

Total Marks: 40 (5Q x 8M)

Please answer all the five questions. Each question carries eight marks and the break-up, where ever required, is given within parentheses. Please structure your answers with the skills you may have acquired while redacting your self-study assignment. You might want to use a page for ordering your thoughts and remember to keep an eye on the clock.

1. In the context of the recent controversy over the subject of cow protection/cow slaughter and the related matter of the human consumption of beef, please outline Gandhi's thoughts on the subject as enunciated in the *Hind Swaraj*.
2. What were Gandhi's principal criticisms against Modern Western Civilization?  
(4) Highlight the main weaknesses of his arguments contained in *Hind Swaraj* but please rationalize your views. (4)
3. Why were khadi and village industries so central to the Gandhian philosophy of action? (3) Outline the difficulties that Gandhi faced on his road to the discovery of khadi. (3) How can one explain the paradox that while Gandhi supported the idea of *swadeshi*, he was against *swadeshi* mills? (2)
4. Fasting as a mode of political protest has been described as being equivalent to "blackmail". Yet many of those who have fasted failed to achieve expected outcomes. Swami Nigmananda, a 34 year old man, who was fasting for almost four months to protest against illegal mining and stone crushing along the Ganga near Haridwar died at the Himalayan hospital in Jollygrant in Dehradun in June 2011. Irom Sharmila of Manipur has been on hunger strike against the oppressive measures of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act since 2000. Anna Hazare fasted for the Jan Lokpal and achieved limited, or qualified, success. For Gandhi, however, fasting was but one element of his satyagraha campaigns both in South Africa and India (Champaran/Ahmedabad Mill Strike/Against the Rowlatt Bills – that we looked at during class work). Explain the essential elements of Gandhian satyagraha and its guiding principles.
5. Margaret Sanger (1879-1966) – an American nurse and birth-control activist - had a prolonged discussion with Gandhi at Wardha in Nov 1936. Sanger and

Gandhi held diametrically opposed views and yet she referred to her opponent in laudatory, almost reverential, terms: “[...] He has an unusual light that shines in his face; that shines through the flesh; that circles around his head and neck like a mist with white sails of a ship coming through. It lasted only a few seconds, but it is there. When I looked again it was only the shiny appearance of his flesh that I saw, but always the smile and a hospitable welcome.” [From *Sanger’s Diary*] Please read the transcript given further below **with the purpose** of responding to the two following questions.

- A. What were Gandhi’s views on women, especially Indian women? (4)
- B. On which themes did Margaret Sanger and Gandhi disagree and explain the corresponding reasons for their disagreement. (4)



Margaret Sanger’s portrait

### **Morning**

**Mrs. Sanger:** Mr. Gandhi, you and I have the interest of humanity at heart, but while both of us have that in common, you have greater influence with the masses of humanity. I believe no nation can be free until its women have control over the power that is peculiarly theirs, I mean the power of procreation.... Women’s lack of control over fecundity results in overpopulation, in poverty, misery and war. Should women control this force which has made so much trouble in their lives? Do you see any practical solution for this problem, which in my humble opinion is the direct cause of much of the chaos in the world today?

**Mr Gandhi:** I suppose you know that all my life I have been dinning into the ears of women the fact that they are their own mistresses, not only in this but in all matters. I began my work with my own wife. While I have abused my wife in many respects, I have tried to be her teacher also. If today she is somewhat literate it is because I became her teacher. I was not the ideal teacher because I was a brute. The animal passion in me was too strong and I could not become the ideal teacher. My wife, I made the orbit of all women. In her I studied all women. I came into contact with many European

women in South Africa, but I knew practically every Indian woman there. I worked with them. I tried to show them they were not slaves either of their husbands or parents, that they had as much right to resist their husbands as their parents, not only in the political field but in the domestic as well. But the trouble was that some could not resist their husbands. I feel that I speak with some confidence and knowledge because I have worked with and talked with and studied many women. But the remedy is in the hands of the women themselves. The struggle is difficult for them but I do not blame them. I blame the men. Men have legislated against them. Man has regarded woman as his tool. She has learned to be his tool and in the end found it easy and pleasurable to be such, because when one drags another in his fall the descent is easy. I have come in contact with some women of the West but not many, so that my deductions about them may be faulty, but I have known tens of thousands of women in India, their experiences and their aspirations. I have discussed it with some of my educated sisters but I have questioned their authority to speak on behalf of their unsophisticated sisters, because they have never mixed with them. The educated ones have never felt one with them. But I have. they regarded me as half a woman because I have completely identified myself with them. I have identified myself with my wife to the same extent, but she observes certain decencies with me, which I have not done with her. I intimately know her. I have made use of her. But I do not suppose there are many women who can claim to have followed their husbands so slavishly as she has. She has followed, sometimes reluctantly, but her reluctance has had a tinge of obedience in it, for she is a good Hindu wife. I have often challenged her and asked her to lead her own independent life but she will not do so. She is too much a Hindu wife for that. I have felt that during the years still left to me if I can drive home to women's minds the truth that they are free, we will have no birth control problem in India. If they will only learn to say "no" to their husbands when they approach them carnally! ... The real problem is that they do not want to resist them. I have been reading about this cause which you advocate so eloquently. I know some of the greatest people in the world agree with you. In India I would mention only two great representative names, Tagore and Mrs. Naidu. I know I have them all arrayed against me. I have tried to think with them.... My fundamental position is that so far as the women of India are concerned, even if the method you advocate were a solution, it is a long way off, for the women of India have so many things to think of now. Don't tell me of the educated girl of India. She will be your slave, much to her damage, I'm afraid.

**Mrs. Sanger:** You mean for instance that the women of the chawls will be against me, the women in the tenements of Bombay?

**Mr. Gandhi:** Yes.

**Mrs. Sanger:** I disagree with you. When I was in Bombay one of the first places I went was to was these women of the tenements. I saw them sitting around, each with three, four or more children. We asked them how many children they had had, how many were dead. There were always some dead. Then we asked how many more they were going to have, and every woman but one held out her hands in supplication as though saying: "No more. Pray God, no more!" It showed that they were already awakened to this idea. Again and again they ask what to do to prevent more children from coming into the world. I want to go to the villages and see whether this desire to have fewer children is not there. Let us not worry about the methods. Let us first discover whether they want more children or not. that will be the beginning.

**Mr Gandhi:** I don't want to say that women want children but that they will not do the thing that will keep them from having more children. They will not resist their husbands. Then I suppose you will say, if neither party resists, why should they not adopt artificial methods?

**Mrs. Sanger:** You have been a great advocate of civil disobedience, Mr. Gandhi. Do you also recommend that the women of India adopt legal and marital disobedience?

**Mr. Gandhi:** Yes, I do. But no resistance bordering upon bitterness will be necessary in ninety-nine out of a hundred cases. If a wife says to her husband, "No, I don't want it," he will make no trouble. But she hasn't been taught....

**Mrs. Sanger:** But that advice is not practical. It means a revolution in the home. It leads to divorce. The average marriage contract assumes that the married relationship will be harmonious.

**Mr. Gandhi:** There should be mutual consent. Without it the thing will be wholly wrong.

**Mrs. Sanger:** that is right, but the problem is not often discussed by young people before marriage, although our young of today are beginning to discuss it more and more, which is a very good thing. But consider the turmoil, the unhappiness it means for the woman if she resists her husband! What if he puts her out of her home? In some states in the United States a wife has no rights if she resists her husband. What can she do? I do not know the law in India, but custom compels her to submit to the sexual needs of her husband.

**Mr. Gandhi:** There are no such laws here.

**Mrs. Sanger:** Yes, but the custom is here. Customs are harder to change than laws.

**Mr. Gandhi:** Yes.

**Mrs. Sanger:** You are giving them advice which they cannot accept. Would it not make their condition worse?

**Mr Gandhi:** Not if they learn the art of resistance. It boils down to education. I want woman to learn the primary right of resistance. She thinks now that she has not got it. Among the women of India it is most difficult to drive home this truth. If I were to devote myself to birth control I would miss this primary education.

**Mrs. Sanger:** But cannot education go with birth control? In England many social workers claim that if they can instruct the poorer women in birth control before their fifth child is born, before the women have fallen into poverty and drink and degradation, these women can be helped. In America in the clinics it has been found in a number of cases where women have been given birth control information and freed from undesired pregnancies for a period of from eighteen months to two years that the woman and her husband have become self-reliant and self-supporting and the case has been closed on the welfare books. The woman has more hope. She is not haunted by the fear of more and more and still more pregnancies. Every case shows a better condition of the woman's mind, more patience, love, education in the woman's life and home after she has been freed of the worry of having too many children. Mr. Gandhi, do you not see a great difference between sex love and sex lust? Isn't it sex lust and not sex love which you oppose?

**Mr. Gandhi:** Yes, it is. But when both want to satisfy animal passion without having to suffer the consequences of their act, it is not love. It is lust. But if love is pure it will transcend animal passion and will regulate itself. We have not had enough education of the passions. When a husband says, "Let us not have children but have relations," what is that but animal passion? If they do not want to have any more children they should simply refuse to unite.

**Mrs. Sanger:** Then you hold that all sex union is lust except that for the specific purpose of having children?

**Mr. Gandhi:** Yes.

**Mrs. Sanger:** I think that is a weak position, Mr. Gandhi. The act is the same. The force that brings two people together is sex attraction, a biological urge, which finds expression in sex union. There are two kinds of passion. One is a force around which centers respect, consideration and reverence

known as love. The latter kind may be the stepladder to God. I do not call that kind of love lust, even when it finds expression in sex union, with or without children.

**Mr. Gandhi:** I think there is a flaw in that position and the world will not have to wait long before it discovers it. I have found the same thing in old Sanskrit volumes, found lust clothed in the dress of love. But I know from my own experience that, as long as I looked upon my wife carnally, we had no real understanding. Our love did not reach a high plane. There was affection, of course, between us. Affection there has been between us always but we came closer and closer the more we, or rather I, became restrained. There never was want of restraint on the part of my wife. Very often she would show restraint, but she rarely resisted me although she shower disinclination very often. All the time I wanted carnal pleasure I could not serve her. She would be a fairly learned woman today if I had not let this lust interfere with her education. She is not dull-witted, but it takes all one's resources to drive home a lesson. I had plenty of time at my disposal to teach her before I became involved in public affairs but I didn't take advantage of it. When I had outlived animal passion and found a better mission in life, I had no time.

**Mrs. Sanger:** I think lust is a very different thing from love. I believe in sex love. Perhaps love in sex is a new thing in our evolution, and develops in the human race as we evolve toward a higher consciousness. But it is usually acknowledged to be a very real thing, a force that cannot be denied....

**Mr. Gandhi:** May one man have pure sex lust with more than one woman or a woman with more than one man? Your literature is full of that.

**Mrs. Sanger:** Love, no. Lust, yes. But I think pure love comes of itself.

**Mr. Gandhi:** No, it does not come of itself. If you have a love for more than one woman, how do you know which is which?

**Mrs. Sanger:** If we can have a choice in our mates there is a natural sex attraction between two people. You then have a different experience and in the experience an expression of love which makes you a finer human being. Sex lust is spent in prostitution, the sort of relationship which makes for oneness, for completeness between the husband and wife and contributes to a finer understanding and a greater spiritual harmony.

**Mr. Gandhi:** You are talking in this strain because social custom has restricted marriage to one at a time in the West, but in the East it is not so. Many believe it lawful to have more than one wife. Or you may have a wife and concubines. I have thought this question through. In the East this practice has been going on a long time. Now I don't ask this question to put you in a corner. This is the argument I had with a woman with whom I almost fell. It is so personal that I did not put it in my autobiography. We had considered if there can be this spiritual companionship. the marriage relationship is a matter of contract. Your parents arrange it in your childhood and you have nothing to do with it. I come in contact with an illiterate woman. Then I meet a woman with a broad, cultural education. Could we not develop a close contact, I said to myself? This was a plausible argument, and I nearly slipped. But I was saved, I awoke from my trance. I don't know how. For a time it seemed I had lost my anchor. I was saved by youngsters who warned me. I saw that if I was doomed, they also were doomed. I decided I was not right in my argument.

**Mrs. Sanger:** I wonder if this is a rationalization or a personal feeling. Even with those men who have concubines, don't you think there is one person among the concubines to whom they are most devoted? When a man finds the one woman for him, their personalities tune in. There is harmony and growth in their union.

**Mr. Gandhi:** Have you read of the Mahabharata legend where Draupadi, the heroine, has five husbands? In its place this union has been glorified as the ideal union. Each husband has his own

complete right in the wife. Now in Islam, in contrast, they let a man marry up to five wives on condition that all be treated as upon the same level. The Prophet does not call it lust and several philosophers in Islam defend the thing. I have talked to many of these men. They think what is happening in the West is debasing and that if all recognized polygamy the world would be better. The followers of Islam can advance good arguments for it.

**Mrs. Sanger:** We cannot speak for all nations. The human race is evolving like a class in school... But I agree with you that we have to start with the individual. You feel that the beginning is with the individual's control of sex. There is no argument there. But do you realize that from the time of marriage until the end of woman's child-bearing period, if she has sex relations with her husband only once each year, she will have ten or twelve children? So that, even with the most continent life, she will be the victim of a large family which she cannot take care of. Must husbands and wives sacrifice their lives for this? Must this relationship, based on a finer quality of love, take place only three or four times in their entire lifetime?

**Mr. Gandhi:** Why should people not be taught that it is immoral to have more than three or four children and that after they have had that number they should live separately? If they are taught this it would harden into custom. And if social reformers cannot impress this idea upon the people, why not a law? ...

**Mrs. Sanger:** The education that goes with birth control gives men and women a higher physical, mental and moral control. Isn't there something you can approve that they can put into practice? Can't you advise something practical, something that can be applied to solve the problem of too frequent child bearing for the mothers of India?



Sanger with Gandhi

### Afternoon

**Mrs. Sanger:** Let us go back to your first point, continence. Do you accept the decision of most modern neurologists and physicians of the world that continence cannot be generally advised and except for particular cases its practice makes for great nervous and mental disturbances?

**Mr. Gandhi:** I have read much on the subject. the evidence is all based on examination of imbeciles. The conclusions are not drawn from the practice of healthy minded people. The people they take for examples have not lived a life of even tolerable continence. These neurologists assume that people will be able to exercise self-restraint while they continue to lead the same ill-regulated life. The consequence is that they do not exercise self-restraint but become lunatics. I carry on a correspondence which many of these people and they describe their own ailments tome. I simply say that if I were to present them with this method of birth control, they would lead far worse lives.

**Mrs. Sanger:** I just wondered because as you know there are many men who encounter this problem, who are not abnormal men but good fathers, hard workers, men who want to do right. I just want to give you two cases in particular.... These men are not vicious men. They are not brutes. They love their wives. They are trying to control a powerful force planted in their beings at birth. If that force is wrong and evil, why was it placed in their bodies by the Creator of all good?

**Mr. Gandhi:** If both are not ready it becomes degradation for one to ask. If you eliminate birth control there will be other methods. The case for birth control is not hopelessly weak, otherwise these brilliant men would not be aligned with it. As in law, hard cases make bad law and because you can cite hard cases does not prove your method right. We must devise other means. As soon as you agree to eliminate certain methods as harmful, you are bound to find others. In the cases you tell of, as soon as I made the discovery I would have seen to it that the men and women were separated.

**Mrs. Sanger:** But what about the woman's economic condition? She has had no preparation to support herself, especially in India. She has depended upon marriage and her husband for maintenance and her bread and butter. Who is to take care of the children? You must think of these things when you suggest separation.

**Mr. Gandhi:** You must devise means. I might suggest that the state take care of them. Or the law might be called in to give a divorce. At present divorce is granted on grounds of infidelity. In the future it may be granted on grounds of health. Even then some hard cases will occur....

**Mrs. Sanger:** But, Mr. Gandhi, the advanced women of the western world have for the past decade or two refused to submit their bodies as receptacles for a man's passion. Women have feelings as deep and as amorous as men. There are times when wives desire physical union as much as their husbands. Doesn't that change the character of the relationship? Doesn't that make a difference? In such cases where there is a fifty-fifty proposition regarding sex or marital expression, both feel this is a necessary part of the happiness of their lives. What have you to say in regard to this?

**Mr. Gandhi:** I would devise other methods. I would not say all methods have universal application. There would be ways of regulating or curbing that passion. If artificial methods are to be avoided, other, natural methods will have to be devised. Supposing that you and I as social reformers said, "If this remedy is not open, we'll have to fall back on others." But the difficulty of mutual approach stares us in the face, because I belong to a generation that believes that life is made for self-restraint in every way of life. Your generation believes in a multiplication of wants, freedom of all human passions.... When you make up your mind to follow a code of ethics you must determine to sacrifice health and ease. There are things more important than health; things more precious than life and well-being.

**Mrs. Sanger:** Yes, I agree that such things should not be imposed upon people. I am not attempting to force birth control upon any one. I am just offering the knowledge to help solve some difficult problems.

**Mr. Gandhi:** Ah yes, Mrs. Sanger, I know you are not trying to impose birth control but there are some birth controllers who would compel men and women to follow them....

**Mrs. Sanger:** In the United States our birth rate is lowering. We have many older people now because people live longer. Then we have raised the age of marriage, which shortens a woman's childbearing period. You think that your poorer people are not fertile? Where does your population increase come from then? Who has the large families?

**Mr. Gandhi:** The burden of large families falls on the middle class; as far as mere fertility is concerned, the fertility is greater among the middle than the lower classes. If that was not true you would not have the low average of five children per family for India. We do not have such a terrible

problem as you face in America or Europe. The problem is with the middle class where indulgence is running riot. They use their wives as playthings. I am sorry to have to say this, but it is true. I don't say there is no illicit intercourse among the poor in India but there is not the fertility.... Take the lot of the millions--starvation. I have lived in it for twenty-one days, but I had no passion. I do not mean to tell you that at sixty-seven I have no passion, but I can regulate it.

**Mrs. Sanger:** But, Mr. Gandhi, there are thousands, millions, who regard your word as that of a saint. How can you ask them who are so humble, so weak, to follow, when you are so much stronger and wiser, have taken years to bring about that self-control in your life?

(Mr. Gandhi just smiled.)

**Mrs. Sanger:** But to come back to this point. Is the reason you object to artificial means of birth control because of the means or the act? ...

**Mr. Gandhi:** Yes, I object for the latter reason....

**Mrs. Sanger:** Have you from your experience in life seen that the people who have had no love in their lives, who have practised continence and restraint, are higher evolved persons than those who have lived normally?

**Mr. Gandhi:** I can not lay down an absolute rule. I know many fine people who have practised continence and restraint and many who have not....

**Mrs. Sanger:** Haven't you some message of encouragement that I can take away with me to help in this work which we are doing for humanity?

**Mr. Gandhi:** I can only say may God guide you right as you would say to me. We are only human beings. I think highly of your purpose; otherwise I would not have given time to this subject. With me God is truth. I would sacrifice everything, even India, for the sake of truth. But if someone wanted to open my mind and tried to prove I was living in a fool's paradise, I would not close my ears to him. Of course, I should have little part with a man arguing a case for untruth, but I would let him argue it and say, "Let untruth be as much God as truth and have as much effect of me if it should."

**Mrs. Sanger:** The good of humanity is in both our hearts, and I am the last person to say that the end justifies the means. But in birth control as in everything else the proper use of knowledge is very important. Everything good can be misused or used without control, and thus becomes harmful. When we give birth control information it goes hand in hand with education for the betterment of the children, the family and the race.

**Mr. Gandhi:** Don't go away with the idea that this has been wasted effort. We have certainly come nearer together.