In the Memory of
my father Sri S.R. Verma
and
brother Mr. Sri Pratap

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It is solely due to the continual persuasion of my wife-Shashi, daughters-Divya and Amrita, and son-Yuvraj, that this manuscript was expeditiously worked upon, and given a final shape for publication.

Over the years, I could not give them their due share in my time, which ethically they should have claimed. I, therefore, express my deep feelings and unfading sense of gratitude to them for giving me moral support in creating this piece of work.

—Ram Pratap
As I perused the voluminous works on Mahatma Gandhi, explored the vast field of his activities, and analysed his life in search for a purpose, I learnt a great deal about him. And as I went in deeper, I got convinced more and more of his eminently high managerial calibre and global management values, which he applied in human resource management and organisational development for constructing a new society of higher order, where ethics and human values find respectable place in interactions and business transactions.

As I continue to elaborate on that in the following chapters, I will gradually drop the word ‘Mahatma’ pre-fixed reverentially to his surname ‘Gandhi’. The only reason being that my intent is to discover in him a facet of managerial feat not yet dealt with by any earlier researcher. This introduction will, I hope, assume great value amongst managers everywhere.

I have sought to throw light on his principles and practices built on his indomitable philosophy of truth, love and non-violence. It is at this juncture that the Gandhian School of Management Thought emerges radically different from any other school of management.

I have quoted, wherever required, views of many thinkers, scholars, managers and humanists—occidental and oriental—from different communities and countries, regions and religions, cultures and customs. Facts and figures have been drawn from major historical events testimonials, meetings, commissions, conferences, UN newsletters, reliable articles, dailies and the books of celebrated authors in global circulation. However, the present analysis represents my own thoughts.
I have, unless unavoidable, refrained from quoting the views of avowed pro-Gandhians in support of his strong points, and also avoided the views of diehard critics obviously to stay out of subjectivity.

I am conscious and aware that even the best analyst or researcher may feel discontented as I do in making presentation on a subject as deep and vast as Gandhi. I may also invite displeasure and incur the dissatisfaction of other scholars on some points of disagreement. If I ever meet or encounter such a predicament, I would not take it by surprise. However, I still hope that readers would find this book novel and interesting, and that the Gandhian School of Management will be accepted exclusively as a new School of Management Thought, worth emulation for making this world a better place, for making corporate management more cognisant of human values and more responsible to social needs.
“Generations to come, it may be, will scarcely believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth”
—Albert Einstein

The life of Mahatma Gandhi has always been a classic and exotic subject, of great interest to scholars around the world. They have discussed him in so many ways, in one context or the other, and studied him from so many sources, viz. modern Indian history, British colonial history, his biographies and autobiography, books by renowned authors, journals, and his works (a Government of India publication), articles, special workshops and international or national conferences and symposia. The screening of the feature film ‘Gandhi’ directed by Richard Attenborough in the early ’80s, and ‘The Making of the Mahatma’ by Shyam Benegal in the ’90s, brought his life closer to the eyes of the common man. Time and again, Gandhi and his
philosophy have been resurveyed, rediscovered and re-institutionalised by the majority of leaders and public figures of most countries across the globe.

Everyone tried and still tries to understand him, and his object-oriented plans and programmes (e.g. newspaper publication in South Africa and India; alignment of Indian diaspora; mill workers issues; conferences and meetings with British emissaries; movements, etc) that he executed at different times through a prismatic vision of one’s cultural educational political socio-political, socio-economic, socio-religious and psycho-social backgrounds attached consciously or subconsciously to one’s perception. He had been apotheosized as a great spiritual leader – a sage (Mahatma) and ascetic; he had been characterised as a religious and political leader and also an apostle of peace; he had been loved as a surrogate father of the have-nots and underprivileged, and had been acclaimed as the bedrock of India’s struggle for freedom. Prof. Gilbert Murray¹, a British classical scholar, extolled him as a ‘modern genius of world significance’ and that “for every oppressed nationalist in every continent, he became a champion, a matinee idol”.

While many historians have accredited him overwhelmingly for India’s independence struggle, a few others have criticised and even held him responsible for the partitioning of undivided India, and the mayhem that followed soon after Independence. His followers and admirers include men and women of yesteryears and of present times. They belong to all sections and strata of society: middle class, rich, poor, young, old, affluent and deprived, privileged and underprivileged; workers, thinkers, scientists, academicians, administrators, missionaries and politicians.

History has always inscribed their names on its pages and humankind has always bowed before those who abdicated their power and positions, sacrificed comforts, wealth and even their lives for the welfare of society, remediying the cause of hunger, famine, poverty, disease and inequality. Humanity also remembers those who fought inessantly against tyrannies and atrocities. Despite the birth of such great luminaries on this planet, and with millions of their followers and disciples in their time and after, the miseries and woes of the people could not be alleviated, and the conflict of warring nations could not be resolved. This must have impelled Nobel laureate Tagore² to express his anguish a decade before the death of Gandhi: “Perhaps he will fail as Buddha³ failed, as the Christ failed to wean men from their inequities, but he will always be remembered as one who made his life a lesson for all ages to come.”

If Mahatma Gandhi’s failure on any count is to be gauged against the parameters taken to be the basis of failure in the life of Buddha and Christ, Tagore then does not seem to have meant at all the word ‘failure’ as used in common parlance, but in an inverted metaphorical sense, it signifies the greatness of these great beings. An appraisal³ of Tolstoy in the words of Mahatma Gandhi would attest to this very fact: “To say therefore that Tolstoy on his own

2. Rabindra Nath Tagore – a poet and philosopher; he got the Nobel Prize for literature in the year 1913 for his work 'Gitanjali: Song Offering'.
3. Young India', 20 September, 1928.
admission failed to reach his ideals does not detract a jot from his greatness; it only shows his humility.”

Critics who say that Gandhi had failed because he could not avert India’s partitioning, and could not prevent communal riots, should recall former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan’s bitter disappointment, expressed in the context of the USA-Iraq War of 2003, in a meeting convened at the request of the Arab League and NAM: “All of us must regret that our intense efforts to achieve peaceful solution through this Council did not succeed.”

Should that unfortunate cataclysm water down all dedicated efforts that Annan has made for global development and harmony? In spite of this human catastrophe, the purity of purpose with which the Secretary General has always stood, remains unblemished, and his compassion and increasing concern for global issues are unquestionable. His profound grief for the dead in the UAS-Iraq war and anguish for those living the aftermath, is reflected in his massive efforts in bringing humanitarian aid to the victims and placing responsibility on the UN Security Council for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of post-war Iraq.

It is no revelation that Gautam Buddha, Lord Jesus Christ and Mahatma Gandhi had practised and preached truth, love and non-violence and worked for sustaining human welfare and values, so as to bring harmony, peace and an implicit order in society. They had similar perceptions of the world, and similar prescriptions to eradicate peoples’ ills and miseries. But to accomplish their mission, they had chosen different paths, through their unique programmes, methods and means, hoping for a global society – a world fraternity – to dawn one day upon this Earth.

After all, human life has its own limitations. Any quest, goal or mission undertaken may remain unfinished, unattained in one’s life span. We work with constraints and we achieve within limits. There would remain an epistemological limitation to our understanding of things, of Nature and of the Universe in an absolute sense as can be drawn from the Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle in quantum mechanics (physics) and Godel’s Incompleteness Theorem in mathematics. Thus, certainty or completeness in absolute terms in the results of human endeavours has to be ruled out. ‘Limit’ is innately associated with man’s reach, still excellence lies in stretching this reach and narrowing down the gap hereon to absolute perfection. Hence, there is nothing unusual if the Gandhian model could not resolve all complex human and social problems in their entirety, but surely, what is unusual, is that it still holds out a promise for a better world.

Nobel Laureate Physicist Eugene Wigner, while commenting on the Uncertainty Principle of Heisenberg, said that the hidden variable that does not allow us to reach the absolute certitude (truth) is the consciousness of a person (scientist). My own interpretation of the hidden variable is that it is the ego which cuts into conscience and interferes with the knowledge and understanding of the

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5. The principle of uncertainty/indeterminacy, as enunciated by Nobel Laureate Werner Heisenberg, mathematical physicist and founder of quantum mechanics.
absolute truth. Truth (reality), non-violence (tolerance) and love (non-prejudice) are organically linked and are the subtle and intrinsic attributes of human conscience, originating in the sub-atomic domain. They play a decisive role in our understanding of ‘being’, ‘seeing’ and ‘knowing’, assuming all other physical conditions, tools and apparatus to be mechanistically perfect. Error means departure from truth, and the scale of departure is the degree of falsity, the severity of which depends on the magnitude of departure that should be observable, measurable and also controllable to a great extent, by a person of higher conscience who may or may not be religious or spiritual.

Gandhi was born in an upper middle class Hindu-Bania (business class) family; Gautam Buddha was a Hindu Kshatriya Prince; Jesus was born of Jewish Mother Mary in impoverished conditions. Each had a different background and different phases of developments, but they all nurtured a common vision. They shared pains, agony, anguish and sorrows with one and all; they were caring, concerning and compassionate having love and sympathy for all; they were kind and considerate, tolerant and forgiving in keeping with the philosophy of non-violence; they were seekers of truth, hence disciplined, determined, and undeterred.

Perhaps to vindicate a universal truth that some core human values and a code of ethical conduct are always essential for our sustainable development and living together, they had come on this earth in different ages, in different societies and in different civilizations, yet they cherished a common goal.

Gautam Buddha and Lord Jesus have been deified and Mahatma Gandhi not yet. Both Buddha and Jesus lived in seclusion, either alone or with their disciples, isolated from common man, but Gandhi lived in the midst of common men. What makes Gandhi essentially different from Buddha and Christ is that: (i) no miraculous incident is attributed to him; (ii) he alone synthesised truth, love and non-violence into a juggernaut and transformed it into a corporate movement too powerful to be ignored; (iii) Gandhi was determined to empower despondent society and wanted it to be independent, responsive and responsible; and (iv) that he imbibed and upheld reasonable and testable truth ever cherished in Hinduism, Islam and Christianity to enlighten his own conscience, thus creating a separate weltanschauung benevolently interactive with all the communities and people of all kinds.

If Science is nothing but a research for truth, as stated by Nobel laureate C.V. Raman, Gandhi is to be regarded as a social scientist, for he never used any ad hoc method in his search for solutions to the problems he encountered in his life. He studied the genesis of problems, the ground realities and legal implications; only then he decided methods and means to attain the goal. Also as a social engineer, he was always reinventing himself and his environment by applying checks and balances to adapt to the changes without changing his rock-solid philosophy. His approach for managing man, machine, materials and methods, were not derived from any legislation, force or fright, but were the distillate of humanitarianism and an

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7. ‘C.V. Raman- A Memoir’ by A. Jayaraman, p.130, Affiliated East West Publisher Pvt. Ltd. 1989, Madras (now Chennai)
outcome of self-actualisation and introspection sustained by an inner force and inner discipline. He experimented non-invasively on the mind and conscience of the people, ruled and ruling, of two big subcontinents – South Africa (SA) and India, then under the subjugation of the British imperial power.

He wrote in the daily *Harijan*: “Somehow or other the wrong belief has taken possession of us that *ahimsa* (non-violence) is pre-eminently a weapon for individuals and its use should, therefore, be limited to that sphere. In fact this is not the case. *Ahimsa* is definitely an attribute of society. To convince people of this truth is at once my effort and my experiment.”

Without any official position and power, he remained an unchallenged and unmatched leader who controlled the psyche of millions of people from all rungs of the society, soliciting their unflinching support for about half a century. After all, plans are not made in a huff and success is not achieved in a jiffy. It takes decades to build a society and centuries to stabilise a nation. Since his struggle was against imperialism and the abuse of imperial power, it was simply impossible for anybody to mark a beginning or perceive an end. Though the field of his operation was complex and vast, he still demonstrated an exceptional managerial prowess and a unique managerial finesse.

His indefatigable work in South Africa which lasted for two decades, sowed the seeds of strong will in the natives and immigrants to unite and work with zest and zeal, and grit and guts for securing their fundamental rights and restoring human dignity. Ultimately, the day came and Nelson Mandela took over in 1994 as the first black President of independent South Africa. On being honoured with the Bharat Ratna award in 1990 by the Government of India, Nobel Laureate Mandela said: “The policies of Mahatma Gandhi are much more relevant even today.”

After returning from South Africa (SA) in 1914, Gandhi tested his philosophy in his own homeland, India, and used his managerial acumen to lead masses and activate mass movements many a time. The impact of his persona was so deep and irresistible that it changed the mindsets of the people not only of this country, but of the world at large. He showed them a new method of non-violent and non-invasive management, and how to settle differences and grievances through dialogue, persuasion and passive resistance. Oliver Wendell Holmes of the Medical School at Harvard encored: “What another man has taught as a personal discipline, Gandhi has transformed it into a social programme for the redemption of the world.”

Curt Coffman, American co-author of the best seller ‘*First Break all the Rules, What the World’s Greatest Managers do Differently*’ — said at the Smart Talk (organised by *Hindustan Times* on August 13, 2003 in New Delhi) that great managers are people like Katherine Graham (Chairman, Executive Committee, *Washington Post*), Bill Gates (Chairman, Microsoft) or Mahatma Gandhi. His statement distinctively underlined Mahatma Gandhi as a great manager of very special class.

Dispelling contempt for the past, and dispensing with the arrogance of the present, if we look without prejudice into
the gestalts of Gandhian management, the world can still learn a few very important lessons to avoid pitfalls, and avert crisis and catastrophe in the future.

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THE KERNEL OF GANDHIAN MANAGEMENT
applied his philosophy as a litmus test to confirm his principles, and as a fire-test to warrant his practices. It is the integration of this philosophy with his principles and practices that adds a new dimension to the field of management. It defines a new set of management values and hence a new school of management thought.

Most corporates and competing institutions often issue their mission statements in which they declare their philosophy by defining their identity and stating in broad terms their intent or goal, competitive edge or strength, target groups and markets.

IBM aims at supplying intelligent information, hence their innovations give foremost consideration to accuracy, quickness, compactness and security which are crucially important in making decisions in a competitive environment. Microsoft overcomes the barriers of languages by stressing on research and development in many such softwares that are user-friendly and which use symbols and icons to convey similar meanings in different languages. It has, therefore, gained worldwide acceptability and popularity.

Nokia cell phones are ‘connecting people’, and BPL is ‘believing in the best’. Johnson & Johnson promotes its baby products with an accent on body care ‘with tender love’. Sony believes in people-oriented policies so that a person hired by an organisation can be accepted as a whole and is not dichotomised in virtuous-self and vicious-self. The Tatas, leader in the Indian automobile sector, combine robustness with sophistication. The Birlas promote their products through cultural and religious activities. Bajaj Auto advertises its products with focus on family
technique and the reliability of the data from primary or secondary sources. If all these parameters are bias-free and error-free, they add credence to the results that can be accredited as ‘true’. However, our access to the ‘absolute truth’ may still be denied by Nature, for our understanding of ‘being’, ‘seeing’ and ‘knowing’ of the minutest object and event (shorter than a femto-second) – the building block of this universe – has been so far very limited. Such limiting zones are formed in our thought process alone, because the evolution or dissolution of our mental fields effected by internal and external stimuli, defines our analytical power and comprehension up to a certain point of accuracy, beyond which uncertainty becomes larger than the observable object or events of the micro-domain. If we accept it as an inherent limitation imposed by Nature in reaching the ultimate truth, Gandhi must then be regarded as one of the greatest corporate managers and human resource developers of the twentieth century. Or as Nobel Laureate Rabindra Nath Tagore famously said, “He was a living truth at last, and not only quotations from books.”

Gandhi knew that common masses cannot manage themselves for perfect non-violence, and elements of imperfection are unavoidable. That is why Professor Gene Sharp1 of Harvard University argues that according to Gandhi, although imperfection in practicing perfect non-violence is inevitable, one’s duty is therefore to strive constantly for the least imperfection.

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The second element of the Gandhian philosophy is love, which too has varied meanings and shades in different societies, and for different groups of people. One may instantly relate it to liking, fondness, passion, infatuation, attachment and adoration whereas, in Gandhian context, we must expand its horizon to encompass compassion, empathy, sympathy, kindness, reverence, esteem and devotion. We need to transform our mind-set from passion to compassion, from antipathy to empathy and from individuality to plurality in order to understand the expounded meaning of love.

The third important element of his philosophy is non-violence. Which does not only mean non-killing, non-aggression or non-injury, but also being free from prejudice, jealousy, hatred, animosity, pride and ego, since these elements too implicitly cause some kind of perturbation, a sort of violence towards one’s self or others. As a researcher in the fields of science and management, I have always experienced, be it with myself or my peer group, that presence of the above said elements inhibit the recognition of truth in others’ work and create hurdles in searching for the truth within and assessing oneself truthfully. Truth and science, hence scientific management, are closely linked to each other.

Nobel Laureate C.V. Raman2 meticulously draws a semblance between truth and science: “Science is nothing but a research for truth. Truth not only in the physical world, but in the world of logic, psychology, behaviour and so on. The virtue of a truly scientific frame of mind is the readiness to reject what is false and untrue.” We know as

well from our exercises in the pursuit of science that fear, fright and coercion also strongly interfere in the process of finding truth as they also create perturbation, distort our perception and delude our findings. What one logically deduces is that for scientific management, a manager has to manage the affairs of an organisation without ego, pride, predilection, prejudice, jealousy, hatred, coercion, fear etc., because they all reflect violence in one form or the other.

Hence, the absence of truth and love on any pretext, and/or the presence of ‘violence’ in any form would interfere with SWOT analysis and PEST analysis, and would jeopardise the setting of SMART goals, while all these are, in fact, important tools of organisational management. It is ironic that Gandhi has been often misquoted by a few critics as a symbol of ‘weakling’ and has been mistaken as failed, because they measured his success with a narrow and myopic view arrested within the frame of material gains and gratifications. What they failed to notice is the paradigm shift that Gandhi actuated in human resource management — the very basis of modern corporate management.

At the Millennium World Peace summit held at the UN headquarters, New York, in the last week of August, 2000, about 1,500 religious and spiritual leaders from 75 faiths and 92 countries assembled (as reported by media) and unequivocally affirmed the dire need to establish peace and harmony in the world. They condemned violence and

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SWOT: Strength, weakness, opportunities and threats
PEST: Political, economic, social and technological environments
SMART: Specific, measurable, achievable and time-bound
issued vigorous statements\(^1\) on the subject ‘Towards A World Movement For Non-Violence’. Betty Williams, the Nobel Peace Laureate from Northern Ireland, stressed in her speech that practicing non-violence is not for the faint-hearted, as it requires exemplary courage. Ela Gandhi, granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi and member of the South African Congress, reiterated: “Non-violence is not a passive concept but an active one—one that demands courage and love, not hatred.”

We don’t really know how sincerely and seriously the people who participated in this summit have pledged and committed themselves to Gandhian philosophy and to propagating the concept of peaceful co-existence on earth. But we expect that futurity shall respect, more than ever before, the men and women who possess these attributes. Society shall always admire those who can show even moderate sense of respect for truth, love and non-violence.

To corroborate this conjecture, let’s recall an incident at the White House at the turn of the century. How narrowly did former President Bill Clinton escape the political disaster during his last tenure? What factors have contributed in bailing him out? His alleged affair with intern, Monica Lewinsky rocked the Presidential Office and the news made headlines in all leading newspapers and magazines. In this sensational case, the issues related to truth, love and non-violence (tolerance) were found surfacing very frequently and were noticed prominently in almost all the meetings and proceedings of Prosecution and Defence.

President Clinton, in a philosophical mien, exclaimed\(^4\) under oath: “It is in the hands of the Congress, and the people of this country, ultimately in the hands of God.” Behold, the President did not outright controvert the truth; he did not deny his love; and he did not resort to retaliation or counter allegation (a form of violence) against his adversaries and their accomplices who chose to disrupt his career, disgrace his image and bring discord in his family life. Only simple modesty on the part of Clinton, implying respect for all three cardinals of Gandhian philosophy, swung the public opinion poll as conducted by market research groups, in his favour, exonerating him of his misdemeanour – if it was – and endorsing his continuance in office. Even the later impeachment move against him failed in the U.S. Senate.

It is also worth noticing here how emphatic Henry Hyde, Chairman of the judiciary committee of the US House of Representatives, had been about searching truth alone. He told the House in this context: “We do not make any charges, we simply begin the search for truth.” One also sees there an event with a strange coincidence of time and place, when American congress took a historic decision to erect a memorial of Mahatma Gandhi in Washington D.C., and President Clinton accorded his approval on Oct. 28, 1998.

I have purposely brought in here this specific reference to the case of Bill Clinton. Americans have always been interested in the philosophy and methodology of Gandhi as much as Gandhi had faith in their capability to understand and respect human values. He\(^3\) once said; “I am

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interested in the United States and in Americans always. There is a special bond of sympathy between us, I believe. The Americans can understand our desire for independence.'

The laws of truth are global; suppression of truth always caused upheavals in public and politics, while just reverence or reconciliation with the truth very often settled down the storm of war and the heat of destruction. Gandhi once said: “Politics bereft of religion is death trap.” Religion to him was first humanity and omnipresent God, while God for him was another face of the truth.

5. ‘Mahatma Gandhi: Letters to Americans’, compiled and edited by Dr E.S. Reddy, Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan, 1998, Mumbai
6. Young India, 3 April 1924.