**Question: Discuss Gandhi’s concept of State. (2017)**

Mohandas Karamchand, popularly known as Mahatma Gandhi was born in 2nd October, 1869 at Porbondar of Gujarat. The ideas of Gandhi regarding the state are explained as follows:

1. **Stateless and classless society:** Like Marx, Gandhi also opposed the institution of state. According to him the state is a soulless machine based on force and is an instrument of oppression and exploitation. Instead of class struggle, Gandhi was in favour of “class collaboration” and class co-ordination as the first step to establish classless society.
2. **Pioneer to Satyagraha:** Satyagraha was the basis of Gandhism. The inner aim of Satyagraha is the self purification. Without self purification it is not possible to fight against injustice. There is co-relation between Satyagraha and non-violence. Gandhi used this method to resist the state authority against exploitation and suppression. He used some methods of Satyagraha to fight against injustice prevailing in the state and this are- Non-Cooperation, Fasting, Strike, Civil disobedience and Hizrat.
3. **Decentralization of Political power:** Gandhi was in favour of the decentralization of political power. But his decentralized system should be started from village and for this he advocated the direct election system from village panchayats.
4. **Economic decentralization in state:** Byeconomic decentralization he meant that the large scale industries should be replaced by the small cottage industries. Every village should be self-sufficient unit. Gandhi launched the Swadeshi Movement and called upon the people of India to reject western goods and stressed on the Khadi industries and hand woven cloth. According to him, in centralized economy, only the capitalists are benefited.
5. **Gandhi’s non- violence state:** Gandhi said about the non-violent state. He also viewed that the state cannot exist without using its force but it should not use too much coercive measures against its citizens. The state should use minimum force to maintain laws and order.
6. **Role of police in state:** According to Gandhi, the police are essential part for a state. But this section of society should follow some principles to establish an ideal state. He viewed that the police men should be believer of Ahimsa (non- violence) and consider themselves as servant and reformer not as the master of the people.
7. **Role military:** Like the police force, the military personal also should be the believer of the Ahimsa. The military section of the state should be active both during normal as well as in disturbance period. In normal period it should give little chances for clash or riot among the various communities. If country is attacked by some other foreign power they should either yield possession or be non-cooperative to the aggressor. Gandhi said that there will be greater number of loss of life if forcible resistance is offered in state.
8. **Crime, Punishment and Jail:**  Gandhi wanted for retaining of some kinds of punishment. But he believed in preventive and deterrent measures. The aim of punishment is to reform the criminal. Gandhi also insisted that the jail should be considered as the reform centre where education and training should be provided to the criminals.
9. **Judicial system:** He criticized the judicial system of India due to its expansiveness. His emphasis was that the judicial system should be decentralized and it should be up to the village level. According to him, the judges and the lawyers should perform their duties without any payment.
10. **Tax system:** Gandhi did not favour to collect tax through coins but it should be paid through physical labours. To quote him, “Payment in labour invigorates the nation. Where people perform labour voluntarily for the service society, exchange money of money becomes necessary. The labour collecting the taxes and keeping accounts is saved and the results are equally good.”
11. **State is not an end:** According to Gandhi, the state is not an end but “One the mean of the enabling people to better their condition in every department of life.” The state is a mean through which the greatest good of the people can secured. Gandhi wanted to resist the state authority through Satyagraha if it misuses its power.
12. **Sovereignty of state:** Gandhi did not favour the absolute sovereignty of state. He had faith on the popular sovereignty based on moral authority. According to him, the individuals should have limited loyalty to the state and this loyalty should also be conditional. It helps the people to resist the authority of state to misuse its power.

**Criticism**

1. **Defective economic policy:**. But in this era of globalization and liberalization the economic policy of Gandhi cannot fulfill the needs of the people.
2. **Vague idea:** Gandhi’s views of state are not clear. According to him, the state is a soulless institution and therefore, it should be abolished. On the other hand, he said that the state should uplift the socio-economic condition of the people and it is a mean to the end and the individuals are the end.
3. **Limitation of non-violence:** It is not possible for each individual to develop his morality towards non-violence. The human instinct compels the state authority to take some coercive measure against them. Therefore, to maintain the law and order of state to some extent violence by the state is essential.
4. **Tax system is not scientific:** To develop the economic condition of the people, planned economy is very essential. And for planned economy adequate money have to be collected through proper tax system. Gandhi’s view regarding tax that is physical labor instead of payment by coins cannot be accepted.
5. **The principle of Satyagraha is very tough one:** Gandhi advocated the Satyagraha as a method to resist the state authority from the misuse of its power. But this method is not for the common people. The Satyagrahi must be a spiritually developed persons and it is not possible for all common people in the society.
6. **Utopian in nature:** Gandhi’s ideas of state are utopian in nature like the ideal state of Plato. He said about the Ram Rajay. But this type of state is not possible to establish in the earth. To establish complete violent free State is also beyond imagination. The state must use coercive measure for good governance.

**Conclusion**

It is right that some of his principles are irrelevant to the modern society and therefore have been criticized from different angles. But despite the criticism we can say that Gandhi’s perspective of state has great impact on socio- economic and political life of the people. His advocacy on non-violence influenced many people of the world. He applied this weapon in his personal as well as social and political life. His non violence principle is recognized by the world community and therefore, his birth day is celebrated as non-violence day by the UNO.

**Question: Critically discuss Gandhi’s concept of Ahimsa with special reference to relevance in present-day society. (2014)**

**Introduction**

Gandhi was an earnest supporter of an ideal state which called by him as “Ram Rajya”. In ideal state, there will be no any use of physical force, exploitation, suppression and oppression. Gandhi said that this kind of society is possible only by practicing of Non-violence doctrine. Gandhi wanted to apply and preach the doctrine of Non- violence in the whole society as a weapon to fight against the untruth and immorality. He not only used this principle in the socio and political movement but he also applied it in his personal life. He coined the term the Non-violence as “Ahimsa”.

**Meaning**

Gandhi as the believer of Non-violence explained the concept from two different angles. The first one is abstaining from physical harm to anybody including the environment and second is to abstaining from hate, untruth, and abuse words. According to Gandhi, Non-violence method is very strong weapon for the “Satygrahi”, the believers of Non- violence. It is the non-violence method through which the critical problems can be solved easily. The non- violence helps not only the individual who use it but also on whom it is used. The persons who use this method have to tolerate many things in his life which helps them to be more pure and as a result they can develop their mental strength through this method. On the other hand, on whom the non –violence method is used, can develop his soul and conscience.

**Three Level of Non-Violence**

1. The highest type of non-violence is the enlightened non-violence or the non-violence of brave. It is the non-violence of one who adopts it not by painful necessity but by inner conviction based on moral consideration. This non-violence is not merely political but pervaded everywhere of life. It was the non-violence without any mental reservation. It is such kinds non- violence that moves mountains and transforms life.
2. The Second kind of non-violence is based on expediency and sound policy. It is weakness rather than moral conviction. On the basis of demanding of situation it supports the violence. If pursued honestly it is accepted as a policy. However, it is not as effective as the non-violence of the brave. It permits the use of violence where necessary. To quote Gandhi, “the strength of non-violence is in exact proportion to the ability, not the will, of the non-violent person to inflict violent.”
3. The third kind of non-violence is the passive violence of the coward and the effeminate. According to Gandhi, “Cowardice and Ahimsa do not go together any more than water and fire.”A coward runs away from danger instead of facing it. It is unmanly, unnatural and dishonorable. The non-violence of coward in really violence inactive violence. If a choice is to be made between violence and cowardice, Gandhiji would have preferred to violence. He said, “It is better to be violent if there is violence in our breast than to put on the cloak of non-violence to cover importance.” Again he said, “There is hope dor a violent man to be some day non-violent but there is none for a coward…..”

**Relevance of Non-Violence**

All these show that a non-violent idea of Gandhi has relevance till now for all section of people. Due to feelings of its importance the United Nations declared 2nd October, the birth day of Gandhi as the International Day of Non-violent. Gandhi applied his non-violence philosophy as a weapon against British, an imperialist in South Africa and there he succeeded to emancipate the Indians. After his achievement he also applied his doctrine of non-violence against British rule in India. His tired less efforts and endeavor helped him to free India from British rule. This mission and vision inspired the some dignitaries and among them Dalai Lama, Aung San Suu Kyi, Kwame, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr, Desmond Mpilo Tutu, Barrack Hussein Obama, John Odey etc. are famous. Many of them have succeeded to redress and emancipate the oppressed classes from the clutch of oppressors and many are relentlessly using this weapon as their doctrine

**Conclusion**

From the above explanation about of Gandhi’s views on non-violence, we can come to the conclusion that Gandhi was an earnest supporter of the principle of non-violence. He not only practiced it in his personal life but also he applied this principle in social and political life of the state and was able to win the heart of the people. Gandhi succeeded to free India from British imperialism using this method.

**Relevance of Gandhi’s Philosophy of Nonviolence**

Nonviolence provides us with tools, the positive means to oppose and stop wars and preparations for war, to resist violence, to struggle against racial, sexual and economic oppression and discrimination and to seek social justice and genuine democracy for people throughout the world. Observing the importance of the doctrine the UNO passed a resolution on 15th June 2007 to celebrate the 2 October, the birth day of Gandhi as the International day of non-violence.

1. **Helps to re-instate the dignity of the human:** Gandhi provided the world his timeless philosophy. It was not meant for the independence of India only. Nonviolence is itself normative. It applies to any situation. Gandhi’s nonviolence remains an authentic source of normative personalizes meaning that it aims first of all to re-instate the dignity of the human person. He was a fearless advocate of the dignity of the human person.
2. **Weapon to emancipate oppressed:** His philosophy on non-violence has helped millions of the discriminated poor to discover meaning of life and to live a worthy life as true human calling. He aimed at a Theo-anthropocentric society where the human person was at the centre of the social order. All the time, when the oppressor becomes oppressive, he would become weaker and all the time, the oppressed would resist the oppressor with the spirit of nonviolence, he would become stronger. It would be a losing battle for the oppressor and he would have to succumb, be converted or collapse.
3. **Applications of Nonviolence:** Many institutes have been founded to propagate Gandhi’s philosophy of Nonviolence. These have applied nonviolence in the prisons, in curing drug addicts, in understanding anger, in resolving conflicts, and in fighting for civil rights. Notable among these institutes are the M.K. Gandhi’s Institute for Nonviolence, Memphis, founded by Arun Gandhi, The Albert Einstein Institution founded by Gene Sharp, Gandhi Serve Foundation, Berlin, Germany, Sarvodaya Trust, and many other internet sources.
4. **Application of Gandhi’s Doctrine of non-violence by some dignitaries:** Gandhi applied his non-violence philosophy as a weapon against British, an imperialist in South Africa and there he succeeded to emancipate the Indians. After his achievement he also applied his doctrine of non-violence against British rule in India. His tired less efforts and endeavor helped him to free India from British rule. This mission and vision inspired the some dignitaries and among them Dalai Lama, Aung San Suu Kyi, Kwame, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr, Desmond Mpilo Tutu, Barrack Hussein Obama, John Odey etc. are famous. Many of them have succeeded to redress and emancipate the oppressed classes from the clutch of oppressors and many are relentlessly using this weapon as their doctrine.