1. Critically examine Gandhi’s views on Citizenship.

Ans: According to Gandhi all states have the intrinsic potential for oppression and violence, none more so than the modern highly bureaucratic state. His ideal is a state that is bereft of centralised power. His conception of citizenship was based on three cardinal tenets: satya, ahimsa and dharma. According to Gandhi, all states tend to violate satya and ahimsa, which is why he described the state as a soulless machine. He distrusted state as it represented coercive power and hence reposed greater faith in the role of the individual to meet the onslaught of the state. The state represented compulsion, uniformity and violence in a concentrated form which is why his ideal was a non-violent state that would be self-governing and self-sufficient in which the majority rule would prevail with due respect for minority rights.

For Gandhi, the individual citizen is endowed with dharma and is the bearer of moral authority with the right and even the duty to judge the state and its laws, by the standards of dharma, which in turn, combined the essentials of satya and ahimsa. Since the state is a ‘soulless machine’ and the individual is endowed with dharma that encompasses both satya and ahimsa, it is therefore the paramount duty of the individual, endowed with moral authority, to challenge and even disobey the state for “every citizen renders himself responsible for every act of his government. And loyalty to a capricious and corrupt state is a sin, disloyalty a virtue. Civil disobedience becomes a sacred duty when the state becomes lawless or, which is the same thing, corrupt and a citizen who barter with such a state shares its corruption and lawlessness” (Gandhi, 1951, p.150). Describing civil disobedience as a moral right of every individual, he called it a “birthright that cannot be surrendered without losing self respect” (Ibid, p.155). The existence of injustice justifies political resistance and political protest is basically moral. Like Locke and Jefferson, he believed that loyalty to a constitution and its laws need to be reviewed and affirmed once in every generation.

He also emphasised on the need for civil disobedients to be respectful of the law as they are law abiding citizens. A satyagrahi cooperates not out of fear of punishment but because cooperation is necessary for common good. Civil disobedience is based on profound respect for law and is resorted to publicly and nonviolently. Gandhi differed from Thoreau in stressing on strict non-violence and it is his conception “that has usually been accepted in recent discussions in civil disobedience”. In more recent times, Rawls defined civil disobedience as a “public non violent conscientious yet political act contrary to law usually done with the aim of bringing about a change in the law or policies of the government” (Rawls, 1971, p.368).

In 1922, in a written statement submitted to a court of law, Gandhi explained his transformation from being a loyalist of the British Empire to that of a non-cooperator. Listing the deeds and misdeeds of the government, he concluded that the British rule had made Indians helpless, both economically and politically, and that the only solution was non-cooperation. Writing in Young India in 1920 he observed:

2. Examine Gandhi’s conception of the Gram Swaraj.

Ans: Gandhi is a virulent critic of all models of western industrialisation as though they produce material goods but are alien to our moral values. The village panchayat system and the village republic could create both a participatory model of democracy and would also allow an escape route to avoid the perils of western industrialisation. Gram Swaraj will be the essential framework of this alternative model with the promotion of self-sufficiency in providing the material conditions essential for fulfilling the needs of the individual and enhance the elements of self-respect and pride in oneself.

Gandhi is conscious that the present day conditions of the villages are far from the ideal that he desires and it is because of this consciousness that he argues for a reformed rural setting where truth and nonviolence would co-exist in a situation of harmony and promotion and practice of rural virtues of cooperation and performance of duties. His close associate, J. C. Kumarappa coins the term ‘villagism’, which Gandhi gladly accepts as an essential framework of realising rural swaraj. Gandhi desires a complete economic revival of India with satya and ahimsa as its foundation and the credit for preparing a blueprint along these lines goes to Kumarappa. The framework for the village swaraj is provided in two books of Kumarappa: Why the village movement: A plea for village centred economic order and Capitalism, socialism and villagism. The first book is considered as the first normative statement of Gandhian economics and could be regarded as the manifesto of Gandhi’s economic vision. Kumarappa is of the view that as economic autonomy for the individual is essential for freedom and that as majority of Indians live in rural areas, the village economy has to be the basis of India’s social well-being. In the rapid process of industrialisation and urbanisation it is the countryside that suffers the most. He observes that “there can be no industrialisation without predation and that agriculture was and is the greatest among all the occupations. In case of agricultural civilisation, the system ordained by nature is not interfered with to any great extent. If there is a variation at all, it follows a natural mutation. The agriculturalist only aids nature or intensifies in a short time what takes places in nature in a long period. … Under the economic system of the industrial society… we find variations from nature are very violent in that a large supply of goods is produced irrespective of demand, and then the demand is artificially created for goods by means of clever advertisements. Kumarappa is against use of chemical fertilizers and desires the use of organic manure as a way of ‘Economy of Permanence’ as against the man-made ‘Economy of Transience’. He strongly favours the use of night soil as manure thereby converting human waste into wealth and in overcoming the prejudices of caste. He criticises the British for their poor maintenance of irrigation tanks and urges the conservation of ground water. He also favours small industry as a means of resource preservation. He argues that we should make Mother Nature our great teacher and never do something that is contrary to her ways, for if we do that we will be annihilated sooner or later. “Water from the sea rises as vapour and falls on land in refreshing showers and returns back to the sea again … A nation that forgets or ignores this fundamental process in forming its institutions will disintegrate”. Kumarappa recognises the decay and