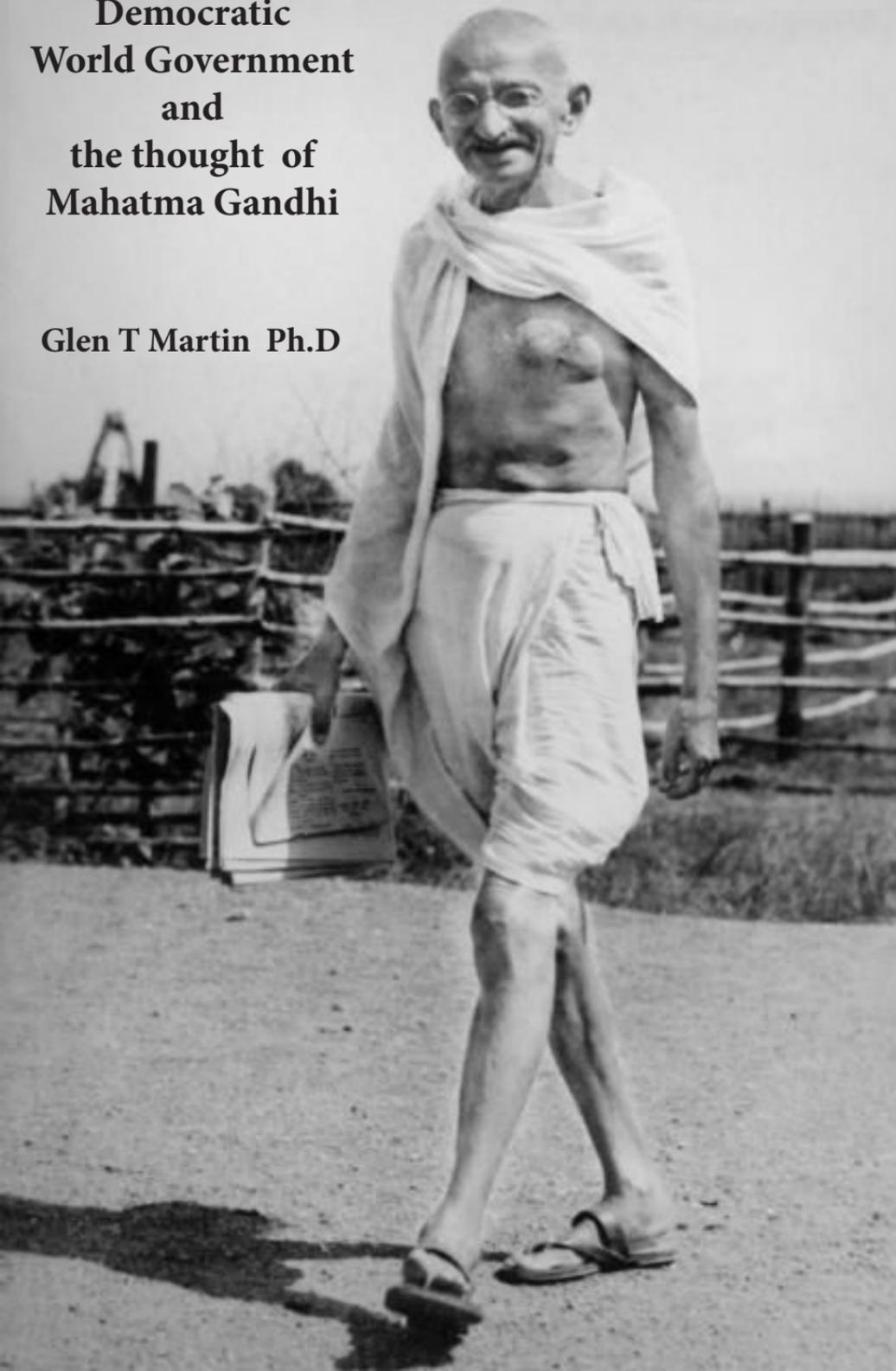


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World Government
and
the thought of
Mahatma Gandhi**

Glen T Martin Ph.D



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Democratic World Government and the thought of Mahatma Gandhi

At the dawn of the 21st century, the essence and spirit of Gandhi's thought cries out for non-military, democratic world government. The world has moved in the past 50 years to the point where the violence that Gandhi abhorred is institutionalized on a global scale. It is institutionalized in the system of nation states each pretending to be sovereign, independently from the sovereignty of the people of the earth. It is institutionalized in a global economic system in which the exploitation of the poor by the rich has reached planetary proportions.

This essay shows that the spirit of Gandhi's life and thought supports the vision of a new world order embodied in the Constitution for the Federation of Earth.

This Constitution has been translated into eighteen languages and is being promoted world-wide by the Global Ratification and Elections Network.[1] It provides for a planetary federation of nations and people: for the first time in history creating democratic participation for every citizen of Earth within a World Parliament. The World Parliament and all the agencies of world government have

the explicit mandate and duty to work for the welfare of the entire planet, of every living person, and for future generations.

Gandhi's life and thought expressed the truth of the Vedas that the "human family" is one. "Mankind is one, he writes, "seeing that all are equally subject to the Moral Law. All men are equal in God's eyes . There are, of course, differences of race and status and the like; but the higher the status of a man, the greater is his responsibilityAnd all work towards a common end- the welfare of humanity." [2] The World Constitution embodies this principle within a legal and moral framework that makes its realization truly possible for the first time in history. In today's world of economic globalization, Sarvodaya cannot be realized by individual governments working alone. The World Constitution creates not only world democracy but a new economic order directed to eliminating poverty and misery worldwide. "According to me," Gandhi writes, "the economic constitution of India, and for the matter of that of the world, should be such that no one under it should suffer from want of food and clothingThe neglect of this simple principle is the cause of the destitution we witness today, not only in this unhappy land, but other parts of the world, too." [3]

For Gandhi, India's role in world history was to provide a spiritual and moral center for the regeneration of the world towards peace and justice. He urged India not to imitate the warlike behavior of the West but to become "a new India bearing the best that the West has to give and becoming the hope not only for Asia and Africa, but the whole of the aching world." "The ultimate solutions must involve "the whole of the aching world." [4] The World Constitution creates a non-military world government and abolishes all weapons of war from the earth, to be carefully and systematically eliminated by the Earth Disarmament Agency. The moral and spiritual leadership of India must ultimately lead to the institutionalization of peace under a federal world government.

Even with respect to swadeshi, Gandhi emphasizes that self-sufficiency cannot be created at the expense of others but only by recognizing interdependency. "All living beings are members one of another," he writes, "so that a person's every act has a beneficial or harmful influence on the whole world, ... and an awareness of this truth should make us realize our responsibility." [5] The World Constitution gives every nation the right to determine its own social, political and economic system within the framework of universal human rights provided

for all citizens of the planet (Article XIV, 2). It is this principle of federalism, and the protection of individual cultures, religions, communities, and persons that makes world government under the Constitution a concrete embodiment of Gandhi's vision. Our responsibility is not simply self-sufficiency, but a world system that makes possible self-sufficiency for everyone. As Dr. Rama Sen says of Gandhi, "His integral approach is the result of his conviction that human life is a unity and a synthetic whole No problem can be regarded as essentially metaphysical or moral or social or political or religious. Life must be lived in accordance with a plan or an integral scheme." [6] At the dawn of the third millennium, that integral scheme is found in the Constitution for the Federation of Earth.

The Preamble to the Constitution affirms the following principles: Conscious that Humanity is One despite the existence of diverse nations, races, creeds, ideologies and cultures and that the principle of unity in diversity is the basis for a new age when war shall be outlawed and peace prevail; when the earth's total resources shall be equitably used for human welfare and when basic human rights and responsibilities shall be shared by all without discrimination.... This single statement embodies not only Gandhi's

principles of ahimsa, sarvodaya and universal responsibility, but also unity in diversity. It creates a legal framework for global unity in diversity that, for the first time, can make possible the unity of Moslems and Hindus, of rich and poor, of Indians and Pakistanis, of Americans and Cubans, of all races, creeds and ideologies. Gandhi understood that diversity cannot be protected without a fundamental unity and interdependence. In Gandhi's time, full swaraj meant for him full partnership in the Commonwealth of Nations. [7] In our time, swaraj for each nation or people means participation in the Federation of Earth. "Complete Independence through Truth and Non-violence," Gandhi wrote, "means the independence of every unit, be it the humblest of the nation, without distinction of race, colour or creed. This Independence is never exclusive. It is, therefore, wholly compatible with interdependence within or without." [8] Swaraj, Gandhi says, requires "complete independence of alien control and complete economic independence" as well as "moral and social elevation . "[9] As we have seen, this moral and social elevation is embodied in the Preamble to the World Constitution in the realization that there can be no true independence without unity in diversity for the entire planet.

Raghavan N. Iyer writes that Gandhi held an open view of human possibilities and the future. [10] Indeed, he assumed that human beings could progress in their moral and spiritual development and that India's role was to lead in the moral elevation of civilization. Man's triumph will consist in substituting the struggle for existence by the struggle for mutual service," Gandhi wrote, 'the law of the brute will be replaced by the law of man.' [11] It is this positive view of our human possibilities that makes Gandhi's thought at one with that of Sri Aurobindo who wrote that "a free world-union must in its very nature be a complex unity based on a diversity and that diversity must be based on free self-determination." [12] When accused or being "utopian," Gandhi answered that each of us should live our utopias at all times. [13] Civilization, Gandhi said, cannot be a matter of pushing buttons and killing ever more people. Civilization will come when men have elevated their moral being.[14] It will come when they have achieved peace with justice through creating a world order based on the principle of unity in diversity and the moral perfectibility of human beings . And moral progress for human beings means that we have focused on the true welfare all, not simply on the majority. [15] The Constitution for the Federation of Earth, throughout its nineteen articles, requires the

world government to focus on the welfare of the entire planet while protecting the rich diversity of its citizens and nations .

We have reviewed Gandhi's life and thought with regard to sarvodaya, to India's role in world history , to swadeshi, to unity and holism, to the principle of unity in diversity, and to the promise of moral progress for humankind. All these aspects of his thought point towards federal world government as this is envisaged under the World Constitution. The same is true of satyagraha and ahimsa. Gandhi said that it was his mission to convert the world to ahimsa. [16] Ahimsa, he says, includes as it attributes "truth , harmony, brotherhood, justice, etc." [17] Truly democratic processes are inherently non-violent and the World Constitution makes possible , for the first time, true democracy for our entire planet.

The reason for this is that political domination of one nation by another is one form of institutionalized violence. Foreign rule , Gandhi believed, is "organized violence." [18] Hence, a World where the powerful nations directly or indirectly dominate the weaker and poorer nations is one in which swaraj and true democracy do not exist. The same is true of the organized violence of economic exploitation.

[19] When giant corporations penetrate India to exploit its poor masses, institutionalized violence is a reality. A world order in which these conditions of political domination and economic exploitation prevail is, for Gandhi, inherently violent. "Economics that hurt the moral well-being of an individual or nation are immoral and, therefore, sinful. Thus the economics that permit one country to prey upon another are immoral." "True economics," he says, '...stands for social justice, it promotes the good of all equally including the weakest, and is indispensable for decent life.' [20] "The structure of a world federation" Gandhi writes, "can be raised only on a foundation of non-violence, and violence will have to be given up totally in world affairs" [21] In contrast to our present condition of world-wide institutionalized violence, the Constitution for the Federation of Earth initiates a substantially non-violent world order for the first time in history. It abolishes, through the rule of enforceable law, not only war but political domination and economic exploitation and guarantees every person on Earth a living wage, life-long health care and social security.

The democratic processes institutionalized under the Constitution also promote non-violence and spiritual progress among human

beings by taking conflict off the battlefield (now made illegal) and placing it within a setting of dialogue and debate. The Constitution creates a World Parliament to debate principles, a World Judiciary to settle disputes among nations, groups and persons, a World Ombudsmus to defend human rights worldwide and to be a watchdog on government itself, and a World Police allowed only those weapons necessary to apprehend individuals. Hence, it activates a major step forward in non-violence (and the possibility of further moral proforress) as the legal framework for humankind.

Gandhi later referred to his time in South Africa when he committed his life to satyagraha as the most creative moment of his life.[22] It may be, in our day, that the most creative moment of our own lives could be commitment to that satyagraha institutionalized in Constitution for the Federation of Earth.

Notes

1.The World Constitution and Parliament Assoc. and Global Ratification and Elections Network (WCPAGREN), 8800 West 14th Ave., Lakewood CO 80215, USA. Web: WCPAGREN.org.

2.Hingorani, Anand T., ed., Socialism of My Conception- M.K. Gandhi (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan,1966),p.34, from Ethical Religion, p. 56.

3.Ibid, p. 272, from Young India: Nov.15, 1928.

4.Jesudasan, Ignatius, S.J., A Gandhian Theology of Liberation (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984), p. 64, from Indian Opinion, December 1914.

5.Hingorani , p. 73, from Ashram Observances in Action, p. 67.

6.Sen, Dr. Rama, “Only Gandhi Can Save Humanity,”in Sheshrao Chavan, ed. Mahatma Gandhi- Man of the Millennium (Delhi: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 2001), p. 266 .

7. Jesudasan, p. 57.

8. Hingorani, p. 125, from Constructive Program, 1945 Edition, p. 5.

9. Hingorani, p.115, from Harijan, Jan 2 , 1937.

10. Iyer, Raghavan N., The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi (New York: Oxford University Press , 1973), p. 97.

11. Jesudasan, p. 127, from Autobiography V: XXXIV.

12. Sri Aurobindo, The Human Cycle (Pondicherry Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, 1992), p.517.

13. Jesudasan, p. 32.

14. Hingorani, pp.18-23, from Hind Swaraj, Chap VI & VIII : 1908.

15. Ibid.,p.32, from Unto This Last- A Paraphrase: p. IX.

16. Ibid., p.120, from Harijan: Jan. 13, 1940.

17. Ibid., p.15, from Harijan: Aug 11, 1940.

18. Jesudasan, p. 34.

19. Ibid. p. 120 from Harijan June 1,1947.

20. Ibid .

21. Prabhu, R.K. and Rao, UR, The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1987), p. 460 , from Gandhi's Correspondence with the Government: 1942-44, p. 143.



Dr. Glen T. Martin is Professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Radford University in Virginia and founder in 1994 of the Radford University program in Peace Studies. During his twenty-five years at Radford University, Dr. Martin has been active in both national and international work of philosophers focusing on issues of peace. Since 1996, he has been President of International Philosophers for Peace, an organization with members in 25 countries that works to promote the social, political, and economic conditions necessary for world peace. Since 1995, he has also been active in the movement to create non-military, democratic world government under the Constitution for the Federation of Earth. In this capacity, he has been a member of the World Executive Council of the World Constitution and Parliament Association which coordinates a network of tens of thousands of people from 120 countries worldwide in their work toward these goals. On behalf of the Earth Federation Movement, Dr. Martin has travelled and lectured widely with respect to world peace and the need for democratic world government. Since December 2003, he has served as Secretary-General of WCPA, of which currently is the President.

Martin has published or edited seven books and many articles and reviews on a variety of topics in comparative philosophy, the spirituality of human liberation, economic democracy, and democratic world government...