLOSED FROM 12 NOON TO 2 P.M. AND FROM 8 P.M. TO 4 A.M.**

.....
 • We are not exclusively attached to any country.
 • We give no special emphasis on any religion.
 • We are not bound to any community or cast.
 • Our field of study is to soar in the region of the
 • noble thoughts spread all over the world.
 • To assimilate noble thoughts is our sacred duty.
 • To establish understanding in various specialities,
 • to develop world-attitude is our discipline
 • of thought.

.....
 Vinoba

BRAHMA VIDYA MANDIR

Po. Paunar, Wardha 442111 Phone : (07152) 288388; 288181

BRIEF BACKGROUND

Brahma Vidya Mandir is located on the banks of the river Dham; 9kms. East of Wardha and 6 kms. of Gandhij's Sevagram Ashram. Vinoba Bhave first came to this location in 1938 and began initiating his various spiritual-social activities and experiments. These included ideals such as *Kanchan-mukti* (freedom from money-economy), *Rishi-Kheti* (earning livelihood from farming with simple, inexpensive tools that are within the reach of the poor), working without the help of bulls or hired labour, and keeping the principles of equality and nonviolence. In that same year, while Vinobaji was tilling the land, a stone carved relic, bearing the image of Bharat-Ram was found. Experts determined that the relic dates back about 1500 years. Vinobaji chose this relic, among the many others found on the premises, as the ashram temple's center Place in 1940. Two years after this fortuitous discovery, the well known Individual Satyagraha movement started from this very place.

Quite unexpectedly in 1951, he was inspired to start the Bhoodan Yatra (Land gift Movement). For that he walked all over the country for 13 long years asking for land for the landless. His mission attracted many and thousands of selfless workers joined him in his efforts. Among these followers there were some women who wanted to lead a spiritual life. For them, Vinobaji founded Brahma Vidya Mandir in 1959. The purpose of this place is to offer women the possibility of a deeply contemplative life overflowing in fruitful activities for the good of society. At this time Vinobaji was still on his Bhoodan walking pilgrimage; so for the first 5 years, he offered his guidance to inmates through correspondence. During his tour in Maharashtra in 1964, he stayed in this Paunar Ashram for about

one year, modeling the inner and outer life he envisioned for the Ashram. Then again he moved to Bihar and returned to Wardha in 1970. From 1970 to 1982, the last twelve years of his life he spent in Brahma Vidya Mandir.

Brahma Vidya Mandir is the temple (Mandir) where one seeks the wisdom and experience (Vidya) of the Absolute (Brahma). Women's spiritual emancipation is the motto of Brahma Vidya Mandir. At present, in all, 28 sisters live in the ashram. They come from different states of India and one is from Japan. Without distinction of caste, creed, language, religion, and nationality they share their lives together. Brothers closely associated with Vinobaji also lived with the sisters.

Life in Brahma Vidya Mandir is the fusion of the three classic currents of sadhana, Karma (action), Jnana (knowledge), and Bhakti (devotion). This threefold combination provides the means to meet the fundamental needs of the body, mind and spirit.

The members of Brahma Vidya Mandir are diligently committed to *Samuhik Sadhana* (collective spiritual pursuit for the realization of the Self). This collective spiritual sadhana is central theme of the ashram. In short, this means surrendering all of one's capacities at the feet of the Lord, abiding in the group, and seeing the inter-union of all aspirants as different organs of one body.

There are 5 pillars of the community's spiritual life, all grounded in satya (truth) and ahimsa (nonviolence). The pillars are Brahmacharya (celibacy), Samuhik Sadhana, Shrama (productive manual labour), Swadhyaya (self study) and Bhakti (devotion).

The outstanding Feature of Brahma Vidya Mandir is that there is no single administrator or manager of the ashram. All activities and arrangements are carried out according to the decisions reached unanimously by group. Unanimous

decision-making is a fundamental means of strengthening shared life of the community.

Manual labour gives the pleasure of living close to the land. *Swadhyaya* (self-study) gives the opportunity to view the depth of ones own beautiful inner self. Bhakti unites us with the Almighty. The meaning of Brahmacharya is not confined to restraint of sensuality. Brahmacharya means all our activities should be guided with the single motive of achieving unification with Brahma, the Absolute. Community life brings lessons of joy and challenge as we learn to live with and for our fellow beings. The features of the ashram's spirituality point to and contribute to the establishment of a nonviolent society.

Productive manual labour is essential feature and life in Brahma Vidya Mandir. The ashram should be self-supporting so as not to be a burden on society. The ashram does not accept governmental support and try to be self sufficient. It follows that all aspirants engage in manual work (each committing to a daily 6 hour labour programme) and practice voluntary poverty. The women cultivate the ashram's land (using organic farming methods), run a small dairy दहीघाट, spin the thread for their clothing (khadi). All these enable the ashram inmates to be self reliant as much as possible and it also indicates ways in which inequities, may be eradicated.

The sisters publish a monthly journal, Maitri (friendship) in Hindi. The journal shares news and views about the experiments based on spirituality and scientific outlook. It is the mouthpiece of the ashram, providing an important source of contact with the outside world. At times other spiritual and *Sarvodaya* literature is also published. Physical and mental labour is equally valued.

Vinobaji often said, politics and religion are outdated. Science and spirituality should replace them. We live in the

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