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Q. 1 Gandhism presents some of the most effective tools to combat fascist regimes and hit them at their root. Discuss

- While both Gandhism and Fascism evolved and grew during the circumstances of the first half of 20th century with the criticism of modernity in Western Europe, the two ideologies stand poles apart with many scholars and activists taking recourse to Gandhian tools against Fascism. Gandhi, himself was extremely critical of Fascism which he referred to as Hitlerism given its highhanded implementation by Hitler in Germany.
- Gandhi underlines certain basic elements of Fascism including anti-rationalism, violence, survival of the fittest race, over-emphasis on a leader, centralisation, corporatism and lastly, ultra- nationalism. Gandhian ideology presents the very anti-thesis to these foundational elements of Fascism through the following ideas:
 - ✓ Truth or Satyagraha: While Gandhi himself offers a criticism of absolute criticism, Gandhian ideology does recognise the inherent goodness in these faculties of human personality- required for the progress of mankind, a basic idea of Enlightenment. In fact, the whole edifice of the Satyagraha of Gandhi was built upon what he calls the 'soul force.' Importantly, against Fascism, Gandhi believed violence breeds violence and it is the weapon of the weak. Further, unlike the Fascist tendency for othering, Gandhian belief in universal reason was the foundation stone on which he built up his theory of universal truth and Satyagraha.
 - ✓ Non-Violence: Physical non-violence is merely a part of Gandhian ideology. Non-violence, to Gandhiji argues Douglas Allen, was deeper and multi-dimensional in its elimination of inner, psychological violence (hatred and negativity), economic violence (exploitation through control of economic resources such as land, water, oil, etc), linguistic violence (used to dominate and humiliate others), cultural, religious, political and social (the traditional hierarchical relationships) violence which stands starkly against the terror perpetuated by Fascist regimes.
 - ✓ Sarvodaya: A core belief of fascism is argued to be its conception of constant struggle in society in order to weed out the undeserving and unsustainable elements of society- survival of the fittest race. Gandhism instead offers the ideal of Sarvodaya or 'upliftment of all'. The concept of Sarvodaya is based on the basic idea that good of the individual is contained in the good of all. Ashis Nandy presents Gandhi as boldly confronting the "hyper-masculine" political culture of his time (such as in Fascism), which sanctified "institutionalized violence and ruthless social Darwinism.
 - ✓ Swaraj: Another crucial element of fascism appears to be its over-emphasis on the role of leadership, one that is both elitist and patriarchal. As against this Gandhism presents the idea of Swaraj which rather than blindly following in the footsteps of a leader, stands for not merely political but also spiritual and individual freedom. Gandhi's objective was to inculcate inner strength in people, and encourage them to be active in godly pursuits and desist from worldly pleasures.
 - ✓ Panchayati Raj and Decentralisation: As against Fascism, Gandhism views a centralised state as a violent institution. Taking cue from Thoreau, Gandhism perpetuates the idea of oceanic circles of village republics ensconced in organic proximity to nature. It is a civilization that abhors coercive power and functions through moral persuasion, rather than violence. Rather than a

- ✓ soulless machine of State or a leader, values of truth and non-violence guide the individual's actions. Gandhi calls this 'enlightened anarchy.'
- ✓ Corporatism: Fascist regimes espouse complete control of all economic activities in society by the state in the name of national regeneration and unity. Against this Gandhism presents the weapon of trusteeship with complete subordination of individual interests to the interests of the state. Hence, Gandhi would always criticise the monopolisation of the economic activities of people in the hands of state with a view to further the totalitarian pursuits of state to penetrate and control each and every sphere of human life in society.
- ✓ Pacifism and Cosmopolitanism: The emergence of Fascism was based on its exploitation of the nationalist sentiments of the people in Italy and Germany in the aftermath of the First World War. As against ultra-nationalism, Gandhism presents an alternative, wherein nationalism needs to be understood in terms of independence, self-respect and dignity of a nation as part of the broader comity of other nations. National regeneration essentially entails inner-purification and development of a country.
- ✓ However, at the same time Gandhism itself has been criticised by scholars such as Arundhati Roy who regards him as "Saint of the Status-Quo" and Perry Anderson who argues that Gandhi's ideas were "arrested by intense religious belief." Despite these criticisms, Gandhian ideology presents us with effective tools to combat violent and exploitative regimes and has thus been adopted from the likes of Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela to even today being a model of social movements such as the anti-corruption campaign or the black lives movement or those fighting for rights of immigrants, refugees and the LGBTQIA+.