Salman Rushdie's novel Haroun and the sea of stories begins with the great story teller Rashid Khalifa, opening his mouth to tell a story but finding it as empty as his heart. The rest of the novel portrays the search of his son, Haroun to fight the prince of silence and regain the magic of story telling for human kind.

Rushdie's novel mirrors our times, an era where the art of enchantment has given way to the registering of data. Quantities of information and new assault our being, leaving us bereft of direction and meaning. Although the past of all cultures has abounded with story telling and the evoking of imagination, the focus of modern life on members associated with market-oriented goals impoverishes the human spirit and contributes greatly to the mounting malaise of people's alienation. Engaging in non-violence entails, inter-alia an attempt to remove this malaise.

When we talk of non-violence as an instrument to fight against oppression and subjugation, we undoubtedly think of Gandhiji. Gandhi was well-known for his non-violent struggle against the British towards political freedom. Non-violence was a basic imperative in Gandhi's whole life, both the smaller circle of his ashrams and in the wider political arena.

When he went to South Africa and began his stormy career as a political activist, he began to use the expression "passive resistance". After coming back to India, however, Gandhi's attention was drawn to the term Ahimsa, and he required from the inmates of his ashram the vow of the non-violence, alongwith the vow of truth, celibacy, non-stealing and non-possession. For Gandhi, non-violence came to be a high demanding ideal which eschewed violence not only in action but also in thought and words.

Gandhi was deeply influenced by the concept of *ahimsa* in the Hindu and Jain literature. In his search for other sources, Gandhi glanced upon Tolstoy's The kingdom of God is within you, and about this he commented that "after I read this book, that lack of faith in non-violence vanished". He was also attracted to the inwardness of the sermon on the Mount, which was his guiding principle. He was delighted that the Sermon on the Mount emphasized motives rather than action. Above all, the Sermon on Mount provided Gandhi sound basis for his advocacy of non-violent resistance. On the Sermon Mount Gandhi commented, "It was the new testament which awakened in me the righteous and value of passive resistance. When I read in the Sermon on Mount, such passages as Resist not him that is evil, but whatsoever smiteth thee on thy right check, turn him the other also and have your enemies and pray for them that persecute you that may be sons of your father which is in heaven" I was simply overjoyed.
Gandhi often said that non-violence is the law of the human species, and that is infinitely superior to the brute force. He was aware that violence was entrenched in our culture and that much of the present structure of society still depends upon forces. Yet Gandhi was emphatic that non-violence advocated by all religions is the way to direct out lives on earth. He also stressed that non-violence is to be practised not only by the individual but by the group also. He also accepted the need for struggle and conflict in human societies, and attempted to apply non-violence in mass political struggle. Gradually, non-violence became for Gandhi an appropriate method to mobilise the masses, irrespective of caste, religion and language, against the British rule in the Indian continent. Even while developing non-violence as a political ideology Gandhi demanded that non-violence has to be a creed and a way of life and not a policy.

In Gandhi's view, non-violence is the summit of courage and fearlessness, so that it is not violent but cowardice that is authenticated to non-violence. Gandhi was insistent that non-violence out to be the main Dharma, the central ethos and norm of human society. So, it is not surprising that Gandhi advocated Jews in Germany to use non-violent resistance against the Nazi regime.

There may be conflicting opinion about his method of non-violence, but his influence has expanded both geographically and theoretically and this can be seen in the non-violent struggles of diverse political and religious ethnic groups. As early as 1952, Damilo Dolci used non-violence to liberate the poor in Sicily. By the 1970s, many countries in Europe used non-violent resistance for environmental protection and against nuclear threat and various forms of human rights violations. Above all, it was Martin Luther King who helped propagate Gandhi's method of non-violence in his protest marches against the racist oppression in the Southern part of America. Gandhian non-violence has indeed become the most revolutionary idea of the twentieth century.

In December 1931, Gandhi visited the Vatican on his way to India, after attending the Second Round Table Conference in London. Seeking a crucifix in one of the chapels, he confessed, it was not without a wretch that I could tear myself away from that scene of living tragedy. I saw there at once that nations like individuals could be made through the agony of the cross and in no other ways."

Gandhi was profoundly moved by the living image of Christ crucified that a few day later, in a Christmas talk abroad the ship Pilsna, he would argue that to experience in the midst of strife one must destroy one's whole life, and crucify oneself and he added, "as the miraculous birth is an eternal event so is the cross an eternal event in the stormy life."

In Gandhi's view, Jesus' death on the cross was a supreme example of commitment and self-sacrifice. He attributed his advocacy of non-violence not only to the Sermon on Mount but also to the suffering shown by the Jesus on the cross. To a newspaper Editor, Gandhi would comment "the example of Jesus' suffering is a factor in the composition my undying faith in non-violence which rules my actions, worldly and temporal.

Gandhi's Satyagraha demands that the non-violent resists take suffering upon themselves rather than inflicting it on the opponent. Such a posture in Gandhi's thinking is precisely what the cross is all about. In Gandhi's, "living Christ means a living cross and without it, life is a living death."

For Gandhi, truth with non-violence and self-suffering was the guiding pillars. Satyagraha was an experiment with truth was the path led by Gandhi to the fullest realization of his destiny as a human being. Gandhi also sought to make religious
faith an ally and an instrument in the social and political liberation of human beings. Gandhi understood his participation in politics as a way to spiritual salvation. Standing vast to his conviction of God as Truth, Gandhi became a prophet of revolt against all forms of injustice, exploitation and violence.

As such Gandhian, "Practical idealism" is going to be the real thing of human rationality and vision in the twenty first century. Whether we want it or not, Mahatma Gandhi will be there either in name or in deeds of the generation to come. No "commitments" can run away from this reality.

Gandhi has always been an activist and a political worker. His philosophy or "way of life" is also primarily derived from his lessons of life and "experiments" through diverse experiences.

Today inspite inherent uncertainty of politics, its omnipresence and ubiquitous nature can never be put aside. "Politics is highly specialised field of activity. Such a specialized field must not be left to the mercy of self-styled political leaders emerging either overnight or almost from nowhere in the history of their own peculiar political experience.

The need of the hour is well embedded political niche of properly equipped political scientists and their commitments, dedications, deviations and determination. Political knowledge and discipline of a political scientist must become the ranging path finder. Politics is power as an instrument for the ultimate end of Sarvodaya or welfare of all.

Gandhi wanted to bring about a social change through non-violent means, not through external pressure but through a change in individual. Gandhian social revolution was a two-sided Satyagrahs and Sarvodaya.

According to Lewis Fisher, the French writer, "it is Mahatma Gandhi who is going to lead the world in future."

Martin Luther King wanted to win the battle of equality in the United States of America through non-violent means, following Gandhi's foot-steps. Nelson Mandela of Africa adopted Gandhian non-violent approach to win the battle of equality and suffered in prison for almost 27 years. So, this approach holds good even today.

Modern movements, national as well as international, which have followed and developed the Gandhian tradition, are, for example the citizen right-movement in the United States, parts of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, the true-claimers in the Indian Chipko movement, land occupying farmers labourers in Brazil, the mass action against nuclear weapons in Great Britain during 1960s and peace camps organized at nuclear weapons basis all around Western Europe during 1980s.

Gandhi's Satyagraha became an effective force in Champaran in Bihar in 1917. The Champaran Satyagraha became a hisotric event in which conflict was proved morally right and people for the first time were scrutinised to moral aspects of the conflict. Before Champaran people never thought that conflict could be taken to a morally higher level. Moral power made the people bold to face political authority. In India, Champaran was a testing ground for non-violence.

Gandhi's call for civil-disobedience in the early 1920s against the government there were incidence of violence. Gandhi accepted responsibility for violent outbreaks which had occurred following his call for civil disobedience, and asked for the highest penalty that could be inflicted upon him. He appealed,

"I wish to endorse all the blame that the Advocate-General has thrown on my shoulders in connection with the Bombay occurences, the Madras occurences, and the Chauri-Chaura occurences.

Thinking over these things deeply and sleeping over than night after night and examining
my heart, I have come to the conclusion that it is impossible for me to dissociate myself from the diabolic crimes of Chauri-Chaura or the mad outrages of Bombay. He is quite right when he says that as a man of responsibility, a man having received a fair share of education, having had a fair share of experience of this world, I should know the consequences of everyone of my acts. I knew that I was playing with fire, I ran the risk and if I was set free I would still do the same. I wanted to avoid the violence. Non-violence is the first article of my faith.

But I had to make my choice. I had either to submit to a system which I consider has done an irreparable harm to my country or incur the risk of the mad fury of my people bursting forth when they understood the truth from my lips. I know that my people have sometimes gone mad. I am deeply sorry for it; and I am therefore here to submit not to a light penalty but to the highest penalty. I do not ask for money. I do not plead any extenuating act.

Such an appeal could come only from deep inner voice. In the same spirit he concluded his arguments and suggested to the Judge: "The only course open to you, Mr. Judge is ... either to resign your post or inflict on me the severest penalty if you believe that the system and law you are assisting to administer are good for the people." On hearing such unexpected and fearless plea, Judge Broomfield acknowledged that Gandhi was in a different category from any person that he had even tried or was likely to try and he said, "The law is no respector of persons. Nevertheless it would be impossible to ignore the fact that in the eyes of millions of your country you are a great patriot and a great leader. Even those who differ from you in politics look upon you as a man of high ideals, of noble and even saintly life. I have to deal with you in one character only ... It is my duty to judge you as a man, subject to the law, who has, by his own admission, broken the law ... I do not forget that you have consistently preach against violence and that you have on many occasions, as I am willing to believe, done much to prevent violence. But having regard to the nature of political teaching and the nature of many of those to whom it was addressed how you could have continued to believe that violence would not be inevitable consequence it passes my capacity to understand."

In that trial Gandhi was sentenced to six years’ imprisonment. He was sent to Yeravada Prison but he remained a man of inner peace.

The two characteristics, fearlessness and inner peace made Gandhi the unique person that he was a leader with imagination, a politician with a vision, a mystic with a mission. So, Gandhi’s strength does not come from physical capacity, it comes from an indomitable will.

Conclusion:

India is a land of extreme contradictions. And the situation in India could be better understood in terms of the person of Mahatma and the qualities found in him. Further, Gandhi’s inspiration and ideals still motivate India, albeit most of the times unconsciously, and provides a structure for making sense of conflicting Indian scenario.

If Indians have a vision for the future, a utopia to hope for, that vision is basically they are provided by the Mahatma. He has shown the Indians a viable alternative. Though it has not been implemented in the actual polity and policies of the nation, the vision provided by Gandhi is the steering wheel which guides India to the future.

Einstein wrote, "Generation to come, it may be, will scarce believe such one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon the surface of this earth."

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